

Embodied citizenship in the making

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Cover: The photo was taken at Pride in El Alto, the celebrations of the *Día del Orgullo Gay*. Photo: Nika Rasmussen

Nika Rasmussen

Embodied citizenship in the making

Bolivian urban youth at the crossroads
of social hierarchies



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Abstract

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This thesis analyses the body as a nexus for playing out power relations and feelings of belonging. Based upon twelve months of fieldwork amongst young urban people living in La Paz and El Alto, it examines the connections between bodily conceptions, social hierarchies and societal inclusions. During the fieldwork in 2014-2015, Evo Morales and his MAS Party had been in power for almost a decade. The young people had thus grown up with the “process of change”, the project of decolonizing the society and building a plurinational state. This served as the study’s backdrop.

The material shows that despite the government’s “process of change”, old and discriminatory structures and notions prevailed amongst the youth. Social hierarchies and the production of differences were integral parts of their everyday life. The young people, engaged in an organization working for sexual and reproductive rights, navigated complex and contradictory norms and values in a conflictive socio-political landscape. With political practices at the micro-level of everyday life, they questioned, negotiated and reproduced old notions and developed their political subjectivities. The topic of sexuality emerged as a particularly intense site for interrelational struggles between adults and young people. A new political position surfaced, claiming space in the nation’s body politic – the political subject of youth. The study of youth fruitfully unravelled social and political developments and adults’ interests, highlighting constructions of temporalities and the need to consider age.

The thesis makes evident how notions of race, class, gender, age, sexuality and place *materialize* bodies. Some bodies merged with salient norms, whereas others “stood out” and felt “out of place”. It is suggested that the relationship between society, state and the individual is productively studied with the framework of “embodied citizenship”. Embodied citizenship is theoretically and analytically uncovered by linking projects of nationhood, how belongings at different societal levels and social hierarchies are produced and interrelated, together with an intersectional gaze on power relations. This elucidates that citizenship is an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life. It develops in relation to social hierarchies and projects of nationhood whose inherent power relations work to materialize bodies.

Keywords: Youth, Social Hierarchies, Citizenship, Everyday Life, Intersectionality, Political Practices, Nationhood, Bolivia

Nika Rasmussen, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Box 631, Uppsala University, SE-75126 Uppsala, Sweden.

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To Felix and Hedvig

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Source: The United Nations. <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/bolivia>

1. Introduction:

Aim and research questions

It was Monday. We were about twelve people gathering in the youth space. The space at this small branch office consisted of a large dusky room, adjoined to the locale of the medical facilities of the organization. It was located on the second floor, on a small cross street from one of the busy main streets in El Alto.

The facilitator Daniela began the day's activities for the group of newcomers.¹ The young women and men, from fourteen up to their early twenties, were to continue working with the paper-made human models they created the previous week. Now it was time to provide them with genitals. Daniela mustered up a pedagogic talk about not feeling ashamed to talk about them. Just like our noses, genitals were a natural part of our bodies. "And no one feels ashamed to talk about their nose, now do they?" she asked rhetorically.

The girl and the boy groups chose to furnish their respective models with a vagina and a penis, and Daniela instructed them to create a life story for their models. Discussions unfolded. Life was made hard for both of them.

The paper model "Rodrigo", an Afro-Bolivian boy,² was bullied at school for his dark skin. He was often left alone at home. One of the boys kept repeating that Rodrigo was being sexually abused by his uncle, but the others ignored him. Discussions continued. Bad things just kept on piling up for Rodrigo; he would soon turn to drinking. Now Martín interjected. He was a young man in his early twenties and the only openly homosexual

¹ All names of informants are pseudonyms. All translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

² The number of Afro-Bolivians is small, and most of them live in the tropical area of *Los Yungas*, northeast of La Paz. In the last census from the year 2012, 23 330 out of a population of about ten millions (10 059 856) define themselves as Afro-Bolivians (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015a: 7, 29). As none of the young people, staff or other people I worked with defined themselves as Afro-Bolivian, this population is not represented in the thesis.

amongst the young people visiting the youth space. Like the paper model Rodrigo, he had also had his fair share of troubles at home. At the age of fifteen he ran away from home when his stepfather found out that he liked boys. Now he spoke up. “Why did things have to be so bad for Rodrigo?” One of the boys responded that he had “that look” (*esa pinta*). Martín objected. He insisted that “Wasn’t one of the things they were supposed to learn here to not judge people based on their appearance?” No one answered and the subject was dropped. The boys continued with the task, adding more details to the paper model’s life story. When Rodrigo got bullied at school, what different nicknames might he hear? Shadow? Chocolate?

Meanwhile in the girls’ group, the paper model “Melody” had it coming. She was being physically abused by an alcoholic father. Her two elder brothers treated her badly. When Melody tried to make friends at school, she was rejected for being poor. Her only potential friend, a girl sharing her poor circumstances, suggested they rob people to get money. Prospects looked bleak.

This was the end of the paper models’ life stories. But many other stories continued. The young women and men of the youth space were in the midst of shaping their own.

The ethnographic scene brings to light several analytical themes that this dissertation focuses on. Young people have a clear understanding of social hierarchies. Furthermore, relationships of power permeate their everyday life. The scene illustrates how notions of race, class, gender, age relations and sexuality *materialize* the body; that is, certain features and shapes of the physical body are highlighted. These features and shapes are visible and “stand out,” thus giving the body its particular bend at junctures in space and time. Whilst the young people crafted paper bodies with social lives, the paper bodies materialized the young people’s notions of the physical characteristics of these socialities.

Moreover, the scene not only illustrates how structural forces shape materialities and how norms and values become embodied.³ It also elucidates how young people live these forces in the present moment and in moments yet to come. They question, negotiate and create meaning of them in the making of a life story. With adults, young people engage in struggles about

³ The anthropologists Andrew J. Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart (2011: 389) define embodiment as “patterns of behavior inscribed on the body or enacted by people that find their expression in bodily form.” Important thinkers for anthropological thinking on embodiment, see for example Mauss ([1934] 1979); Bourdieu (1990) and T.J. Csordas (1990; 2011).

how to define their respective positions. Structural forces, norms and values are thus not the only tunes to which we dance. From the different walks of life people create their own rhythm (cf. de Certeau 1988 and the concept of tactics).

The scene with young men and women creating paper models is part of a material I gathered during twelve months of fieldwork in the neighbouring cities La Paz and El Alto in the years 2014–2015. The political capital of Bolivia, the colonial city La Paz, is situated in a canyon. Houses built of redbrick stride along the sides, at times at bewildering steep angles. Imageries of houses sliding down the slopes often came to me. This happened with regular frequency, and people expressed genuine fear of houses losing their ground. Poverty and corruption at the city hall got the blame for the situation (see Arbona and Kohl 2004). I was told that one could buy permits for building in areas condemned as insecure.

The houses straddle all the way up to the *Altiplano* where El Alto lies. From the Andean high plateau, the view is breathtaking, with La Paz spread out below. And indeed, shortness of breath could at times be felt, at over 4000 metres above sea level. Reflecting its large number of Aymara-identifying inhabitants, young and fast-growing El Alto is described as both *cholo* and indigenous (Lazar 2008; Canessa 2012: 218; Mollericona 2007: 32). The *cholo* is defined as an “upwardly mobile or urban Indian” (Albro 2007: 290), or referred to by anthropologist Mary Weismantel (2001: xxv) as a racial category between indian⁴ and white, and connoting “urban vice, linguistic and cultural admixture, and bodily corruption” (Weismantel 2001: xxv).⁵ Many inhabitants are poor and migrants from the city’s Aymara-dominated hinterland. They are also former miners and workers in search of jobs after the large structural changes that took place in the job

⁴ The term indian (*indio*) is highly pejorative in Bolivia. It is therefore used sparsely, only in quotes or when referencing authors when they utilize the term (to not run the risk of altering their point since they use indigenous and indian on different occasions) and when its linkage to the colonial system is evident. As many other terms used throughout the dissertation, like indigenous, white, mestizo, etc. the usage of the terms does not reflect a belief in a reality “out there”. The terms are seen as cultural and social constructs – with context-specific meanings, ambivalent, shifting and contested – utilized to create, reproduce, or negotiate the production of difference. Furthermore, the dissertation uses lower-case spelling of indian. This actually reflects reality, in the sense of a geographical slip-up as Christopher Columbus had not in fact reached the East Indies (and here I follow the heed of for example Canessa 2005: 24–25).

⁵ *Cholo*, and its feminine version *chola*, have many different meanings depending on the context, and they are not identical either in meaning or in usage. Some of the connotations and meanings of *chola*, and its diminutive *cholita*, are elaborated on in Chapter Seven.

market in 1985.⁶ To capture the specificity of and interlinks between the cities, the anthropologist Xavier Albó (2006: 332) describes La Paz as “the country’s political heart” and El Alto as “the lung of La Paz.” This comprises people’s daily commuting and El Alto as the hub for transportation and the provider of energy.

From February 2014 to February 2015, I got to know Martín, other young people and the cities they lived in. The young people were active in an organization working for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The organization served as my point of departure and the means through which I came in contact with young urban people. In the dissertation I use the pseudonym/acronym CYRI for the organization. It stands for the Centre for Youth Rights and Information. The young people had grown up during a time when Bolivia underwent major political changes at the national level. This national level was in a sense very close to them. As the seat of the government, the city of La Paz was both their local “backyard” and the national space for political debates.

I was interested in understanding how these young urban Bolivians navigated social hierarchies in their everyday lives; how they understood themselves and others with a focus on bodily conceptions in relation to power relations as well as to “society”, that abstract entity composed of different levels. The dissertation hence delves into the intimate relationship between society and the individual. It is a theme that has intrigued researchers across time and disciplinary borders.

The dissertation develops the argument that the relationship between society and the individual is fruitfully studied using the concept of “embodied citizenship” (Russell 2011; Bacchi and Beasley 2002; Beasley and Bacchi 2012). Embodied citizenship is elaborated on and fleshed out to a theoretical framework in which social hierarchies are analytically tied to citizenship and projects of nationhood. The production of difference has characterized Bolivian projects of nationhood and their promulgation of citizenship ideals. Many groups have found themselves excluded from these ideals.

To clarify with an example, in *Now we are citizens*, the anthropologist Nancy Postero (2006) describes the processes and societal changes behind what would later culminate in the election of the country’s first indigenous

⁶ These changes will be described in Chapter Two. To read more about the city of El Alto and its inhabitants, see for example Lazar (2008); Albó (2006); Calestani (2012a; 2012b).

president in 2005.⁷ Her central argument is that following from the multi-cultural political reforms in the 1990s, her indigenous informants felt that they too should have the same rights as others (Postero 2006: 163). When these “newly formed citizens” were disappointed with the reforms’ lack of real changes, they moved up from local-level politics to establish themselves at the national level. The colonial history and its aftermath for indigenous groups had gained political momentum. Evo Morales Ayma was elected president in 2005 with the support of strong social movements demanding change. He and his party MAS (Movement Towards Socialism)⁸ had promised to radically alter tenacious historical structures. This political project of change became embodied by “Evo”. For the first time, the body of the Bolivian state was represented physically by a man embracing his indigenous roots (see for example Grisaffi 2013; Nicolas and Quisbert 2014).

The “now” in Postero’s (2006) title and the gist of her argument suggest that the meaning of citizenship has little to do with citizenship understood as a formal status. Universal – *formal* – citizenship was implemented in Bolivia following the revolution of 1952. However, it was not until “now”, about five decades later, that her indigenous informants *felt* like citizens.

This strikes at the core of the problem this dissertation is all about. How can we understand and study citizenship to more fully capture the meaning and significance it has in people’s everyday life?

At the time of my fieldwork, Evo Morales was still in power. He and his party members kept up the discourse of the “process of change” (*proceso de cambio*) – the government’s project of creating a plurinational state. This project of nationhood serves as the study’s backdrop. The young people thus not only navigated social hierarchies and what is often described as the winding road of coming of age.⁹ They also navigated and carved out a place for themselves in a societal landscape under the auspice of ongoing changes in power relations.

I argue that the young peoples’ sense of societal inclusion – their imagined horizons and the possibilities and limitations they faced in carving out a place for themselves – is encapsulated by the framework of *embodied*

⁷ “Now we are citizens” was stated by one of Postero’s (2006: 9) informants to describe changes over time for indigenous people.

⁸ MAS-IPSP (*Movimiento al Socialismo–Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos*) = Movement Towards Socialism–Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples.

⁹ For an early critique of this notion, see Mead (1949).

citizenship. Why embodied? The experiences of the lived body are important for understanding people's sense of inclusion. Power relations are a part of the production of the body. And our bodies are the sites where we meet, live and feel social hierarchies.

The developed theoretical framework of embodied citizenship thus connects the analyses of how bodies *materialize* through power relations – how the young people reproduced, negotiated and made meaning of power relations in everyday life – and links these to the broader political level of how projects of nationhood have shaped societal exclusions and inclusions. The theoretical framework thereby analytically untangles the young people's embodied sense of inclusions and exclusions – of their place in society. Most importantly though, this unravelling is not reduced to simply what is presented to them. It also considers how they take their place in society.

Power relations are thus central to this understanding of citizenship. Therefore, intersectionality is used as an analytical tool to properly distinguish how seams of power are interwoven in specific situations and in understanding how bodies materialize. The dissertation discusses social hierarchies on the basis on race, class, gender, age, sexuality and place. These categories could certainly be described as abstract constructs for research purposes. However, they likewise serve as powerful tools for social differentiation with tangible effects in people's lives. As we engage with understanding people's behaviour and viewpoints, the intersectional perspective elucidates the complexity of power relations involved in their and in researchers' positions. Chapter Three details the thinking behind the development of the theoretical framework, what sources of inspiration it builds upon and why.

Aim, research questions and outline

So what does 'citizenship as lived experience in everyday life' mean? The dissertation aims to empirically demonstrate and analytically develop the study and understanding of citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life.

The aim of the dissertation is accomplished by looking at the Bolivian society from the perspectives of young urban people. Embodied citizenship

is operationalized through looking into the concrete effects of social hierarchies in everyday life, how they play out, feel and are managed, and how they affect people's sense of inclusion.

The theoretical framework highlights the interrelationships between how belongings at different societal levels are construed and people's positions in social hierarchies. These entanglements are recurrently discussed, though delimited to the local and national levels. The discussions further our understanding of the effects of social hierarchies. They elucidate the significance of belongings for understanding people's embodied experiences and how bodies materialize.

Furthermore, the young people's practices at the micro level – interconnected to aspirations, projected belongings and political subjectivities – are discussed in terms of how they can be defined as citizenship practices. These practices support an understanding of citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life. Furthermore, the discussions make clear how political projects of belonging are not merely impositions from above. People experience and negotiate them in everyday life.

Nevertheless, and well worth noting, understanding citizenship in everyday life as defined and argued for in the dissertation does not suppose a conscious engagement to do political work. However, even if people are not consciously engaged in political work, their practices by no means lack relevance for understanding citizenship as lived experience.

The subsequent research questions operationalize the aim and guide the discussions in the ethnographic and thematic chapters to come. In the young people's everyday lives, how are social hierarchies embodied, manifested, reproduced, questioned and negotiated? How can we understand social hierarchies in relation to societal inclusions and exclusions? Amongst the young people, how are political subjectivities and engagement developed and expressed? And lastly, how can we comprehend the entanglements between different positions and belongings at the local and national level?

The material I gathered amongst young urban people active in an SRHR organization provides the basis for my discussions. The argument developed is that understanding citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life offers a productive analytical lens to comprehend and study the interlinkages between individuals, society and the state. This understanding comprehensively takes into account people's positions, criteria for belonging at different levels, and the consequences these have for people's sense of inclusion in societies they formally belong to. This

sensation can belie abstract and commonly stated principles of every citizen's equal value and rights. The theoretical framework developed can thus be used for the purpose of evaluative discussions of whether and how citizenship regimes in different contexts succeed in realizing formally stated principles of citizens' equal value and rights.

So what have citizenships relations looked like in Bolivia? Chapter Two gives a short historical background and describes contemporary Bolivian citizenship relations. The overview in Chapter Two delineates the most pertinent issues characterizing the national political landscape before and during the period of fieldwork. Based on foremost anthropological research on citizenships and social hierarchies, it also presents earlier research in these fields and contextualizes the ethnographic material and discussions to come. Furthermore, Chapter Two sketches the situation regarding sexual and reproductive rights.

Chapter Three outlines and discusses the theoretical framework of this dissertation. For the purpose of enabling more fine-grained analyses, additional theories and analytical tools are introduced where necessary. Chapter Three also includes a brief description of the methods, methodology and material of the study. This is followed by five ethnographic and thematic chapters. They answer the research questions in overlapping and complementary ways. Through highlighting different intersectional cuts in relation to race, class, gender, age, sexuality and place, the chapters – taken as a whole – unravel the young people's multifaceted experiences in relation to their positionings and belongings at different levels. Each chapter focuses on some of the aspects specifically but elaborates on them by considering more complex junctions. The choice of race, class, gender, age, sexuality and place was informed by their relevance. This was an outcome gleaned both by ruminations beforehand of what the most pertinent factors in the field might be, in terms of how they emerged throughout the fieldwork, and in the analysis of the gathered material.

To do fieldwork in two cities was beneficial. The comparative gaze made evident the racialization of place and its importance for understanding the young people's sense of societal inclusion. Chapter Four focuses on the intersections of race, class and place. The chapter shows how the conjoint production of place and racialized and class-marked bodies at inter-local/city levels related with young people's self-perception and terms of inclusions and exclusions on a broader level. The material and discussions make evident the stickiness of social structures despite a national po-

litical project striving for change. The norm of racialized whiteness maintained a firm grip on the young people's projected and desired belongings. Nevertheless, change was also in the air, interconnected with the government's "process of change." The case of the construction of a cable car illustrates this. The infrastructure project concretely materialized the government's political project in people's everyday lives at the local level. It generated tensions that spurred both a reproduction and a questioning of norms and boundaries.

Chapter Five looks into the interconnections between national and local discourses of men's machista (sexist) behaviour and how young men and boys questioned, negotiated and reproduced these in their lived masculinities in everyday life. At the national political level, leading male politicians embodied notions of political space and citizenship as masculine. This, however, was a point of contestation of the kind of masculinities envisioned and practised by the boys and young men at CYRI. Their "emergent masculinities" (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011) made evident the processual character of citizenship and how it is practised in small actions in intimate spaces in everyday life.

Adults defined appropriate life trajectories and temporalities over the head of young people. In Chapter Six the young people's perspectives, analysed predominantly at the intersection of age and gender, elucidate the construction of urban Bolivian youth. Their interrelationships to adults, society, and the government/state are detailed through the themes of sex education, teenage pregnancies and violence, themes of import for understanding the young people's situations. Young bodies constituted sites for societal reproduction and negotiations of change. Their bodies materialized as overloaded with sexual significance and were construed as objects of adult control. The young female body was a particularly intense site for intergenerational struggles. Adults' and peers' practices of gossip, slander and control produced gendered inclusions and exclusions at the local level, whilst a changed legal framework boded for a redefined relationship to the state. In relation to the theme of violence, adults' bodies were instead at the centre. Violence was understood within a heteronormative, adult-centric framework, where men were perpetrators and women their victims. The violence the young people were subjected to by their parents and caregivers leapt out of the picture. However, a growing recognition of children and young people as bearers of rights was emerging.

Chapter Seven begins with an overview of how the production of racialized and gendered ideals have served historical and present projects of nationhood. It ties local and national levels together in present-day settings through the logics of a heterosexual market of desire. Despite the government's "process of change", norms and values remained firmly in place. Gender ideals and sticky structures from earlier projects of nationhood lingered on. Depending on the intersections of race, class, gender and age, young women had different possibilities to negotiate ascribed positionings and claim and perform femininities of their own choosing. Some were essentialized to embody the "process of change". However, the young women's organizational engagement aligned with the production of alternative femininities and the development of political subjectivities. CYRI's framework of how to understand gendered expectations resonated with young people's experiences of injustices and discrimination. In producing alternatives, femininities were both done and undone. The young women both renegotiated and reproduced the terms of feminine citizenship.

The adult-centrism identified in Chapter Six characterized local and national political spaces as well. However, the MAS government's "process of change" stirred the political landscape and reanimated the question of who belonged to the *pueblo* (the people). Chapter Eight details the emergence of youth as a new political subject, staking claims to be included in the body politic. The chapter mainly discusses the position of young people as a homogeneous group and political subjects. Nevertheless, a quick detour into how race, class and place changed the political terrain revealed ongoing processes of the production of difference amongst the young people. Furthermore, other groups apart from young people claimed recognition as well. The "process of change" was used as leverage, elucidated through the example of TLGB¹⁰-groups. These broader political changes are important to understanding the emergence of youth as political subjects as well.

The ethnographic and thematic chapters reveal the ongoing negotiations of citizenship relations. In the final chapter the main results are summarized, along with a discussion of what the theoretical framework brings to light. But before all that, earlier citizenship relations require some attention, as they inform an understanding of the current citizenship relations in the making.

¹⁰ TLGB = Transgender, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual. This was the most usual order of the acronym during the time of my fieldwork. Nevertheless, other orders were used as well.

2. Historical background: Citizenship relations then and now

Decolonizing the state

Two questions seem to circulate constantly in Bolivia's collective consciousness. One is, "Who are we?" arising out of the conflictive diversity of co-existing cultures /.../. The other question plaguing the national psyche is, "Why are we unable to emerge from our backward condition?" A common answer is the very disunity evinced by the first question. (Luykx 1999: 35)

Bolivia's history has spoken, and continues to speak, about how to understand and do difference. The various regimes of citizenships reflect this. With independence in 1825, the newly formed nation was destined to grow on the soil and inherited legacy of the Spanish colonial system. It harboured "dual republics", separate jurisdictions for indians and Spaniards, and a tripartite hierarchy (white, mestizo and indian). Around the twentieth century, the projects of nation-making in the Andean countries revolved around the quest of modernity: how to progress and become civilized. The main obstacle was the so-called "indian problem". How should the native people be integrated into this national project? (Zulawski 1990; Larson 2004; 2005). The historian Brooke Larson (2005: 33) contends, "creole elites often turned pessimistic about their nation's racial unfitnes or diseased body politic."¹¹

The strategy of whitening through *mestizaje* (race-mixing) fared poorly in the Andean countries. Their indigenous populations were simply too large (Larson 2004: 17). Race distinctions were framed in binaries, either or. The mestizo thus posed a problem. It was considered an unworthy,

¹¹ Larson (2005: 33) refers to Alcides Arguedas Díaz' influential essay *Pueblo Enfermo* (Sick Nation) from 1909 as an example.

“contemptible race” (Larson 2004: 243).¹² The colonial system of dual republics soon came under pressure from the proliferation of various interstitial categories. The historian Rossana Barragán (2014) points out however that *mestizaje* was both a result from mixed unions and a cultural phenomenon. One could achieve social ascendancy through changing clothes and learning Spanish. In Chapter Four of this dissertation, more present-day understandings of racial identities are outlined.

There are many important historical events and processes that reconfigured the terrain between rulers and the ruled. For example, the elite’s different projects, the counter struggles, political liberalism, market expansion, *indigenismo*¹³, the Chaco War 1932–1935, the national revolution in 1952 that introduced universal suffrage and the *indianista-katarista* movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. These have been described at length elsewhere however (see for example Larson 2005; 2004; Stephenson 1999).¹⁴ Therefore the focus of this chapter lies on more recent political changes. These underlie the development of the project of nationhood the MAS government introduced and the political landscape in which the young people of my study have grown up.

Class and race have always been fused in Bolivia. However, during different periods one or the other has grown as the salient sign to animate forces of social and political discontent. After the revolution in 1952, class turned into the organizing nexus. This changed in 1990 when indigenous peoples initiated a walk from the Amazonian lowlands to the highlands and La Paz, the *March for Territory and Dignity*. The introduction of democracy in 1982 had provided openings for broader alliances for ethnic mobilizations. Now different indigenous peoples of the lowlands together demanded legal recognition of their territories and organizations, their cultural specificities and better social conditions. This manifestation became the start and symbol of a period that would increasingly frame political mobilizations in terms of ethnicity or indigeneity (Vazualdo 2011; Lallander 2016; Canessa 2007b: 200–202; Postero 2006; Healy and Paulson 2000: 10).

¹² See Luykx (1999: 146) for how negative notions remain in the early 1990s.

¹³ *Indigenismo* refers to the elites’ cultural projects in which they defined indigenous culture and specific indigenous qualities. These served as models for the revalorization of the native populations to fulfil the national interest of forging a unified cultural heritage.

¹⁴ See also Rivera Cusicanqui (2010); Bigenho (2005; 2006); Gill (1993; 1997) and Barragán (1997). In other Latin American countries, see for example Cadena (2002; 2000); Smith (1997) and Wade (2009; 2010).

Meanwhile the country was characterized by social upheaval. In 1985 the New Economic Policy was launched. It was the start of a period of neoliberal economic policies that would strike a hard blow against the middle class and the already poor. Significant state power over the economy was transferred to the market due to a chaotic economic situation. It was caused by decades of economic mismanagement during different military regimes, a huge fiscal debt, hyperinflation (at a staggering 20 000 %) and economic blows such as droughts and falling tin prices. The economic reorganization entailed *inter alia* that state mines were closed, the public sector diminished, state companies were privatized, public expenditure was cut, the tax system was reformed and state subsidies were withdrawn (Healy and Paulson 2000: 10, 21n5; Gill 2000: 13; Farthing and Villegas 1991). Furthermore, with Sánchez de Lozada elected president in 1993, the IMF and the World Bank gained a strong supporter at the steering wheel for the structural adjustments they advocated. More changes would follow (Kohl and Farthing 2009; Gill 2000: 12).

During the years of neoliberal economic policies, over 30 000 miners were laid off. They were officially but never practically relocated (Gill 2000: 13, 73). Together with the privatization of mines, this was a blow to nationalist pride and the memory and ideals of the 1952 revolution, when the mines were nationalized (Luykx 1999: 9). Moreover, “systematic government efforts were made to obliterate the COB [the Bolivian Labor Confederation] by destroying its militant backbone, the miners’ union,” according to the geographer Benjamin Kohl and the journalist Linda Farthing (2009: 68). The miners’ union “had for decades been the vanguard of the labor movement” (Healy and Paulson 2000: 11). The resistance would instead increasingly be headed by the coca growers of the Chapare region. They fought against coca eradication policies and the presence of the US military, a presence legitimized by the “war on drugs” (Healy and Paulson 2000: 13; Kohl and Farthing 2009: 68).

A program report details that as the economic policies hit poor families especially hard, many children, and particularly girls, were forced out onto the streets (Programa Oqharikuna 1994, referred to by Stephenson 1999: 229n33). Migration to the cities escalated, and social problems worsened. Many miners moved to El Alto in hopes of turning things around (Gill 2000). In fact, different waves of migration lay behind the development of the city, combined with the physical limits for La Paz to expand. The first wave followed the revolution in 1952 when *pongueaje* was prohibited, the

system that had held indigenous people in forced labour,¹⁵ combined with drought and the agrarian reform the year after. The agrarian reform granted them small parcels of land, but they were often too small to feed a family. Later waves answered the need of labour for construction work in the 1970s and severe droughts in 1982–83, which forced many *campesinos* (peasants) to seek a living in the city. The last big wave followed from the neoliberal economic policies when many ex-miners took their chances to start anew in El Alto (Arbona and Kohl 2004: 258; Lazar 2008: 46–47; Gill 2000).

Bolivia, together with other Latin American countries, adopted the ideology of multiculturalism in the 1990s (Wade 2010: 138). When Sánchez de Lozada came to power in 1993, he changed the Constitution in a political landscape where indigenous groups intensified their mobilizations and increasingly raised demands. The country was now to be recognized as a multi-ethnic and pluricultural nation. The constitutional changes were supplemented by a large number of laws, “multicultural reforms”, with the aim of improving the situation for indigenous people and a recognition of cultural diversity (Burman 2014: 253–54; Postero 2006: 124–32).¹⁶ Anthropologists Kevin Healy and Susan Paulson comment on the changes with amazement:

Whereas for decades, cultural integration and Westernization had been advanced by public education, technology transfers, mass media and other government-promoted programs, the architects of the second wave of neoliberalism in Bolivia took an unprecedented stance against cultural homogenization. Cultural pluralism, juridical recognition of indigenous organizations, collective territorial rights /.../ became strange bedfellows with the strict economic adjustments that negatively impacted many people. (Healy and Paulson 2000: 12)

The multicultural project, however, came mainly to celebrate cultural diversity in the form of music, handicraft and language. Meanwhile, the analysis of class relations was pushed to the background (Burman 2014: 253). Researchers have argued that the multicultural reforms served the specific purpose of implementing the neoliberal doctrine (Burman 2014; Postero

¹⁵ On the large estates, the *haciendas*, indigenous people (*pongos*) were forced to perform unpaid labour and pay tribute to the masters. In return, they earned the right to farm a small piece of land. The word *pongo* comes from the Aymara and Quechua word for door, *punku*. It vividly reflects the fact that the person performing the unpaid labour often had to sleep by the front door of the master’s house (Canessa 2012: 93–94; Stephenson 1999: 209n8).

¹⁶ On the reception of the educational reform, see Luykx (1999: 55–63).

2006). When the state stepped down from its responsibility to provide the citizens with services, it delegated that responsibility to the citizens instead (cf. Paley 2001).

The anthropologist Maria Tapias (2015) notes how the neoliberal reforms called for a new type of citizen ideal. In the Bolivian Andes, she studied the interlinkages between women's emotion narratives, conceptions and experiences of health and well-being, and the social and political changes following the neoliberal policies. She argues that the reforms "also had moral dimensions as they called for a new type of Bolivian citizen—one who could be self-reliant and entrepreneurial, one who could be modern and take advantage of the opportunities that would unfold in Bolivia because it had opened itself to the forces of globalization" (Tapias 2015: 34).

For Postero (2006: 53, 123) the multicultural reforms, with the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) as a spearhead, defined specifically indigenous people as political actors. The law strengthened the political role of the municipality and recognized various local-level and grassroots associations and traditional indigenous communities. "Indigenous citizenship" was to be exercised at the municipal level. Her indigenous informants, the Guaraní of the eastern lowlands, used the new spaces to radically contest neoliberal policies and the meaning of citizenship. Simultaneously, LPP undermined the traditionally strong power of the unions. Before, they had been the main channels to convey political discontent (Postero 2006: 127–38; Albro 2010: 75). The neoliberal policies thus instituted new citizen ideals and opened up for new political subjectivities. The anthropologist Anders Burman (2014) describes a similar process in the highlands. The multicultural reforms opened up spaces and CONAMAQ, an organization for highland Aymara and Quechua people, was founded.¹⁷ It would later work together with other organizations to create a political alternative for radical change by supporting the future president Evo Morales.

Political and social discontent grew steadily, as did the mobilizations. In Cochabamba in 2000, protests erupted as water resources went for sale to a multinational company. The "Water War" quickly turned into a hotbed for voicing various streams of political discontent. In 2003 President Sánchez de Lozada's decision to sell gas to foreign interests generated broad-based protests. The "Gas War" equally became a site for gathering

¹⁷ CONAMAQ = *Consejo Nacional de Ayullus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (The National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu).

various sources of political discontent, be it global capitalism or US imperialism, poverty and marginalization, under an expanding component of indigeneity. The protests exploded when several unarmed protesters were killed by the military. The president fled the country (Canessa 2007a; Flores Vásquez, Herbas Cuevas, and Huanca Aliaga 2007; Albó 2006).

The union leader of the Chapare coca growers, Evo Morales, rose to power in this tumultuous landscape. In the following elections he was backed as the leader of MAS by the joint forces of social movements. The alliance consisted of different organizations representing both ethnic/indigenous and class-based interests, the lowlands and highlands, and specifically female peasants, natives and indigenous women. Morales promised with his candidature to broaden the political participation of formerly excluded groups, to counter the forces of US imperialism and global capitalism, and work against the devastating effects of the neoliberal policies. He won a majority of the votes, which secured his power to steer politics in a new direction (see Postero 2006; 2017; Grisaffi 2013; Lalander 2016).

The emergence of young people as political subjects, described in Chapter Eight, is linked to this tumultuous and vibrant political landscape, where calls for inclusion, rights and recognition were made by many different groups.

This is a very sketchy depiction of the background to the MAS government's project of nationhood, the "process of change". There were vast economic inequalities, social hierarchies based on class and race within a country displaying enormous cultural heterogeneity and regional variation. Furthermore, the country was at the mercy of the fluctuations in the market and large international economic institutions. It was numerically small, caught up in global relations of power. The relationship between the Bolivian state and its citizens – and the different societies and local variations among them, would continuously undergo negotiation. Now the major outlines would be drawn by the new government.

For the political scientist Stéphanie Rousseau (2010: 152), though MAS contains various ideological currents, "the political inclusion of popular sectors, notably by adopting the indigenous peoples' discourse of empowerment, is the main thrust of the MAS political project". Indeed, one striking and immediate effect of Morales coming to power was the changes in the cabinet and congress. Suddenly more than suits and ties met the eye. Morales appointed both men and women from the movements to high state positions. Some of them proudly wore clothes representing their indige-

nous background. When he won the elections for a second term as president, he continued this path and appointed men and women in equal numbers to the cabinet. The presence of women dressed *de pollera* in high state positions had strong symbolical value that the promised changes were actually taking place (Díaz Carrasco 2014; see also Widmark 2012). In La Paz and El Alto, to be dressed *de pollera* means to wear the ensemble of a full gathered skirt (the *pollera*), blouse, shawl, bowler hat, low heel shoes, and the long hair braided in two plaits (see figure 13). This apparel is nowadays, through the twists of time, considered to be an expression of authentic Aymara indigeneity. However, parts of it are modifications of fashion imported by the Spaniards during their colonial endeavours. It was later picked up by urban women of indigenous descent (Gill 1993). Some of the present and historical connotations and meanings of being dressed *de pollera* are described in Chapter Four and Chapter Seven.

Over the years as president, Morales was accompanied by the same leftist vice president. Álvaro García Linera is a public intellectual, sociologist and self-identified “classical Marxist” (see García Linera n.d.).¹⁸ To Farthing, García Linera represented another segment of the body politic. “With his European racial features, dressed in a suit, and projecting a cultured and sophisticated image, he has taken on a role of mollifying Bolivia’s upper and middle classes, terrified by an indigenous-run government” (Farthing 2010: 30).

In 2006, a long-term demand of indigenous, peasants’ and workers’ organizations was fulfilled. Morales summoned popularly elected delegates to rewrite the Constitution in a constituent assembly. The multicultural policies of the 1990s had not decisively changed or eradicated the racist structures. Therefore, indigenous groups placed their hope in radically reformulating and changing the structure of the state by turning it into a plurinational state. Morales appointed a woman from the strong peasant union for women, *Bartolina Sisa*,¹⁹ to head the assembly dominated by political parties. Out of its 255 seats, women held 88. The work process was characterized by several controversies. Moreover, since MAS controlled the majority of the delegates, the composition and legitimacy of the assembly was

¹⁸ From the biography published at the official web page of the vice president.

¹⁹ *Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia “Bartolina Sisa”* (The Bartolina Sisa National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Native Women of Bolivia). It was one of the organizations working in alliance to make possible the political advancement of MAS.

questioned (see de la Fuente Jeria 2010; Uriona Gamarra 2010; Postero 2006; 2017).²⁰

The new Constitution of 2009 declared the state plurinational. It recognized 36 different languages and legal pluralism, and defined specific indigenous rights such as self-determination (though severely circumscribed). One of the most important concepts in the government's project of building the plurinational state was decolonization (*descolonización*).²¹ Vincent Nicolas and Pablo Quisbert (2014: 85), respectively an anthropologist and a historian, hold that the constitutional text has to be considered in light of the census in 2001. In that census, 62 % of the population defined themselves as belonging to indigenous groups.²² President Evo Morales referred to this high percentage several times to legitimize the "process of change". However, in the subsequent census in 2012, the number dramatically declined to 40 %. According to Nicolas and Quisbert (2014: 92), "the news hit with the effect of a bomb."

The reasons behind the drop have been extensively discussed. For example, before the census of 2012 a discussion rose whether *mestizo* should be included as a category for self-identification or not. This suggestion was rejected. Government representatives and the president claimed that the term was colonial and divisive (Nicolas and Quisbert 2014: 89). At the time of my stay, some of the young people, as well as staff at CYRI and my well-off neighbours, criticized the government's decision and perspective. In the middle-class neighbourhood in La Paz where CYRI was located, one could read stencil-sprayed graffiti on the walls, "I am neither Aymara nor Quechua I am Mestizo" (*No soy Aymara Ni Soy Quechua Soy Mestizo*).

There is no doubt amongst researchers, however, that the political project has had a major impact in growing people's sense of pride of their indigenous roots. Throughout my fieldwork, various people in different circumstances told me of a sense of newly gained self-respect and not being

²⁰ See also Burman (2014); Rousseau (2011: 12–13) and Htun and Ossa (2013: 15).

²¹ Included in Article 9:1 of the Constitution. Félix Cárdenas, the former incumbent of the Vice Ministry of Decolonization explicated that the society and the people have to go through processes of decolonization in order to build the plurinational state. The "colonial mentality" still saturates the society and people's mindset, which leads to the copying of laws and institutions originating from other countries. See document: Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo (2014) and an interview with Félix Cárdenas made public on YouTube (see 'La Descolonización con Félix Cárdenas' 2013).

²² Defined as *los pueblos originarios o indígenas*.

subjected to the kind of overt racist attitudes they encountered before. They attributed these changes to the MAS government's work.²³

According to the census of 2012, 67.5 % of the population live in urban areas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015a: 14). Researchers have argued that the Constitution omits the situation of the urban populations with indigenous backgrounds.²⁴ The anthropologist Robert Albro (2010) discusses his urban informants of "humble origins", which indexes class and indigeneity in urban settings. Their engagement in local-level politics, their "*cholo* citizenship", are crosscut and informed by different social positions. Albro's (2010: 82) point is that the "cultural diversification of *mestizaje*" that increasingly characterize people's experiences and political engagement are not subsumed either by the constitutional recognition of a unitary indigenous identity based on collective rights or by its guarantee of individual liberal rights. Sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010; 2008) argues that the framework of collective rights linked to indigenous territoriality, reinforced both by the state and indigenous organizations, leaves urban populations of indigenous backgrounds unattended. Women are especially marginalized. *Cholas'* everyday experiences of discrimination, insufferable working conditions and aspirations for citizenship in urban milieus do not fit the framework of territorially based collective rights. Furthermore, Rivera Cusicanqui (2010; 2008) argues that the framework essentializes indigenous people by locating them far away in time and space, outside modernity. Chapters Four and Seven also show that notions of rurality are still tied to indigenously marked people, despite their urban location.

In commenting on the political changes, Burman (2014) expands the scope of Canessa's claim that "the language of political protest has been indigenized" (Canessa 2007b: 205). Burman (2014) argues that indigeneity

²³ The same researchers have also noted a tension between how the government officially projected its intentions and how its concrete politics unfolded. Postero (2017) argues that under the Morales government indigeneity has lost its emancipatory potential. It has been turned into a vehicle servicing the continuance and building of a liberal nation state. Burman (2014: 260) similarly describes a "hegemonic indigeneity" which was "intimately tied to notions of Bolivian nationhood and a strong Bolivian state" and which underwrote the government's overarching objective to consolidate its power. Furthermore, the state crafted a model culture of national indigeneity based predominantly on the practices of the larger highlands Aymara and Quechua cultures. Thereby it disregarded the country's internal heterogeneity at the expense of smaller indigenous cultures and their rights (Postero 2017; see also Canessa 2007b: 207; 2014; Mayorga 2014; Díaz Carrasco 2014: 152–53; Tórrez and Arce 2014).

²⁴ In fact, in earlier versions of the constitutional text urban populations were included, see Nicolas and Quisbert (2014: 86–88).

has turned into the political language *per se*. He notes how self-references to indigeneity or an expressed concern for the same are used by different sides to legitimize their opposing claims.

Whereas race and ethnicity moved to the forefront in 1990 regarding how to understand citizenship and inclusion, Postero (2017) argues that class has resumed its former front position. The MAS government's later discourse of "economic liberation" partly replaced their more radical ideas of indigenous rights, decolonization, and tackling global climate changes. Decolonization became reframed as getting a share of economic resources and a more just sharing of the Bolivian patrimony (Postero 2017: 111, 152; see also Canessa 2014; Lalander 2016).²⁵

The scope, content and meaning of citizenship relations have thus undergone major changes over the years. However, citizenship relations can be seen from different perspectives. As in Latin America in general, the Bolivian sexual-political landscape has changed considerably in recent decades (see Sáez and Faúndes 2018). The Constitution from 2009 was a defining moment in this regard.

The sexual-political landscape

The young people I met, the *paceños/paceñas* (male and female La Paz-inhabitants) and *alteños/alteñas* (male and female El Alto-inhabitants), were engaged in a SRHR organization. Therefore, the terrain of the sexual-political landscape was of considerable importance to them. Furthermore, since sexuality-related themes are regulated through policies and laws, they constitute an important part of the relationship between the state and its citizenry/body politic in general, and to the young people of my study in particular.

²⁵ The MAS-government made significant efforts to redistribute economic resources by increasing public spending, introducing social welfare policies and measures such as raising the minimum wage. For example, it introduced cash transfer programs for pregnant women and newborns, for school children to increase their attendance and for elderly people (IMF 2015: 17–18; see also Postero 2017: 99; Lalander 2016). The number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 38 to 17 per cent between the years 2006 and 2015, as well as living in poverty, from 60 to 39 per cent. Furthermore, the middle class has expanded "which now represents the most notable feature of the new social structure" (UNFPA 2017: 2). An IMF report states that real GDP growth, on average 5 % between the years 2006–2014, has been high compared with other Latin American countries (IMF 2015: 1, 4).

The Constitution from 2009 paved the way for pivotal changes in Bolivia. Amongst many things, it is inscribed: “Women and men are guaranteed the exercise of sexual rights and their reproductive rights.”²⁶ This constitutional guarantee, together with the subscription to the Cairo document,²⁷ are two of the most important factors why Virginie Rozée, Susanna Rance and Silvia Salinas Mulder (2016: 360), sociologists and an anthropologist, deem the Bolivian legal framework regulating reproductive rights to be “fairly progressive” (*medianamente progresista*).

Researchers point to a number of constitutional advances in terms of specifically attending to women’s needs or opening up for their rights. For instance, the Constitution declared the state secular,²⁸ as based on *inter alia* gender equality;²⁹ it recognized the economic value of housework;³⁰ and it stated that everyone, but particularly women, had the right to live a life free from violence in the home and society³¹ (J. Y. Ortiz 2011; Uriona Gamarra 2010; Rousseau 2011). Amongst fundamental rights, the Constitution declared the prohibition of discrimination based on “sex, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity.”³² This offers some protection against discrimination for people who do not define themselves as heterosexual. However, the Constitution also clearly stipulates that marriage is between a man and a woman.³³ An earlier draft, contrariwise, opened up marriage for same-sex couples. Nonetheless, following pressure from the Catholic Church and the Evangelical National Association, the article was reformulated (D. A. Pérez, Estenssoro Velaochaga, and Céspedes Vargas 2012: 308–9).³⁴

Rousseau (2011) contends that the Bolivian feminist movement, that is, the mestiza dominated feminist movement, together with organizations representing indigenous women’s interests, fruitfully influenced the Constitution. The main divisive point was the right to abortion, opposed by

²⁶ Article 66. See English translation of the Constitution (Max Planck Institute, n.d.).

²⁷ The ICPD Programme of Action, the result of the work at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo 1994. It has been described as a hallmark in the work for the general recognition that women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights are integral parts of development and population plans.

²⁸ In Article 4: instead of earlier recognizing and supporting Catholicism which allowed for religious principles to contest, for example, women’s rights.

²⁹ Article 8.

³⁰ Article 338.

³¹ Article 15.

³² Article 14:2.

³³ Article 63.

³⁴ Article 62 furthermore stipulates: “The State recognizes and protects the family as the fundamental nucleus of society.” See English translation of the Constitution (Max Planck Institute, n.d.).

some indigenous organizations. However, in the face of conservative groups advancing claims for a constitutional protection of life – from the moment of conception – feminist actors chose to strategically drop the legalization of abortion. Instead, they gathered their forces to deal with other matters. The vagueness of the article guaranteeing men’s and women’s exercise of sexual and reproductive rights also reflected these disagreements. It did not establish *what* these rights were (Rousseau 2011: 23). In a report from *Catholics for the Right to Decide–Bolivia*, an organization working for SRHR, the constitutional advances are similarly described as an outcome of successful strategic thinking (Monje n.d.). Feminists established a broad-based alliance to gather strength behind a common proposal and affect public opinion. The alliance consisted of a heterogeneous set of organizations working for diverse interests (youth groups, sexual diversity organizations, indigenous women’s movements, domestic workers organizations, unions, etc.).

Katia Uriona Gamarra (2010), in the discipline of media and communication studies, has a more critical perspective on the new Constitution and the political process. In what could be described as a feminist political manifesto, she argues that several advances for women’s rights have been made. However, discrimination on account of ethnicity has been given precedence to the detriment of gender discrimination. In the Constitution’s recognition of indigenous rights, she warns against a possible discordance with the recognized rights of women.

The tension between women from indigenous organizations and women from the feminist movement can partly be explained by conflicts that played out in the 1990s. Mestizo feminists from the academy or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took control over discourses and the funds on how to explain and work with “gender inequality”. Controversies arose, as the mestizo feminists were perceived as privileged and as reinforcing the continuing marginalization of indigenous women (Díaz Carrasco 2014: 147; see also Paulson 2002; Paulson and Calla 2000).

The sociologist Marianela Díaz Carrasco (2014) interviewed Aymara and Quechua women in prominent positions within the state or indigenous movements affiliated to MAS in the years 2006–2014. From the Aymara and Quechua women’s perspectives, hegemonic feminism belonged to a knowledge assemblage that reinforced domination and colonial structures of thinking. The women perceived hegemonic feminism as far removed from their own ways of living, as grounded in western rationalities and the

project of individualism. For them, hegemonic feminism provoked a separation or confrontation with their male comrades. Instead, the Aymara and Quechua women advanced a decolonization of gender through the project of depatriarchalization (*despatriarcalización*). This project rests on the principle of *chacha-warmi*, which brings out the complementary forces of masculinity and femininity and the need for harmonious balance.³⁵ Díaz Carrasco (2014) observes though that the project's concrete politics includes claims from various strands of feminism.³⁶

The political scientists Mala Htun and Juan Pablo Ossa (2013) argue that the fact that the MAS Party came to power served to unite women that previously had not cooperated. "The government demonstrated strong *machista* tendencies and took measures that denied the importance of women's rights. At the same time, rising reports of gender-related political assault fortified gender solidarity" (Htun and Ossa 2013: 10). Urban feminist groups and *Bartolina Sisa* (the peasant union for women) joined forces. This resulted in major reforms that have effectively increased women's participation in political spaces, as is outlined in Chapter Seven (see also Rousseau 2011).

At CYRI where the fieldwork was done, the staff recognized that the government had introduced several new laws that strengthened the legal framework especially for women's and children's rights. Some of these are detailed in the thematic chapters. The staff stated, however, that the government showed no political will to actually implement the laws in practice, since no resources were allocated for this.

In recent years the legal framework has continued to undergo major changes. It elucidates the dynamism of the sexual-political landscape in Bolivia. In 2014, when I did my fieldwork, abortion was illegal except in two situations. Either when the woman's health or life was in danger, or if the pregnancy was a result of a sexual assault or incest. In these cases, the

³⁵ See Harris (2000) for anthropological understandings of *chacha-warmi*, gender complementarity and *pachamama*.

³⁶ The concept of "depatriarchalization" (*despatriarcalización*) was part of the MAS government's project of building the plurinational state. Social scientist Jenny Ybarnegaray Ortiz (2011: 165) attributes the idea to the vocal and well-known anarchist-feminist collective *Mujeres Creando* (in English: Women Creating) when they, criticizing the government's unidimensional focus on decolonization stated, "There is no decolonization without depatriarchalization" ("*No hay descolonización sin despatriarcalización*"). For an account of how the concept was used by the Vice Ministry of Decolonization, see for example the document by Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo (2014).

woman had to obtain judicial authorization to proceed.³⁷ In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled against the need for judicial authorization. This paved the way for the government, three years later, to expand the scope for legal abortions when it revised the whole penal code (IPPF/RHO, n.d.). The new penal code stated that abortions were legal before the eighth week for students or women who were responsible for the care of children, elderly or disabled people. For small girls and adolescents, abortions were legal irrespective of the stage of pregnancy, provided that other predefined criteria were met (Molina 2017). The law changes were met by hunger strikes and protest marches, mainly organized by Protestant churches and Catholics (Valdés 2017; Aliaga 2017). After 42 days of being in force, the new penal code was annulled at the president's request (P. Ortiz 2018).

The many laws and processes in motion demonstrate a sexual-political landscape undergoing rapid changes. The landscape constituted a vibrant site for the reproduction, contestation and negotiation of the social order – in short, a site of meaning-making. Sexuality-related norms, values, laws and policies regulate and shape matters of the most intimate and private nature – at least they are often framed as such. Therefore they constitute an important component in comprehending citizen/state relations. The next chapter outlines the theoretical framework and the choice to locate the study within an organization working with SRHR and amongst youth.

³⁷ Authorization was very difficult to obtain since the combination of cultural stigmatization, prejudices, and strict penal code severely circumvented approbation. Furthermore, even with approval, a woman/girl might not find a doctor willing to perform the procedure.

3. Theoretical framework and methodology

Embodied citizenship

Citizenship and nationhood

The interest in citizenship is not just in the narrow formalistic meaning of having the right to carry a specific passport. It addresses an overall concept encapsulating the relationship between the individual, state and society. (Yuval-Davis 1997b: 4)

New *actors, sites and scales* of citizenship have emerged that complicate the ways in which citizenship is enacted not as only membership but also as claims. (Isin 2009: 370)

The dissertation's theoretical framework is developed in relation to the concept of citizenship to highlight the interconnections between politics, power and ideals with people's sense of belonging in everyday life. The framework furthers the understanding of how inclusions and exclusions at different levels of society are produced and interrelated and their consequences for people's meaning-making. It is inspired by a variety of theoretical sources. It pursues a general line of inquiry by anthropologists whom, as Miguel Díaz-Barriga and Margaret Dorsey (2018: 2) hold, have furthered the theorization of citizenship through their analytical and empirical attention to the gap between "citizenship as sets of rights and lived citizenship."

To start with, the theoretical framework is informed by how citizenship theorists have demonstrated the gendered, racialized and sexualized constructions of citizenship (see for example Pateman 2001; D. Richardson 2017; E. H. Richardson and Turner 2001; Weeks 1998; Waylen 1996). Citizenship theorists have illuminated how models of ideal citizens exclude some or many from ever fulfilling the requisites for reaching full citizen-

ship. One can speak of a discrepancy between formal rights and the substantial possibilities people have of exercising these (see Young 1990; 1997). The sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis writes about the “stratification which exists in each country, from the ‘super citizen’ who fully belongs, via those who have full formal citizenship status but are subject to economic and/or racial discrimination; denizens, who have only part of these citizenship rights; the sub-citizens – refugees or asylum seekers – who have no legal right for employment and no security rights; to the un-citizens – the undocumented migrants” (Yuval-Davis 2011b: 157–58). And in a study on nationhood in the Bolivian Andes, the anthropologist Andrew Canessa argues: “Full citizenship ... remains elusive for the more indian, the less urban, and for women” (Canessa 2005: 16).

A common line of critique against citizenship theory comes from researchers working in other geographical-cultural contexts than the global north. They criticize the understanding of self that underlies the citizenship theory that is predominant in Western societies. The individual as a western, atomistic construct speaking the language of rights and entitlement has become a punching bag for criticism levelled at liberal and neoliberal versions of citizenship (Lazar 2008; D. Richardson 2017; Beasley and Bacchi 2012).

Nonetheless, according to Postero (2006: 223), the political discourse has increasingly turned to the language of rights in many Latin American countries. Thereby it diverges from earlier claims made within a discourse of race and class. She holds that “citizenship is the framework by which social conflicts and power relations are negotiated in modern democracies like Bolivia” (Postero 2006: 223). Thus, by combining the fields of citizenship studies and the study of social divisions, this dissertation analyses the gap between “citizenship as sets of rights and lived citizenship” (Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey 2018: 2). Through paying attention to how people manage, negotiate and live social hierarchies in everyday life and by analysing the productiveness of social hierarchies and their interconnectedness to nationhood, the meaning and content of citizenship in everyday life can be brought to the surface.

The dissertation’s theoretical framework relies heavily on the scholarship of Yuval-Davis. She has recurrently attended to how the production of difference and sameness is generated and played out in political projects of constructing a sense of belonging. The conceptualization of the nation-state as having a corresponding border for the state-governed area and the nation with its people is in practice but “a fiction” (Yuval-Davis 1997a:

11). Nevertheless, this fiction is kept alive in nationalistic projects. Therefore, a collectivity set out to govern needs to legitimize, “naturalize”, its position. “This naturalization is at the roots of the inherent connection that exists between nationalism and racism” (Yuval-Davis 1997a: 11). Yuval-Davis argues that gender relations have had a crucial – albeit often neglected in studies – role in nationalisms. In constructions of nationhood “gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities” (Yuval-Davis 1997a: 39). The overview of Bolivian citizenship relations in Chapter Two shows that the country’s heterogeneous population was viewed as an obstacle for the goal of reaching modernity. Chapter Seven outlines furthermore how the production of gendered ideals at the intersection of race and class have served both historical as well as current multicultural projects of nationhood. Both these historical and current projects are important backdrops for understanding present social hierarchies. This is elucidated in Chapter Seven.

For Yuval-Davis (2011b: 2), “Politics of belonging have come to occupy the heart of the political agenda almost everywhere.” She (2011b: 10) continues that they “comprise specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging to particular collectivity/ies which are themselves being constructed in these projects”. Building on T.H. Marshall’s famous definition of citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community” (Marshall 1997: 300), Yuval-Davis (1999) argues for an understanding of citizenship as multi-layered. In her take, multi-layered citizenship engages different levels both within national borders (local, regional, national), as well as across them in supranational communities. Similarly, in her study of citizenship practices in El Alto, anthropologist Sian Lazar (2008) holds forth the importance of the local level in understanding the relationship between the state and its citizens. Lazar’s study has been a valuable source of inspiration and analytical insights on the meaning of citizenship in everyday life and how *alteños*’ relationship to the state is mediated at the local level through associations and embodied practices.

In line with Yuval-Davis (1999) and Lazar (2008) I find that people’s sense of belonging develops in relation to different societal levels. I have chosen to delimit the scope of the analysis to the interrelationships of levels *within* national borders and, furthermore, to focus on the local and national levels. The dissertation offers only a few hasty excursions across national boundaries. Moreover, Yuval-Davis (2011b: 70; 1997a: 11) has insistently

emphasised how these memberships at different levels are also shaped by various kinds of belonging at the crosscuts of social hierarchies. I take her argument to heart and integrate an intersectional perspective to the dissertation's theoretical framework. As will be shown, an intersectional perspective brings power relations and junctures to the fore. But before detailing the analytical productiveness of the intersectional perspective, in the next section I discuss how the body and embodiment relate to the meaning-making, sociality and practice of citizenship.

Bodies and citizenship

"Is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?" Carol Lee Bacchi and Chris Beasley (2002) ask in the title of their article. The political scientists delineate two focal ways in which citizens are defined in relation to bodies in political thinking. Either you are controlled by your body, making you a lesser citizen, or you are in control of your body, making you a full citizen. Within this framework, embodiment and citizenship are difficult to unite. Bacchi and Beasley (2002: 330) problematize this model of political subjectivity and the assumption of "mind controlling body" that dominate citizenship theory. They challenge the mind-body split and the ethos of neoliberalism by proposing the ethic of "'social flesh' to capture a vision of interacting, material, embodied subjects", and "draw attention to how fleshly materiality highlights intersubjectivity and interdependence" (Bacchi and Beasley 2002: 330; see also Beasley and Bacchi 2012). Moreover, they open up for new ways of viewing social change and what could count as political. Instead of focusing on large-scale events, they urge us to pay attention to what happens at the micro level. Only in this way can we more fully understand social change (Beasley and Bacchi 2012:115; cf. Oinas, Onodera, and Suurpää 2018).

One of the ways I engage with Beasley and Bacchi's (2012) call is by making use of the anthropologist Nancy Munn's (2003) conceptualization of bodies as "mobile spatial fields", as making space when they move about. In my analysis of the ethnographic material, I find Munn's (2003) concept analytically productive in understanding how micro practices in everyday life can be seen as political activities and expressions of agency. Combining this with Bacchi and Beasley's "social flesh", the theoretical framework puts forth a fuller, fleshier version of what it means to be a citizen. Instead of a "political subjectivity ... equated with disembodied rationality" (Bacchi and Beasley 2002: 338), this understanding engages with

material co-existence, has a basis in lived experience and everyday practices, and recognizes the interdependent production of subjectivity. Thus, Bacchi and Beasley include more that matters in the very meaning of being a citizen and the politics of citizenship.³⁸

Matter *matters* in another sense as well. For the philosopher Judith Butler (2011), power produces materiality. What matters with matter is produced through the course of time. It remains as residue from the processes in which matter has taken its shape. Materiality is therefore produced as matter of significance. The materialization of a body signifies that it is viable and intelligible. Outside this intelligibility, abject bodies fail to matter. In Butler's words,

bodies that matter is not an idle pun, for to be material means to materialize, where the principle of that materialization is precisely what "matters" about that body, its very intelligibility. In this sense, to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where "to matter" means at once "to materialize" and "to mean". (Butler 2011: 7)

In line with Butler's perspective, the power-laden processes of the production of materiality inform my analysis and understanding of how bodies materialize. However, in Emily Russell's (2011) work of literary analysis, I find an interesting objection to Butler's (2011) account of the dematerialized nature of specifically abject bodies. According to Russell (2011), the materiality of abject bodies is quite the opposite. Instead of being dematerialized abject bodies that have failed to matter, Russell (2011: 15) argues that these failed bodies rather have "an excess of materiality". For Russell (2011), bodies perceived as failed or abnormal expose the construction of the body politic where U.S. citizenship is tied to notions of individuals as able-bodied and independent. Abnormal bodies are so to speak overloaded with materiality. And this "excess" of materiality is what matters with them (cf. Howe 2011: 287). Russell (2011: 15) argues:

³⁸ Others have found Bacchi and Beasley's work inspiring as well. Wiseman (2014) draws on their work in her dissertation in sociology. Based on interviews with young disabled people in Scotland, Wiseman studies the embodied experiences of citizenship in everyday life. She started with the idea of studying rights, but the informants' narratives redirected her to the framework of citizenship instead. Their embodied experiences, transcending the public/private divide but often shaped by experiences from their "private lives", encompassed broad notions and feelings of inclusions/exclusions, participation, and belonging. Her study strengthens the idea of the utility of citizenship as a framework to capture embodied experiences and inclusions and exclusions in relation to different societal levels.

Corporeality is not distributed evenly across the normal and the abnormal. Instead, the materialization of the viable body, in as much as it relies upon abjected bodies, allows for a kind of escape from the physical body that is only possible for the unremarkable norm.

Thus, pondering what constitutes an abject body in Butler's (2011) sense, it is a body that fails the citational practices that follow from regulatory norms of heterosexual logic. The viable body, contrariwise, materializes through mastering the script of citational practices. In Russell's (2011) sense, the viable – intelligible body – loses the weight of the materiality of the flesh. In materializing the norm, the body blends in. It merges in its successful mastering of the script. In one of Butler's meanings, it still matters. It matters in the sense that it is intelligible. Its intelligibility makes its surface smooth; no explanations are needed (see also Howe 2011). The abject body on the other hand expands in materiality. It stands out and calls for explanation. For Russell (2011: 136):

This paradox lies at the heart of embodied citizenship, in which the very characteristics that exclude people marked by disability, gender, race, and sexuality from full participation in the foundational logics of citizenship are the same properties by which we understand their national participation.

In this dissertation I follow the paths of Butler (2011) and Russell (2011) and suggest that bodies materialize through ideals and norms that make them matter. They also materialize by failing the same ideals and norms; this failure is what comes to matter with these bodies.

Russell's (2011: 15) take that the "material body becomes a sticky, thick property that attaches itself to those conceived as different" strikes a chord with Ahmed's writing about the work emotions do. Ahmed (2014), a scholar in race and cultural studies, ponders that in feeling comfortable one's body merges with the environment. Boundaries between different entities dissolve. For her, the "disappearance of the surface is instructive: in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies. The sinking feeling involves a seamless space, or a space where you can't see the 'stitches' between bodies" (Ahmed 2014: 148). Accordingly, bodies that do not follow the rules feel a sense of discomfort, the body "feels out of place" (Ahmed 2014: 148). In her take, bodies outside the norms come to increasingly feel their surface. In analysing the ethnographical material, Russell's and Ahmed's lines of thinking are signalled

with cues that describe bodies as out of place, overloaded, visible, marked, or merging, blending in and invisible.

Russell (2011) develops the concept of “embodied citizenship” to capture the overload of materiality that weighs abject bodies down. It “stands for the unacknowledged embodiment of all citizens, but more directly calls upon the ideological weight attached to bodily difference as the overdetermining force of political participation for those marked as different” (Russell 2011: 4). Her thinking and concept of embodied citizenship, together with Ahmed’s (2014) phenomenological take on what emotions do, are parts of the theoretical framework. To this I add an intersectional perspective for the analytical attention it pays to power and social hierarchies. These are essential for understanding citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life.

Intersectionality

I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. (Lorde 1984: 120)

The observation that critical engagement with race and gender resides primarily at the periphery of the discipline points to a deeper and embedded concern: that anthropology remains preoccupied with notions of binary difference, the effects of which are far reaching. (Henne 2018: 1)

In an overview article on anthropology and intersectionality theory of gender and race, Kathryn Henne (2018: 1) opines that despite the fact that “anthropology has a long-standing commitment to overcoming ethnocentrism and to disrupting beliefs of cultural and ethnic supremacy /.../ critical discussions of gender and race, including how they operate within a broader milieu of social difference, remain largely outside mainstream anthropology.”

To remedy this problem and better understand young people’s experiences and negotiations in everyday life involving social hierarchies, the analysis of the material gathered is informed by an intersectional perspective. That is, in order to analyse the workings of power and social divisions, specific junctions of intersecting categories have to be considered. This contrasts with analysing social categorizations in isolation, adding one

analysis on top of the other. Adding for example an analysis of race to class shadows how people experience the concrete operation of interlocking categories that structure inequalities in their everyday lives.

Various knowledge and social justice projects from the 1960s and forward have prepped the terrain for intersectional thinking. US black feminism, writings and activism of women of colour, cultural studies and the feminist critiques of it – to mention a few – established the intellectual groundwork before the ideas became encapsulated by the specific term intersectionality (Collins 2015; Yuval-Davis 2011b: 3), attributed to the legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1991).

The sociologist Kathy Davis (2011) suggests that one important explanation behind the swooping success of intersectionality lies in its vagueness. I too have many times found intersectionality unclear, for example regarding how to carry out an analysis. However, just as Davis argues, I found its vagueness compelling in the way that it opens up for its very strength. “It encourages complexity and avoids premature closure” (Davis 2011: 52). Since “power is everywhere” and productive (Foucault 1998: 93), the question of how power is relevant should be open to new answers along the way. As Yuval-Davis (2011a: 160) points out, “the question of how many social divisions exist in every historical context is not necessarily fixed and is a product of political struggle as well as of an analytical process.”

In the making of difference, power is central. The intersectional perspective pays due attention to power. Indeed, “Intersectionality is inextricably linked to an analysis of power” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013: 797). As I will tie together the understanding of young people’s experiences and negotiations of social hierarchies with the meaning of citizenship and how it is lived in everyday life, the intersectional focus on the production of subjectivities and interconnections with political projects further underwrites the choice. For Yuval-Davis (2006b: 205), the intersectional perspective centres on how social divisions “relate to political and subjective constructions of identities”. However, despite the intersectional perspective’s roots in standpoint theory (Choo and Ferree 2010: 132–33; Yuval-Davis 2011b: 3), Yuval-Davis (2006b: 203; 200) insists, it is important not to conflate “vectors of discrimination and difference and identity groupings”, equating “positionings, identities and values.”

In a similar vein, Paulina De los Reyes and Diana Mulinari (2005) express concern that the potential of the intersectional perspective could be swallowed up by a one-sided focus on the political imperative of identity

politics and recognition of differences. Instead, the economic historian and sociologist argue: “We see the potency of intersectionality first and foremost as the development of a theoretical perspective that connects power and inequality to the individual’s ability to act as a subject within the framework of the structures of society, institutional practices and prevailing ideologies” (De los Reyes and Mulinari 2005: 16). Indeed, the fact that the dissertation’s theoretical framework also includes the integration of practices at the micro level to explain social changes furthermore warrants a consideration of individuals’ agentic possibilities. Within the field of youth studies, the anthropologist Deborah Durham (2008) warns against equating agency with practices of opposition. She cautions that practices of agreement can also be expressions of agency. And the anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner (2006) develops an approach with agency as fully embedded, born out of its local logic, and structured by its surrounding. So how can the production of differences, social divisions and the possibilities for agency be studied?

Dorthe Staunæs (2003), in the discipline of education, argues for attending to the *doing* to discern the entangled relationships between social categories and production of subjectivities. In doings one can see the available subject positions at hand; the negotiations, ambivalence and the ruptures in everyday life that may open up new possibilities and fissures to exploit. Sociologists Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker (1995: 9) likewise focus on the individual level; they argue for looking at the production of difference “as an ongoing interactional accomplishment”. Social categories are situationally and simultaneously experienced and produced by individuals.

Staunæs (2003) and West and Fenstermaker’s (1995) perspectives speak to the dissertation’s theoretical point of departure that structural forces are not merely absorbed at the site of individual bodies. They are also negotiated in everyday practices, throughout and across the course of life. However, the importance and recognition of contextual agency should not overshadow the fact that people’s experiences *remain* as residues, as embodied memories of the production of difference. These residues persist as parts of people’s subjectivities and their sense of self, and in how their and others’ bodies come to materialize.

In understanding these materializations and the power relations that lie behind them, temporal notions and age need more consideration in intersectional analyses in general. Race, class and gender are often pointed out

as the most important or common parameters in studies of social divisions.³⁹ Sociologist Jeff Hearn (2011: 94) contends that age, together with disability “are the most neglected of the ‘big six’ social divisions”, in discussing studies on masculinities and intersectionality. This is true despite the fact that “age is an unusual social division, in its apparent universality yet constant change” (Hearn 2011: 94).

A study encompassing youth highlights the argument for the importance of attending to age and temporal notions in order to understand the different guises of power. Additionally, there are other reasons for why youth are a fruitful group to study.

Youth studies

Why youth, how youth?

Youth are a critical indicator of the state of a nation.
(Honwana 2012: 3)

Why is the study of youth relevant, and how can we understand the concept of youth?

Three anthropologists have the floor. For Alcinda Honwana (2012: 3), through the study of young people one gains an “understanding [of] the social, political, economic, and cultural concerns of adults. The two generations are entangled in complex processes of construction and reconstruction, the making and remaking of society” (see also Flacks 2007). Durham (2004; 2000) argues likewise for the relevance of studying young people to grasp societal relations and political processes at large. For her,

Youth as a historically constructed social category, as a relational concept, and youth as a group of actors, form an especially sharp lens /.../. Through this lens, relations and constructions of power are refracted, recombined, and reproduced, as people make claims on each other based on age. (Durham 2000: 114)

³⁹ See for example Hearn (2011: 89); Phoenix (2011: 145); Yuval-Davis (2011a: 159); Davis (2011) and P.-I. Villa (2011: 176).

In a study on youth, consumerism and social divisions, Jennifer Cole (2008: 100) states that because of young people's structural position "betwixt and between", they fruitfully illuminate changes in how social differentiation is made. Since young people don't have the same responsibilities as adults, they can more easily take on changes. Cole (2008: 101) continues, "Because of [their] association with mobility, youth is also the age group in which the tension between reproduction and change is most likely to be visible. Consequently, youth very often becomes a flash point for wider social anxieties".

Thus, these anthropologists argue for the study of youth because of their relational position. Studying young people allows us to untangle processes of power and the political, social and cultural forces that craft and instigate changes in societies at large. These arguments align neatly with the dissertational themes of studying social hierarchies and their effects in order to capture social changes at large, together with the changes that political projects of nationhood might bring about.

Studies already done on youth in Latin America at large and specifically within Bolivia have informed this study and the discussions to come.

Latin American studies on youth and politics

There are a large and growing number of studies in Latin America on young people and political participation.⁴⁰ However, according to the sociologists Anna-Britt Coe and Darcie Vandegrift's (2015: 146) overview, few studies are located in the Andean and Central American countries. Furthermore, they identify a need for more studies from an intersectional perspective (Coe and Vandegrift 2015: 147). The present study makes a contribution in both these regards by its location in the Bolivian Andes and its intersectional analyses of social hierarchies.

There is a long tradition in Latin America of studying young people as leaders of social and political transformations (Coe and Vandegrift 2015: 137).⁴¹ In this dissertation and particularly in Chapter Eight, I develop the

⁴⁰ See the overview of Coe and Vandegrift (2015); the anthologies of Cubides C. et al. (2015) and Alvarado and Vommario (2010); Reguillo (2003; 2008).

⁴¹ The anthropologist Carles Feixa (2010) traces the origins of the theoretical concept of generation as renewal, to the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. Young people were believed to have a "vital sensibility" (Feixa 2010: 13; see also Oliart and Feixa 2012: 331). The concept of "generation" is frequently used, and as Coe and Vandegrift hold, the "centrality of the concept in Spanish-language youth studies orients the field

point of understanding young people's agency contextually instead of seeing them as inherent vehicles of change.

Nonetheless, a result that coincides with this dissertation's is that "combating ageism becomes an implicit framework through which citizenship rights are claimed", which Coe and Vandegrift (2015: 144) find in their overview. In my material, adult-centrism was highly pertinent for understanding the positioning of young people and the relational field for political action (discussed in Chapter Six and Chapter Eight).

In relation to citizenship, researchers argue that young people have been instrumental in creating new practices of citizenships and/or citizenships. They furthermore note that young people's modalities of political engagement have not been recognized as political (Honwana 2012; Oliart and Feixa 2012: 340; Oinas 2015).⁴² The concept "cultural citizenship" reflects this and is important in Latin American works on youth and political participation (Reguillo 2003; Coe and Vandegrift 2015: 138–39). It refocuses from young people's (lack of) inclusion in formal political spaces to a broader understanding of political participation. It encompasses new political spaces and new practices like cultural and artistic expressions. For example in a study of young Aymara rappers in El Alto, the sociologist Juan Y. Mollericona (2007) sees a politicization of everyday life: the rappers *do* citizenship through their lyrics. My study builds upon these theoretical insights and probes the same path. It discusses practices in everyday life as examples of political engagement and argues for a broader understanding of the meaning of citizenship.

Looking specifically at youth studies in Bolivia, some tendencies can be identified. Of eight studies carried out in El Alto, six related to the themes of politics and democracy. For social scientist Yuri F. Tórrez (2013: 123), this illustrates the significant role played by the city in the development of young people's political identities. The present study supports previously gleaned insights of the importance of El Alto. It moreover sheds further light by benefitting from a comparative gaze on La Paz.

In several studies on youth and political participation, the fact that a majority of informants are male is left without analytical consideration. The studies project an image of the politically active youth as a male youth (see the studies by Tórrez et al. 2009; Mollericona 2007; Samanamud A.,

toward a strong association between youth agency and social change" (Coe and Vandegrift 2015: 137).

⁴² See also Oinas, Onodera, and Suurpää (2018); Alvarado and Vommaro (2010: 9–10); Feixa (2010).

Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. 2007). This study broadens the picture by gendering the perspective. Furthermore, it contributes a stronger analytical focus on age to discern why and how youth is constructed (discussed in Chapter Six and Chapter Eight).⁴³

Other studies on young people in Bolivia focus on belongings to the nation through fashion and consumption practices (see Van Vleet 2005)⁴⁴ and nation-making through schooling. Anthropologist Aurolyn Luykx (1999) and Lazar (2010) look at the prominent place schools hold in state projects of nationhood. Lazar (2010) argues that children are taught a type of embodied political agency that characterizes adults' active citizenship (see also Lazar 2008). I follow Lazar's (2010; 2008) thrust by focusing on practices in everyday life and embodiment in relation to citizenship.⁴⁵ Through focusing on young people's organizational engagement that can be described as voluntary compared to school attendance, the study can fruitfully contribute to our understanding of young people's own meaning making and negotiations of their place in society.

Methodology, methods and material

The construction of a field

The study began with a general and broad interest in studying the body as a nexus for playing out power relations. I was interested in how societal "messages" – ideals, norms and values – are taken up by people, and, furthermore, how they are received, negotiated and contested, as well as the interrelationships between these "messages" and how bodies are felt and viewed upon in terms of their different possibilities and limitations.

An initial thought was that a study of youth and sex education would more clearly illuminate how societal norms and values are transmitted, received and negotiated. The choices to study youth and sex education were in this sense instrumental for studying the general theme of interest – the body as a site for power relations. As Honwana (2012), Durham (2004; 2000) and Cole (2008) argue, young people's relational position unravels processes of power and societal forces at large.

⁴³ See especially Chapter Six and Chapter Eight.

⁴⁴ Chapter Seven follows this line of analysis; it discusses young women's use of fashion to negotiate and claim belongings.

⁴⁵ The dissertation regards the important role of schools in discussing sex education and teenage pregnancies in Chapter Six.

These initial thoughts subsequently guided the methodological decision to locate the fieldwork at an organization working with young people, sex education and related sexual and reproductive rights. The assumption was that it would facilitate my point of entry to meet with young people that otherwise could be difficult to establish contact with and to talk about sexuality-related issues commonly perceived as sensitive.

I was simultaneously aware of the political changes taking place in Bolivia and how the question of indigeneity, racism and discrimination were salient themes at the national political level. Would these topics impinge somehow on young people's conceptions of and relationships to theirs and others bodies? I found the Bolivian government's "process of change" very interesting. But I was clear from the start that it would serve as a backdrop to illuminate the workings of power, both historical and present, in relation to the body.⁴⁶

Another impetus for locating the fieldwork at an organization was the belief that this could deepen my understanding of that backdrop. The government's work and projects could be reflected upon from the site of an organization that also was active in the political arena. And thus the general outlines of the study were drawn.

The organization

I chose to do fieldwork at the organization CYRI – the Centre for Youth Rights and Information – because one of its primary target groups was youth. This Bolivian non-profit organization worked extensively with young people with the aim of developing them to assume leadership in SRHR issues. Through their work I gathered that I could meet and get to know young people. I was assisted by a Swedish NGO in establishing contact with the organization.

CYRI worked in different ways. The national office was located in La Paz and drew up the major guidelines for activities. The staff worked to influence laws and policies by cooperating with and influencing political decision-makers. They did research and developed different projects to further the goal, focusing specifically on "vulnerable groups". CYRI had local offices which operated clinics in different parts of the country. The clinics provided medical and clinical services related to sexual and reproductive health at a comparatively low price, and they disseminated information

⁴⁶ The theoretical framework of citizenship, let alone embodied citizenship, would come in at a much later stage of the study, while I was in the midst of writing and still trying to make sense of the material, the themes and the connections I saw.

about sexual and reproductive health and rights. The organization relied on funding from abroad, receiving support from various international financiers, and it cooperated with local, national and international organizations. It had been active for over two decades at the time of the fieldwork. It had thus managed to survive for a longer period than many other organizations of its kind.

Other methodological reflections included the benefits of doing a comparative study. I conjectured that in doing fieldwork in two different local contexts with young people possibly differently positioned in social hierarchies, I would be able to more clearly discern processes of making difference and the particularities of local contexts of norms and values.⁴⁷ However, practical considerations in bringing along two small children on fieldwork guided the decision to live in one city only. From the start I had found La Paz interesting, crowned as the political capital of the country and hosting the parliament and government. Based on superficial knowledge that its neighbour city El Alto was construed differently from La Paz, I gathered that the cities could be fruitful for a study with comparative ambitions. Since CYRI had local offices in both cities and their adjacent location allowed for commuting, I decided to do fieldwork at their youth spaces in both La Paz and El Alto.

Soon after settling in in La Paz where I would live throughout my fieldwork, I became aware of just how different La Paz and El Alto and *paceños/paceñas* respectively *alteños/alteñas* were imagined to be. This had implications for the young people, which I discuss in Chapter Four.

The study was thus situated in an urban context – but it is not a study of urbanity. The large cities in the Bolivian context are rather small in comparison with the large cities in other Latin American countries. Nowadays El Alto outnumbers La Paz, having previously been an outgrowth and part of the latter city.⁴⁸ In previous studies on young people in El Alto, the portrayal of the city has been bleak. The neglect, marginalization and discrimination of its inhabitants loom large (see for example Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. 2007). The young *alteños* and *alteñas* I met painted a more positive picture. They felt that things were definitely improving.

⁴⁷ Initially the plan was to conduct the study in La Paz and Santa Cruz to examine how differently the cities were construed regarding history, the composition of their populations and the roles they played in national politics.

⁴⁸ According to the last census from the year 2012, the municipality of La Paz had the country's third largest population with 766,468 people, the municipality of El Alto came second with 848,452 people and Santa Cruz was the largest with 1,454,539 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015b; 2015b).

The fact that the city has its own university as of 2000 makes a difference both for the city's identity and for young people with intentions to pursue studies (see Lazar 2008: 51–52). But they also talked about other changes that pointed to the development of a specific identity of this “young” city. Whereas La Paz had its famous zebras (people dressed in zebra costumes) to work the streets for increased traffic safety, El Alto instead starred *El Ekucito* (a mix between a *kusillo*⁴⁹ and a harlequin). The female traffic guards dressed *de pollera* was a new feature during the time of my field-work (Rivas 2014), and one could see “My city is changing” sprayed with graffiti paint on walls (see figure 5). And the entrepreneur behind one of the finest hotels had a large billboard that declared the city's advances. For him this included its first elevator and escalator.

These were some of the methodological and practical deliberations and characteristics of the cities that actively construed the field. Furthermore – and most important to bear in mind – the work, structure or objectives of CYRI were not actively *made* into a part of the study. Nonetheless, the organizational context is part of the material.

The sociologist Marc Flacks (2007: 72) for example suggests that researchers studying young people should include if, and how, young people's self-conceptualization is affected by institutional frameworks and practices. This suggestion raises an important point in relation to the study's material. CYRI was embedded within global discourses on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as working with normative models. Furthermore, it worked with youth as one of its target groups. How these different circumstances may have affected their self-conceptualization as young people, their position and outlook, is a question that is important to consider regarding the material and results. For example, Chapter Eight details the processes behind a growing recognition of young people as political subjects and bearers of rights. As stated earlier, researchers working geographically outside the global north criticize the understanding of self, the atomistic individual speaking the language of rights and entitlement, which underlies liberal and neoliberal versions of citizenship. In Lazar's (2008) study of citizenship practices in El Alto, she argues that these notions of the self do not find their kindred spirit in non-western societies. Furthermore, “such a conceptualization relies

⁴⁹ To see a *kusillo* mask, visit the online-mask museum *Second face* on web page: <https://www.maskmuseum.org/mask/peru-kusillo-1/>. According to the information on the web page, “The *kusillo* is an Andean clown character that combines attributes of an insect, shepherd, and devil, although he is considered a benevolent trickster” (‘Second Face’ n.d.).

upon an understanding of the self as a rights- or interests-bearing individual, a ‘commoditized’ version of the self” (Lazar 2008: 23–24). Thus, the organizational framework, together with other organizations in Bolivia, I might add, may very well interplay with the processes underlying the emergence of youth as rights bearers, as described in Chapter Eight.

It is however also important to bear in mind that even though the goals and messages of CYRI certainly played a part in shaping the young people’s perspectives, the young people also found resonance in the organization’s work and perspectives. This both motivated them to seek out the organization’s activities and to stay put as time went by.

At the organization

I spent the first weeks of my twelve-month stay at the national office to get an overview of CYRI’s work, mission and structure. I then relocated to its local offices in La Paz and El Alto, or more specifically, what I refer to as their “youth spaces”. Every local office and major clinic of CYRI hosted a locale specifically planned for young people. These were located in close proximity but spatially separate from the clinics. At the youth space, open every day from morning to evening, young people could watch television, access Internet and use computers, play games or just hang out. Employed facilitators organized activities, taught and disseminated information about sexual and reproductive health and rights, and they developed projects together with the young people who visited the youth space regularly.

On the very first day at the organization, I was informed about and signed the organization’s rules of conduct and ethical guidelines that regulated the work with young people. The ones I met in the youth spaces ranged from fourteen to twenty years, with the exceptions of two twelve-year-olds and a few young men in the age range from twenty-one to twenty-five. I had very little contact with the two twelve-year-olds for two reasons. Firstly, due to their young age I chose to not actively try to “include” them in the study. Secondly, both of them visited the youth space only a few times. I had also decided beforehand not to interview anyone under the age of sixteen due to ethical considerations. However, one fourteen-year-old girl was very persistent in wanting to be interviewed. I acquiesced to her request after having received her mother’s written consent. When meeting the different groups of young people at the youth spaces the first times I introduced myself and the study and asked for their permission to spend time with them in the youth space. I explained that participation was vol-

untary. In order to protect the anonymity of the people I met during fieldwork, all names are pseudonyms. I also regularly discussed my study and ethical considerations in relation to the youngsters together with the staff.

The youth spaces thus constituted the main bases of the fieldwork. I divided my year-long stay, and spent about half the time in each, starting in La Paz to subsequently change to El Alto. I also visited a few other organizations with activities for young people on related themes. Nonetheless, the lion's share of the material comes from CYRI.

The young people

The youth spaces thus provided me with an entry point and a base from which I could meet and interact with young people living in the cities. I attended the organizational activities together with them. I accompanied them to schools to which they had been invited to disseminate information. And I simply spent time with the youngsters, hanging out in the youth space. They came from different neighbourhoods of the cities. Some lived close by while others travelled across different areas, changing up to two or three minibuses, to reach the youth space.

The young people found the space in different ways. Some of them had come out of curiosity, often after a facilitator had visited their school to disseminate information. Others had friends who had dragged them there. Both the young *paceños/as* and *alteños/as* I met generally complained of the lack of spaces where young people could just hang out. The youth space, open every day from morning to evening, provided such a space. Some of them described it as a second home.

The question of how young people had found CYRI also raises the question of who did not. For example, one of the facilitators, Emilio, talked about a project they had had to attract a new group of people to the organization – young people in a “vulnerable situation” (*situación de vulnerabilidad*). He explained that a lot of the youngsters had dropped off the project. The reason, he stated, was that the things they talked about at CYRI had not caught their attention (*llamaban la atención*). He singled out the shoe-shiners as an occupational grouping that had been particularly difficult to attract. None of them returned.⁵⁰ This gives an indication that the young

⁵⁰ One could see the shoe-shiners lining up in rows at particular sites of the different cities, offering their services to passers-by. With the piece of cloth covering their faces to avoid recognition, they were notoriously connected to stigmatizing discourses of criminality, drug addiction, and severe poverty. Seemingly, they had other concerns and priorities than the organization.

people who regularly visited CYRI were in certain respects better off economically than others.

In literature on young people and political subjectivity in El Alto, the authors establish a strong connection between the young people's Aymara heritage and their political engagements and projected goals (see Mollericona 2007; Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. 2007). This was not a general characteristic amongst the young *alteños/as* I met (nor in La Paz). Even though it naturally varied, and some of them had an analysis of their position that included references to colonialism and indigeneity, most of them instead projected belonging to mestizo-identities. Just *how* will be discussed throughout the various chapters.

Furthermore, even though CYRI professed to have an intercultural perspective in different documents, it did not work specifically with questions concerning ethnic rights and indigeneity. Contrariwise, one could argue that the organizational perspective aligned with many of the discourses that at times were labelled as “foreign imports”, especially in relation to perspectives of gender equality (see Paulson and Calla 2000). The young people of the youth spaces thus had other backgrounds than the ones Mollericona (2007) and the social scientists Giovanny Samanamud A., Cleverth Cárdenas P., and Patrisia Prieto (2007; see also Goodale 2006) describe and/or had other aspirations or belongings that they wanted to project.

When I asked the young people why they had continued to visit the youth space, they generally expressed that they had a strong interest in the sexuality-related themes. Some of them added that the youth corner offered them a second home, or that it was nice to get out of their house and/or to meet friends. Even though they expressed a high degree of engagement in the themes discussed at the organization, their participation in the youth corner or in the outreach activities was limited by many other obligations. Most of the young *paceños/as* and *alteños/as* were either high-school students or university students, or were preparing themselves for the university admission tests. Moreover, they had chores in the home, worked on the side, or participated in other organizations or groups. A select few of the participants were full-time workers. All of the participants lived either together with one or both their parents, or with older relatives such as grandparents, aunts or uncles. Several of the young people's parents were either dead or absent. Many had been raised in extended households consisting of several generations and siblings. Their caretakers were heterogeneous in relation to level of education and type of occupation. They worked as taxi

drivers, street vendors, teachers, tailors, homemakers, plumbers, at the university administration, carpenters, were shop owners etc. Most of the young people's parents were born in the cities. Some of them belonged to the second generation of city inhabitants. The intimate relationship between Bolivian constructions of class and race, where notions of urbanity and rurality are important, will be duly discussed in Chapter Four. Besides, *if* the young people at any point stated any class belonging, it was at all times to the middle class. For them, this meant that the family had food on the table and were getting by, but that there was a lack of money for anything "extra". Differences in status were clearly connected to access to economic resources amongst the youth.

The young people's different positions are thus important to consider, as are the researcher's positions.

The I/eye of the researcher

Power relations between adult researcher and young people have received attention (see for example Taft 2007; Pascoe 2007; Best 2007; Raby 2007). The fact that I was white, a foreigner, older and had a higher education than the young people – characteristics traditionally connected to power and authority in Bolivia – was one of the parts constituting the framework of our interaction. The different people I met throughout my fieldwork, the young people, staff, neighbours etc. referred to my whiteness and foreignness in different conversations. The young people did so, for example, when they talked about constructions of beauty in relation to whiteness and ideals imported from abroad. Our different positions were thus not something either of us could, or (always) tried to, obscure through silence. It was a circumstance that at times was commented upon or spurred curious questions. At other times it may of course have been silenced.

That I was positioned as white, a foreigner and older left no room for moments of "misidentification" (see Pascoe 2007: 231). No one mistakenly thought that I was a part of the group of young people. For the same reasons (and because I consider it to be an unproductive strategy), I never tried to make claims to inside knowledge in some pursuit to seem cooler or more up-to-date than I actually was (cf. Taft 2007: 208). Honesty and genuine curiosity are amongst the researcher's best tools to gather material in an ethical and methodologically productive way.

In the young people's visual images of the cities the boundaries were clearly delineated and very prevalent. These clear delineations and the homogenization of the areas did not match the heterogeneity that I myself experienced in the urban landscapes. However, the fact that I had chosen to live in *Zona Sur* (see figure 6), a geographical area in La Paz perceived as the home of the wealthy and the white population, thus played on all the chords of stereotypical associations. I had chosen to live in that particular area to make the transition smoother for my accompanying family, consisting of wife and two small children. As a white, wealthy (in comparison with the young people), and European person with a high level of education, I neatly fitted in and reproduced the prevalent constructions of *zureños* (*Zona Sur*-inhabitants) as the estranged elite. This naturally worried me.

This prompted me at the outset to ask Emilio, the facilitator of the *alteño* youth space, if he believed that my living in *Zona Sur* would create distance between me and the young people. Emilio responded that there were already many other things, such as my coming from abroad, that I spoke differently, and my skin colour. In the end of my stay, I returned to the subject and asked him about the conversation we had had earlier on. What associations did my skin colour carry for the young people? "Superiority", he answered, "It's about admiration." Was this still the case? I asked. "No, no that changes you know a lot, but first impressions are always different," he started out, and continued. "Some of them probably still look upon you with a distance. But here we learn that all of us are equals, the colour of the skin is not of relevance. /.../. They might think that since you live in *Zona Sur* that, ooh [sound of exclamation], you swim in money." When he continued, the advantage of long periods of fieldwork really came out. "It's the first time that we have someone who stays with us for such a long time," he said. "They come one week, two weeks, questions and then good-bye. /.../. One notices that they have made you a part of them /.../ and you have made yourself a part of them, a part of us."

I do not flatter myself by thinking that I was seen as "one of them" as Emilio suggested. But the research strategy of prolonged contact does help to bridge factors that at first may lead to estrangement.

Methods also have their pros and cons. Some of these are discussed next in relation to studying young people in particular.

Methods and methodology – on second thought

That the study was located within an organization has both drawbacks and advantages. Some of these have already been touched upon. To follow young people around in their everyday life can be difficult, for both the young people and the researcher. To tag along youngsters to local places otherwise mostly, or only, frequented by their peers, can put them in awkward and unwanted situations. These situations can be even more challenging when the researcher is contrastively positioned as white and foreign.

Within the discipline of cultural anthropology, great importance is assigned to the method of participant observation. It is often claimed and perceived to constitute its very core (see for example Ingold 2014; Hockey and Forsey 2012: 70–71; Forsey 2010; Robben and Sluka 2007). Observations are held to reveal possible, and scientifically interesting, discrepancies between what someone *says* she does and what she actually *does*, which uncovers the complexity of people's thinking and behaviour. Anthropologist Martin Forsey (2010: 563) critically notes that “a certain hierarchy of the senses has emerged placing participant observation at the apex of the methodological pyramid”. Though acknowledging the importance of elucidating discrepancies between what is said and done, I would nonetheless like to discuss possible methodological benefits of giving added weight to interviews specifically within youth studies. I propose this particularly with discrepancies between what is respectively said and done in mind.

Being young is commonly associated with searching for an individual path while simultaneously navigating competing norms and peer pressure (on peer pressure, see Lashbrook 2000; Shefer, Kruger, and Schepers 2015: 101–3). Therefore, to take peer pressure seriously could enlighten the gap between what is said and what is done. If observing young people's interactions and giving the *doing* (observations) more import than the *saying* (interviews), the material could be a mere reflection of peer pressure and societal norms. These are of course interesting aspects to analyse in themselves. However, individual viewpoints that contradict the accepted or expected norm could more easily be expressed in interviews, without the company of peers.

One way to give interviews extra methodological weight compared with observations is to give informants the opportunity to comment upon practices and situations they have been a part of. When a researcher asks a young person about a situation they have shared, the researcher invites him/her to enter into a reflective conversation pertaining to their own and

other people's practices. In this way the path to understanding is taken together with informants instead of researchers drawing conclusions on their own.

Another reason speaks for giving added methodological weight to interviews within youth studies. The issue of age was very important for the young people I met. They conceptualized Bolivia as an adult-centred society that neglected children's and young people's opinions and perspectives. They gave many and various examples of what they perceived to be age discrimination; some of these are discussed in Chapters Six and Chapter Eight. Their concrete depiction of problematic adult/youth relations made adult researcher/youth informant relations even more important to reflect upon. One way to partly address the problem both ethically and methodologically is by the use of interviews. This might be considered paradoxical, as interviews often are discussed in terms of unequal power relations between researcher and informant, and the researcher's sole control over the end product.

However, since the young people had opined that their perspectives were often not taken seriously, interviews could practically demonstrate otherwise. An interview offers both interviewee and the interviewer great possibilities of addressing questions and concerns that matter to both parties. The young people got the opportunity to express themselves at any length, to add any concerns/topics they felt were significant, and also to ask me any questions they had. Interviews therefore offered the possibility of getting to know me personally or getting a private moment to talk about their matters. My assurances that their opinions and perspectives were important thus materialized in the setting of the interview. I experienced that many of the young people appreciated the possibility of expounding about themselves verbally, being listened to and taken seriously by an adult. This had implications for our ongoing relationship since I believe it strengthened their feelings of being able to trust me.

This does not solve the problem of the researcher being in control of the material and how it is used in the end product. The problems of representation are many (see James 2007). To include informants' "voices" through quotes does not solve the problem of the researcher always being in charge of the text, its content, interpretation of quotes and the framing (Clifford Geertz 1988, referred to by James (2007)). To include young people's "voices" can also lead to the problem of homogenizing the experiences, thoughts and differences amongst all the individuals belonging to the same

age group, made to represent some imagined universal category of youth (James 2007).

In fact, when studying young people, one encounters a variety of terms and differing definitions of the very meaning of being young. Therefore, a clarification of the use of terms in the dissertation follows next.

Concepts and material

Childhood and youth are notoriously difficult categories to define. (Cole and Durham 2008: 5)

The year before my arrival to Bolivia, a law specifically encompassing young people was passed. In the “Youth Act”⁵¹ the terms *jóvenes* or *juventud* were defined as the period between adolescence and adult, delineated from sixteen to twenty-eight years of age. CYRI had more broadly defined the group of young people (*jóvenes*) they worked with to be from ten to twenty-four years of age. When the staff or the young people talked about *los y las jóvenes* (young men and women), my understanding was shaped by the age configuration of the young people visiting the youth spaces. As mentioned, they ranged from fourteen to twenty years, with the exceptions of two twelve-year-olds and a few young men in the age range of twenty-one to twenty-five. In the dissertation, terms such as “young people” or “youngsters” refer to this general age setup.⁵² Unless it is otherwise stated, they include both young men and women.

The ethnographic material originates from observations of the young people at CYRI. A few times observations made of other young people unaffiliated to the organization are utilized, such as students at schools or participants in the organization’s outreach activities. When this is the case, it is detailed. Interviews with the young people and field notes from participant observations constitute the overwhelming bulk of the study’s material. In sum, twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with

⁵¹ Act No 342, *La Ley De La Juventud*, from the year 2013.

⁵² In descriptions of individual informants, expressions such as “in her/his early teens” corresponds the ages 13–15, mid-teens = 16–17, and late teens = 18–19. From 20 and upwards, “young man” or “young woman” are instead used. At times informants are described with more details such as, “early twenties”: 20–23; “mid-twenties”: 24–25. The oldest of the young people visiting the youth space was twenty-five years old. When an individual informant is described as a “teenager,” he/she was between thirteen and nineteen years of age.

young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. Of these, fifteen were boys, thirteen were girls, and the majority of them were between sixteen and twenty years of age. I also did semi-structured interviews with staff at the organization, predominantly with the facilitators or staff working directly with the young people, as well as unaffiliated individuals, in total nineteen people. An experienced transcriber, recommended by a local anthropologist, transcribed the interviews.⁵³ I also handed out a questionnaire at an activity, which the young people present responded to.

The material also includes printed material (for example newspaper articles, discussions in social media, organizational material), field notes from attending social, political or cultural events, and from listening or watching radio and TV shows, etc.

In what follows, I present my research findings in five chapters. The first one discusses how constructions of race come intertwined with the production of place and class.

⁵³ In quotes from interviews ellipses (...) signify that one or a few words have been omitted to enhance readability and the comprehension. /.../ signifies that several words or one or more sentences have been omitted.

4. Feeling like a black sheep: Racialized geographies

The day had come when the young *alteños* and *alteñas* would make the final selection of what would be their new official clothes. These would be used whenever they participated in the organization's outreach activities. Before this meeting in the youth space, the boys and girls had handed in their own proposals for the new design. Now, sitting in a circle in the small meeting room, they had gathered to reach a joint decision. They discussed the different designs and alternatives and narrowed down their options. After a while they had only one decision left to make. Would the elected design be in the colour green or orange?

Faced with the impending vote, Eric raised his voice. He was a tall, trim boy in his mid-teens. With his clothes, stylized look and focused attention on popular brands, Eric gave off the impression that appearance and status mattered a great deal to him. And he was just about to make a comment that bolstered this impression.

"Orange makes our skin look darker," he said out loud. The gathered youngsters listened attentively for what he would say next. But Eric hesitated, pausing for a second. As if he had just realized the pitfall, he then added in an amused tone, "and green as well."

Laughter broke the attentive silence. All the youngsters in the circle joined in.

This exchange brings questions to light that will guide the chapter. It touches upon the chronic Bolivian history of producing difference in relation to race. Crucially, at this moment in time the government's projected "process of change" had turned its wheels for almost a decade. What had come out of this? Did young people raised during this time still think it was better to come off with lighter skin? If so, what did skin colour mean to them? And since the exchange played out amongst the young people in El Alto and not in La Paz – did place have something to do with it? These questions disentangle the dissertation's larger research questions of how social hierarchies play out in young people's everyday lives, how we can

understand social hierarchies and societal inclusions and exclusions, and the entanglements between different positions and senses of belonging at local and national levels.

The young people embodied complex relationships to the issues of skin colour and phenotypes. The complexity is more clearly elucidated by analysing it in relation to the conjoint production of place and racialized bodies. Therefore, after discussing the exchange above, the chapter probes the interrelationship between the cities La Paz and El Alto and the production of racialized spatialities. It does so by looking into the negative reactions that the operation of a cable car between La Paz and El Alto provoked. Tensions were in the air. The case of the cable car illustrates how the political project of the government was played out at the inter-city level. Moreover, it shows how the cities were produced as hosting hierarchically different inhabitants. Notions about the cities materialized bodies at the intersection of race, class and gender. However, hierarchies were both reproduced and contested – the landscape was moving and changing. These movements encompassed the young people as well.

Racialized whiteness

The importance of (skin) colours

So what did the exchange opening this chapter mean for the young people? In interviews afterwards, I asked the *alteño* youth specifically about that. Their answers illuminated the continuous reproduction of the norm of racialized whiteness. Moreover, they showed a careful consideration for how to position themselves in relation to the productions of racializations.

Was a darker skin considered negative? From some of the young people I got answers in the negative. It was merely a question of choosing a colour that suited one's skin colour best. Some colours made you and your skin tone look better than others did. From others I got the opposite answer; skin complexion did matter. However, they did not talk about the exchange on the colours of their official clothes as somehow reflecting their own personal views. Rather, skin colour and other phenotypical characteristics held importance for others, in certain settings, or in society at large. They maintained that they did not share these notions.

Like the others, Camila, a middle-class *alteña*, was careful to keep a critical distance to these notions. She was a lively, sociable teenager who

would soon graduate from high school. She was popular amongst the boys, embodying ideals of beauty with her tallness and fair skin. Camila first explained the exchange from a general perspective. She talked about how beauty ideals were transmitted through media images. “In the soap operas ... the pretty girls are white. We try to whiten our skin, we look for technical methods, look for colours and clothes”, she said. “For example the colours of [CYRI] are orange and green, these colours are too phosphorescent, and normally if you mix this with a dark skin you opaque it. You know it looks even darker.” She ended with a common reassurance: “But for me it doesn’t matter.”

For Eric, the one who initially aired the predicament of choosing the right colour, it was clear that a whiter complexion was in general considered better than a darker one. And he, together with others, connected the desire for lighter skin to the prevailing beauty ideals and persistent racism. When I talked to Analuz, one of Eric’s best friends, she stated that, indeed, it was important for Eric to come off with a lighter skin complexion if possible. Furthermore, she offered a possible explanation. “Because maybe someone once called him ‘black/dark’ [*negro*], or they have told him, ‘You are very white or very dark’,” she said, continuing, “So this has remained like a hang-up in his head that says, ‘This will make me darker, I have to be whiter, I have to be whiter’.” For Analuz however, these things did not matter, “For me no, but for him, yes, it is important.” In this way she established a distance between herself and the aspirations for whiteness that she suggested her bosom friend had embodied.

Just like Camila, several of them mentioned the use of aesthetic practices and tools to appear whiter. Rosa for example, one of the young women, talked about how both men and women used makeup at parties. “People use a lot of makeup and if you go without makeup, like you are, they look at you in a weird way”, she said. “They tell you, ‘Go and put some makeup on. How can you show up looking like that? So dark, so black’.”

The option to modify bodily materiality to approximate ideals was thus nothing unusual in the young people’s surroundings. Makeup, whitening creams, hair dye, etc. were tools in use to more closely resemble the composition of phenotypical characteristics that materialized the ideal of whiteness (on historical muddy-water theories of race in Latin America, see Wade 2010). The promises of a whiter skin complexion were broadcasted through ads, commercials, soap operas, artists, and through the repertoire

of jokes saturated with racial stereotypes marginalizing the indigenous, darker body (about beauty ideals and whiteness, see Canessa 2008; 2012).

The prevalence of a norm of whiteness is well documented in many Latin American countries, including in Bolivia (see for example Wade 2009; 2010; Kulick and Machado-Borges 2005; Smith 1997). When the anthropologist Peter Wade (2010: 12–13) describes how the Latin American racial system is often contrasted with that of North America, he refers to the famous “drop of black blood” which suffices to categorize someone as black in North America. The Latin American system, on the other hand, displays a multiplicity of racial categories. Context and relationality instead tip the balance when judging someone’s racial identity.

Researchers on race and ethnicity in the Andes likewise emphasize the relational character of racial identities (Canessa 2007b; Cadena 2000; Paulson 2002; Van Vleet 2005; 2008; Luykx 1999; for a historical overview on elite conceptions on race in the Andes, see Larson 2004). Based on fieldwork in a small village in the Bolivian highlands, Canessa (2012: 7) argues that “there is no clear social binary, the categories white and indian are always relative” where “one is more or less white; more or less indian.” Weismantel (2001) and the anthropologist David Guss (2014) suggest that the system is both binary and flexible. The binary logic works differently though than the North American system, Guss (2014: 13) writes, “in which racial categories are fixed and immutable. Andean *mestizaje* is continuously shifting and relational depending on one’s location and status. An Indian in one situation can be a mestizo in yet another.”

The degree of whiteness that an individual is perceived to possess is thus highly dependent upon factors other than the mere complexion of the skin. Racial identities are performative. They are constituted in action and connected to various markers which serve as indicators for racial ascription. Height (short stature as a marker for indigeneity), language (Spanish versus for example Aymara or Quechua), type of labour, clothes, urbanity or rurality, education, and economic resources are taken into consideration (Weismantel 2001; Canessa 2005). This unstable and performative nature of racial identities, the flexibility, is what according to Wade (2009: 162) characterizes the democracy of the racial structuring of Latin American countries. But considering this conflux of different markers, relationality and context, how can we understand the focus on skin complexion in the initial exchange?

When I asked the young people about the exchange, they described that racism in general lingered on. Even though stating that discrimination of

indigenous people because of darker skin had decreased, several of them voiced that a lighter skin still entailed more status. The young *alteños* and *alteñas* who faced the choice between green and orange, thus understood the framework of Eric's comment. For them, bodily materiality offered variability. The contextually best alternative was the colour that could lighten up the skin complexion. This would increase the likelihood of materializing a body that "blended" within the comforts of successfully embodying the ideal of racialized whiteness (Russell 2011; Ahmed 2014). Unfortunately, however, neither colour could do the trick. The spotlight placed on this predicament, or rather Eric's in-the-moment realization of the pickle, spurred the laughter.

The exchange and the young *alteños* and *alteñas*' interpretations of it afterwards illustrate how they both negotiated and reproduced norms and values that underpinned the ideal of racialized whiteness. Now, how did the *paceños* and *paceñas* of the youth space relate to the same ideal?

Embodying the cities

The topic of skin colour was also prevalent amongst the young *paceños* and *paceñas*. However, in comparison with the young people in El Alto, there was a difference in *emphasis* in how the topic surfaced or was talked about. This difference, I argue, is explained by the racialization of geographies and the interrelationship between El Alto and La Paz.

In interviews, the young *paceños* and *paceñas* also described beauty ideals of whiteness, and how people in their surroundings made use of aesthetic whitening practices.⁵⁴ The topic of skin colour could also pop up from time to time in everyday interactions. One of these occasions involved my two small children who this day had joined me to visit the youth space. As had happened in many different circumstances, the children's' blond hair, blue eyes and fair skin would raise attention. As the children were running around chasing each other and giggling, I stood close to two male youngsters who gleefully observed the children's' playing. Then one of the young men turned to the other and exclaimed, "Now I feel so dark [*morenito*]!" whilst holding a hand on his chest and nodding his head in the children's' direction.

⁵⁴ One of the *paceño* teenagers even spoke about a classmate who had undergone a surgical operation with the goal of "looking better". This included the aspect of looking whiter (on plastic surgery and constructions of race, see Kaw 1993; Zane 1998). This was however a unique reference by him.

On another occasion, one of the female facilitators talked about the fact that the youngsters often gave each other nicknames based on some physical trait. It was a matter of concern. For her it was “an aggressive language” (*un lenguaje violento*), signalling a lack of respect. One male teenager was for example called “chocolate”. According to the female facilitator, the nickname sprung from his chubbiness (*gordito*). It crossed my mind however that it could also refer to his comparatively darker skin. The same nickname was offered to the paper model Rodrigo, the Afro-Bolivian boy whose life story we caught glimpses of in the first chapter. As a matter of fact, he was bullied for his dark skin. Likewise, the youngsters described how they had witnessed others being harassed and judged on account of skin colour or other phenotypical characteristics that diverged from the beauty ideal of whiteness.

Despite these examples, the theme of skin colour was less of a topic in conversations when hanging out amongst the young *paceños* and *paceñas*. Furthermore, there was a difference in how they connected the theme to themselves or to people in their surroundings. When the *paceño* youth described situations where they or someone close did not “measure up” to others’ expectations and ideals, they had less of a focus on phenotypical characteristics. For instance, when describing the boyfriend or girlfriend whom they aspired to be or already were together with, they centred more on class and economic resources than on skin colour. These aspirational boy- or girlfriends were often described as belonging to a higher social class than themselves.

How the geography was racialized, and the interrelationships of the cities, emerged as salient for me to understand the difference in *emphasis* between *paceño* and *alteño* youngsters. The young people conceptualized the geography of the urban landscape in terms of class relations, the haves and the have nots of the cities. For example, Jaime and Gabriela described this. They were both *paceños*, studying at the university. Jaime was one of the oldest of the youth space, approaching his mid-twenties. He described his family as dedicated to work, rather than formal education. He was a confident young man who knew how to swing an argument in discussions. In describing the geographies of the cities, Jaime started out with *Zona Sur*, the south part of La Paz. “*Zona Sur* they are like, oh wow! [making an emphatic sound] The ones who have money”. He then contrasted this with, “when you live on the north side it’s like the poor ones, those who have to work”. Gabriela was an outgoing and vivacious *paceña* in her late teens who shouldered a lot of responsibility in her home. Her mother regularly

had to work abroad and left Gabriela in charge of her younger siblings. The money left for food was seldom enough, and it pained Gabriela to see her siblings go hungry. As for Gabriela herself, she had grown increasingly thin. I guessed, however, that she was quite pleased with that, and her appetite for life was ravenous. For her, the geography of the spaces was similarly about class. “The *Zona Sur*, we call them ‘*gente de la jay*’ [the elite] because this is more or less where the ministers will live”, she explained. “The ordinary people here [in La Paz] and the poorest in El Alto.”⁵⁵

People I met in different circumstances, be it staff or youngsters at CYRI, neighbours or taxi drivers, spoke about the economic changes during the last few decades. Previous small-time merchants had gained considerable economic success. A new middle class had grown, sometimes referred to as the “new Aymara bourgeoisie” (Gracia 2014). People were also well aware that this newly acquired wealth did not automatically imply a move from the city of El Alto to the wealthy area of *Zona Sur*. Even though the inhabitants had differential access to economic resources, the imageries of the geographical areas were firmly entrenched and homogeneously described as rich, poor, and poorest, starting from the lowest altitude and climbing all the way up to the high plateau.

Likewise, the boundaries of the cities were constructed with allusions to the inhabitants’ physical differences. For example, the outgoing and vivacious *paceña* Gabriela, with an appetite for life, stated, “There are ladies who ... live in *Zona Sur*, and over there lives people who are more or less, white people, you know, so when they come here, they will discriminate against you just for being from El Alto.” Whereas dark skin was associated with El Alto, *Zona Sur* inhabitants were marked by whiteness.⁵⁶ As earlier pointed out, economic resources and embodiment of racialized whiteness are highly entwined in the Andes. Racializations of geographies are based on the intersections of class and race (on racialized geographies in the Andes, see Cadena 2000; 2002; Weismantel 2001).

For the young *paceños/as* and *alteños/as*, the strongest dividing line was drawn between El Alto and *Zona Sur*, the south part of La Paz. (North) La Paz was instead characterized by its diversity, constituting a melting pot in which all kinds of people convened. The *alteña* Camila, the lively and so-

⁵⁵ See López Illanes, Jemio Peralta, and Chuquimia Vélez (2006) for a study on the young elite living in *Zona Sur*.

⁵⁶ On the importance of whiteness amongst the young elite in *Zona Sur*, see López Illanes, Jemio Peralta, and Chuquimia Vélez (2006: 54–56).

cialable teenager who embodied normative beauty ideals, made the following clear categorizations: “It’s like El Alto – the city of *cholitas*, something like that, the clothes of peasants, and *Zona Sur* – the rich people, the children of the wealthy, military personnel, and La Paz is the mixture of that, it’s like a fusion /.../ you can see every kind.” Camila used *cholata*, the diminutive form of *chola*, which is generally understood as a young (unmarried) woman compared with the more mature *chola*.

This racialized geography was also illustrated when Adriana, a university student and *paceña* in her late teens, talked about presumptive boyfriends. When the young people in general talked about possible girl- or boyfriends, they were careful to point out that physical appearance was not relevant for them. Personality reigned, which is exactly what Adriana will soon convey to us. But when I asked them how their friends and parents reasoned, they boiled it down to a question of status. Status was sometimes referred to as “looks” (that the presumptive girl- or boyfriend embodied beauty ideals of whiteness). It could also be about access to economic resources. Adriana belonged to a middle-class mestiza family. When the issue of presumptive boyfriends was on the table, her mother and her views diverged according to Adriana. Money had earlier on been a scarce resource for her mother. Now access to money was important when the mother gave advice to her daughter on a boyfriend’s qualities. Adriana juxtaposed her own line of thinking, refusing both the aspect of money and good looks. “I have always said to [my mother], if I fall in love I will perhaps not fall in love with the best-looking boy. Maybe someone from El Alto, the shortest boy.”

In order to understand the meaning-making in Adriana’s reference to El Alto and “the shortest boy”, one has to bear in mind that short height is seen as a trait of indigeneity and that El Alto is commonly tied to indigeneity (see Chapter One).⁵⁷ The twofold understanding of embodiment is furthermore useful to shed light on why Adriana located the “shortest boy” to El Alto. Arjit Sen, in the discipline of architecture and Lisa Silverman (2014: 2), in history, point out that embodiment both refers to how notions can become a part of the body and how a body can symbolize an idea.

⁵⁷ In the literature, for example, El Alto is described as an indigenous, *cholo* or Aymara city (Lazar 2008; Canessa 2012: 218; Mollericono 2007: 32). The labels reflect its large population identifying itself as Aymara and the links between the city and its rural Aymara-dominated hinterlands. El Alto has grown rapidly due to the large number of migrants moving in from the countryside (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, people maintain strong ties to their birth villages through trade, travels and relatives (Albó 2006; Lazar 2008; Calestani 2012a; 2012b).

When Adriana incarnated her values of not focusing on a boy's good looks, she channelled this into the body of a short boy from El Alto. The opposite of male physical attractiveness was thus spatially located to El Alto, the *cholo* or indigenous city where supposedly the shortest boy could be found (see Chapter Seven about male tallness). Simultaneously she also positioned herself closer to racialized whiteness by locating "indigenous traits" further away from her own hometown, La Paz.

Months later, Adriana told me that she had fallen in love. I knew the young man in question. He frequently visited the youth space in La Paz. He happened to be the tallest amongst them. Was it merely a coincidence? Of course I do not know for certain, but I cannot help but wonder if the constructions of and links between racialized whiteness, beauty ideals, and status could have been a part of his allure.

Embodying *alteñohood*

It was clear throughout the time in La Paz and El Alto that skin colour and other phenotypical characteristics were important in some settings. However, few of the young people articulated directly how this notion materialized itself in relation to their *own* body. The few who did were all from El Alto. Like Álvaro, Silvia and Isaura, whom we are about to meet. As will be shown, the young *alteños* and *alteñas*' meaning-making and sense of belonging were shaped in relation to notions of places. They had embodied the imageries of El Alto. The notion of place, the mere fact of their differential location in the imagined spaces of the cities, construed *alteños* and *alteñas* as further away from embodying racialized whiteness than the youngsters living in La Paz.

Isaura was a friendly girl in her mid-teens who thoroughly enjoyed music and dancing and did well in school. She lived in a middle-class area in El Alto with parents who both had stable jobs in public administration. When she answered my question about the exchange on the choice between colours, I gathered that her physical appearance had been of some concern to both her and her parents. "My mom usually tells me, 'You have to take care of your skin', and my father, 'Be careful to not become like those *birlochas*⁵⁸ who walk around burning their face'," Isaura explained. "Previously, my face was rather dark, and it has gotten much lighter. I have lost

⁵⁸ According to Lazar (2010: 194), the term *birlocha* has very negative connotations. She writes, "This is an extremely derogatory word for an unmarried woman who is not a chola, along the lines of 'tart,' but ethnicized, because it would only really be used by

a lot of weight; I have changed a lot. Before they always made fun of this [in school] and that's why I have come to El Alto.⁵⁹ In El Alto they have much darker skin." For her, physical appearance came down to a question of acceptance. "I think it's the society, how they criticize you and you don't want the society to reject you. You want to be accepted." Isaura was thus deeply aware of the flexibility of bodily materiality.

For Silvia, this flexibility prompted her preference for colours that worked to lighten the skin. Silvia was a young *alteña* who assisted her mother, a woman dressed *de pollera*, in her little shop every day. When I asked Silvia about the exchange on the choice between colours, she referred to the same thing as her peers – how different colours changed the appearance of the skin. Then she continued, "I like my skin to look lighter [*más clara*], that's why I dress in brighter clothes." When I asked why, she responded with a low, cracked voice that it made her feel "comfortable" (*cómoda*).

Álvaro, who often talked assuredly and fast, instead stumbled upon his words when he tried to explain the sense of unease he felt. He was a very ambitious and focused young man in his early twenties, who had his aims set high in life. He studied for a prestigious career at the university. But when he came to talk about his feelings about his own body, his usual energy was dampened. "I'm in the wrong body it seems", he said. These feelings arose "when I'm with my friends who are from another social class", he explained, and added, "I would like to be more like them." It was not about the fact that his friends had more money than him, he told me. It came down to physical appearance. Describing his friends, he said that "They have white skin, blue eyes, and blond hair." Nowadays, he did feel better about himself; previously, "I felt like a black sheep [*me sentía una oveja negra*]." But clearly, something still chafed and bothered him.

What Isaura, Silvia and Álvaro convey are illustrative of how notions of places can become integral parts of people's identities. Sen and Silverman (2014: 2) argue for the analysis of "embodied placemaking", how both

a chola toward women of the same physical appearance but wearing western dress, who would otherwise usually be called 'señorita,' or Miss." I did not experience the same negative connotations of the word, but then again it was also never used, except on this particular occasion, by upper-class *Zona Sur*-inhabitants who wanted to explain different terms to me. According to them, a *birlocha* was the daughter of a *chola* who had chosen to wear western clothes, instead of using the *pollera* like her mother.

⁵⁹ Isaura refers to the fact that she and her family had moved from another city to El Alto.

place and body are “mutually constituent elements of the built environment”. The construction of places is not just the production of humans; equally, people’s identities are shaped and constructed in relation to the notions of places. For Sen and Silverman (2014: 4), “embodiment allows us to see the powerful ideological role played by place in the formation of human subjects.”

Isaura, Silvia and Álvaro had embodied notions of *alteñhood*, constructed as distant from racialized whiteness.⁶⁰ Other studies have also shown that young people living in El Alto experience discrimination on account of where they live (Sánchez Serrano 2010: 46–47; Mollericona 2007: 32). Not to embody the ideal of racialized whiteness had become an integrated part of how Isaura, Silvia and Álvaro looked upon themselves, expressed in the sense of rejection, feeling uncomfortable when not wearing the right colour, or feeling unease in and with what one’s body looked like.

When Camila, the lively and sociable *alteña* who embodied normative beauty ideals, talked about a friend, she gave an example of another consequence of embodying *alteñhood*. Whenever Camila tried to persuade her friend to go to La Paz to catch a movie, for example, her friend refused. “No, they look at me contemptuously [Camila], they look at us with anger [*rabia*] /.../ like we shouldn’t set our foot there’.” Camila pointed out what could have been a logical explanation for her friend’s outpouring. “She doesn’t even have a dark complexion, she has a very light complexion.”

Judging from Camila’s account, her friend had embodied notions of the racialized geography like Isaura, Álvaro and Silvia. Through the supposedly staring eyes of others, she felt her body was “out of place” in La Paz. According to Camila, her friend limited her own movements to particular places. She created what Munn (2003: 93) terms “negative space” – the production of “a space of deletions or of delimitations constraining one’s presence at particular locales.”

At this point I was curious to know whether Camila herself ever felt stared at when she visited La Paz. With a touch of discouragement in her voice she detached herself from the answer, “Yes, sometimes yes, you feel it.” When she did not elaborate on her answer as she usually did, I asked her how she felt. She depersonalized her answer once more, saying, “You are not [from] here, you don’t fit in.” She exemplified how this feeling of not fitting in was created. She described that whenever a girl from El Alto

⁶⁰ See Valentine (2007) for an analysis of place and identity from an intersectional perspective.

visited a boutique below and wanted to ask the price of a nice dress, the staff's response would create that feeling by saying for example, "There is no one here [to assist you]", or 'no no no', or they will just ignore you."

The examples illustrate how bodies materialize through constructions of racialized places and how this affects young people's meaning-making and sense of belonging. Combining the analytical category of embodied placemaking (Sen and Silverman 2014) and the concept of embodied citizenship (Russell 2011) illuminates why the body materializing *alteñohood* – construed in opposition to the ideal of racialized whiteness – is felt to "stand out" and as "out of place" in La Paz. This body, following Russell's (2011) lead, becomes overloaded with materiality. This overload analytically illuminates the young people's sense of unease and being out of place (Ahmed 2014), as well as their attempts to modulate bodily materiality to align with ideals. This affected their sense of belonging, or to phrase it differently, their sense of entitlement. It created "negative space" (Munn 2003) that delimited them from spaces others felt at liberty to occupy. Ultimately it came down to what Isaura expressed, "you don't want the society to reject you. You want to be accepted." Isaura's comment illustrates the stakes involved. It also illustrates why practices in everyday life, which in these cases serve to reproduce or to question norms of racialized whiteness, can be defined as citizenship practices (cf. Van Vleet 2005; Liebelt 2019).

Yuval-Davis' (1999) argument for understanding citizenship as multi-layered puts Isaura's reference to the somewhat abstract "society" into perspective. Yuval-Davis (1999) argues that membership at different levels (local, regional, national, supranational) affects the complex configurations of belonging. Isaura's comment started out from her experiences of being picked at in school, "before they always made fun of this [in school]," then she moved on to the city level, "and that's why I have come to El Alto. In El Alto they have much darker skin", only to end by referring to the very broad notion of societal rejection or acceptance.

So how was the racialization of place made and unmade at other levels during my stay? Next, I discuss how the posting of a photograph in social media stirred up emotions, elucidating current processes of production and negotiation of hierarchies and the racialization of spatialities. These movements and counter-movements were a part of the terrain the young people navigated in their everyday lives.

The process of change at the inter-city and national level

Tension in the air

Welcome to the new “El Alto”, where they sell orange juice in the street, where they sell pirate-DVDs on the sidewalks, where people will sit down in ANY green space without caring whether it’s fenced off or no, where tangerine peels, popcorn [*pasankallas*],⁶¹ ice cream wrappings among other disposable products are now a part of our daily lives /.../ WELCOME TO THE PLURINATIONAL BOLIVIA!!! LONG MAY IT LIVE. – By a member of the Facebook group *Mojigotes*

El Alto is built on the high plateau above La Paz, situated at about 4,150 meters above sea level. Central La Paz is located at 3,627 meters, and the south part, *Zona Sur*, at approx. 3,200 meters above sea level. The dramatic natural landscape and differences in altitude make it ideal for the operation of a cable car (see figures 2 and 9).

At the time I arrived in La Paz in 2014, a cable car was under construction. The fast and comfortable new mode of transportation would prove to efficiently cut the time and distance between the two cities. Before the cable car, the distance had to be endured in often slow and malfunctioning vehicles like minibuses, *micros* or shared taxis (see figure 10). There was an immanent risk of getting stuck in traffic jams. Furthermore, whenever a passenger either wanted to get off or on, the vehicles stopped. And not to mention how the vehicles filled the air with clouds of exhaust fumes. Now one could instead travel the same distance in the comforts of a brand new infrastructure, clean and fast, flying over the city of La Paz whilst enjoying breath-taking scenery. The Bolivian state owned the cable car company. Its slogan, “Uniting our lives”, was literal in the sense of connecting people. Differentiated social worlds once neatly kept separate were now encroaching on each other. This became a source of tension.

The tension was manifested in the controversies that arose around the posting of a photograph in a Facebook group. The aim of the group *Mojigotes* was to work for increased awareness of how citizens should behave in public spaces. The members frequently posted and discussed pictures of situations they deemed inappropriate, such as street littering or parked cars

⁶¹ The Bolivian snack *pasankallas* is a kind of popcorn made from a specific sort of maize.

blocking the roads. This particular photo was shot in the exclusive shopping mall *MegaCenter*. The mall is located in one of the most affluent parts of *Zona Sur*, a mostly residential area (see figure 6).



Figure 1. The photo in the centre of attention for national debates.
Source: W. Pérez (2015a)

In the photo one can see men and women sitting on the floor, resting and chatting whilst leaning their backs against the wall and interior milieu.⁶² The women are dressed *de pollera* with full gathered skirts, shawls, low heel shoes, and their hair braided in plaits. One woman is balancing the characteristic bowler hat on the front of her head, completing the full apparel of being dressed *de pollera*. The red wall is decorated with bowling balls, lanes and a big bowling pin; they are sitting in proximity to a bowling

⁶² The quality of the image is unfortunately very low, making it difficult to properly distinguish details in the advertisement. The photograph was published in different newspaper articles. This image was downloaded from the newspaper article by W. Pérez (2015a), available online.

area. The floor is polished to a shine. It is so sparkingly clean one can see the reflection of an advertisement hanging on the wall, towering up above them. The advertisement for bowling invites the spectator to share in its future. This specific future is depicted as consisting of mostly white teenagers and children dressed in t-shirts and jeans.

The member who posted the photograph started the thread with a disclaimer, acknowledging that the topic was “very sensitive”. After stating that people had the right to be anywhere they wanted, he directed his criticism to the mall’s administration. They should set up more benches to avoid the scene in the picture. It was a pitiful sight (*da pena*).

The first comment came after twelve minutes, followed by an intensive stream of input.⁶³ The spark that lit the fire was the act of sitting on the floor. This was clearly not up to standard. The depicted people’s upbringing was questioned. “What fucking people. They have no manners whatsoever”, a member wrote. However, in the ensuing heated discussion a whole repertoire of actions got caught in the crossfire. The people in the picture came to represent a group – “those people” (*esa gente*) – blamed for lacking personal hygiene, for littering, and for the mall’s filthy bathrooms. The comments made it clear that “those people” did not belong to the world of *MegaCenter* where people looked and behaved differently. As one member rhetorically asked, “Have you ever seen a gringo or a *q’ara* [Aymara: white person] doing such a disgraceful thing????”

“Those people” were seen as intruders. But from where did the intruders come? And who, or what, could be blamed for their intrusion?

The men and the women in the picture got firmly pinpointed to the city of El Alto. Moreover, the members blamed the new cable car. They perceived an increase in “disorder” after the cable car started operating. “This disorder dramatically increased with the cable car’s arrival to Irpavi [a neighbourhood in *Zona Sur*]”, one member wrote. Another one voiced that they now had to protect themselves from criminals in *MegaCenter*. The theme of security popped up early in the thread, and it unremittingly lingered on. It bluntly built on a slippery slope line of thinking. “It begins just like that and then the robberies come,” a member stated.

Drawing on real and imagined connections between *alteños* and the countryside, the depicted people were also linked to the countryside (see

⁶³ The analysis of the discussion is based on material saved when accessing the group’s Facebook page the 7th of January 2015, at 4:53 p.m. It is possible that entries at any other time resulted in a modified material depending on whether members or administrators edited or deleted comments.

Lazar 2008; Albó 2006; Calestani 2012a). There was a noticeable worry that the specificity of *Zona Sur* would be swallowed up by *alteño* characteristics, properly belonging to other times and places. In Bolivia, as in many other countries, discourses of modernization, civilization, and progress are linked to the city. The countryside, *el campo*, is characterized as its opposite. People and places are seen as lagging behind in terms of their degree of progress and civilization (Van Vleet 2008: 48; Canessa 2012). The people in the photo were thus seen as out of place and out of time. They materialized a different chronotope from that of *Zona Sur*, construed and reproduced by members of this Facebook group.

The mall *MegaCenter* held a particular place in this chronotope. It incarnated discourses of modernity, progress and civilization – and of racialized whiteness. In a study based on observations of the young elite living in *Zona Sur*, Álex López Illanes, Ronal Jemio Peralta, and Edwin Chuquimia Vélez (2006: 28) show the importance of specific places for them. These places were used in practices of socialization when the young elite displayed and secured their cultural belonging. Indeed, through consumption and socialization patterns, the *MegaCenter* was likewise utilized for the production of specific positions at the intersection of race, class, gender and age. Francesca, a mestiza-identified Spanish teacher and friend of mine who belonged to the upper middle class, said that the whole controversy revolved around class and the use of space. She explained that *MegaCenter* is the type of place “where the boys and girls go to socialize with their friends and show themselves out a bit in public.” In the picture in the Facebook-group, the *Zona Sur* chronotope and the youth who socialized there were symbolically visualized through the towering advertisement. Representing the future, the youngsters and kids in t-shirts and jeans materialized these discourses of modernity, progress, civilization and racialized whiteness. Literally, and metaphorically speaking, their “others” were positioned beneath them.

Uniting our lives?

The discussion in social media could have remained unknown to a broader audience. Somehow, though, it made it into the news headlines and became the topic of debates in the national arena. It was covered in newspapers, opinion pieces and on television.

David was a good-humoured, well-liked and bright young *alteño* who had worked abroad for a year to save some money for studies. He had been

away when the cable car was under construction, but now he had come back to El Alto and the youth space. Upon his return he had been amazed to see the cable car all geared up so suddenly. It was an impressive sight. But when he talked about the discussion in social media, he became both angry and sad. “For me it has been like a blow, as if they had slapped me in the face.” The slap was aimed at all *alteños* and *alteñas*, irrespective of their differences. “More than [towards] the people *de pollera*, at the people of El Alto”, he said. However, the slap hit home as well. His own mother could have been the direct target of the shot and the derision. She dressed *de pollera*. Furthermore, David was fully aware that she had internalized many of the negative stereotypes and representations that flourished around women dressed *de pollera* (detailed in Chapter Seven). Now he worked up an anger. He could not understand the big commotion around the practice of sitting on the floor. “It is a part of our culture, a part of our heritage”, he said.⁶⁴ This made the comments even more hurtful, “That they want to attack the culture, they want to attack our way of life /.../ it is very shocking, very infuriating.” The resentment David expressed was not felt by him alone.

Counter-movements mobilized against the perceived discrimination and racism in the social media discussion. Shortly after it had become the topic of public debate, a private initiative was taken and a Facebook event was created. People were invited to join in on an *apthapi*, a traditional Andean potluck meal to which everyone brings something to eat or drink to be jointly shared. It is also a way to reconcile differences between disagreeing parties. By organizing an *apthapi* in front of the very mall that now publicly incarnated the face of racism, Andean culture and the old elite were symbolically united (see figure 8). Afterwards the newspapers proclaimed the event a success. It got covered with headlines such as “The Mega-Apthapi in La Paz opened up a space for debate” (Pau 2015), or “Racism and tolerance met in the Mega”, with the subtitle, “From the social networks the

⁶⁴ The practice of sitting on the floor also became an important issue in the debate at the national level. The practice became a symbol of cultural values and differences, as it did for David as well. Félix Cárdenas, at the time the incumbent of the Vice Ministry of Decolonization, for example, said, “The ones who criticize a woman for sitting on the floor are the ones who ignore the culture. We have tried to explain that within the indigenous culture it is normal to sit on the ground because in that way you stay in contact with the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth).” (W. Pérez 2015a). Canessa (2012: 231) offers a gendered and age-related explanation in terms of status instead of referring to cultural values of sitting close to the *Pachamama*. In the small village he studied in the Bolivian highlands, women and children would sit on the floor whereas men would sit on a stool.

disagreement and the necessity emerged to discuss racism, inclusion and coexistence” (Peralta M. 2015).⁶⁵

The headlines demonstrated that the political changes in the country had been the theme under negotiation. Starting with the photograph in the social media, to the debates at the national level and the organization of an *apthapi*, these events elucidated the need to make sense of the plurinational project. They were a part of an ongoing discussion and negotiation of the political changes and their implications for people in their everyday lives.

Leading politicians behind the government’s political project had not remained silent either. One of the key figures for the government’s project of decolonization, Félix Cárdenas, rejected the comments as motivated by racism and demanded respect for indigenous people (W. Pérez 2015a). Cárdenas was the incumbent of the Vice Ministry of Decolonization, working with the implementation, promotion and development of programs, projects and policies to broaden the participation and input of indigenous peoples. Before he was appointed to this position, he was a union leader and activist for indigenous rights. Now he urged the mall’s administration to put up more signs about the law against racism and all forms of discrimination (W. Pérez 2015a; Página Siete 2015a; 2015b).⁶⁶ The law was a hallmark of the government’s policies with a literal presence in people’s everyday lives. Everywhere in commercial establishments and public places one could see signs with the phrase, “We are all equal before the law” (see figure 7). The obligatory signs visualized and materialized the government’s politics in banks, shops, cafés, restaurants, etc. The message was thus constantly transmitted to the population, visually and orally through, for example, radio and television announcements.

The cable car had also been put into service, not only for its travellers, but moreover for the government’s project for change. The state-owned company used the slogan “Uniting our lives” to impel unity amongst its diverse, heterogeneous population. The company, that is, the state, greeted its urban citizens on social media, “for our people in all our diversity; We are a family! We are one!”⁶⁷ In the same spirit, the three lines of the first phase of the infrastructure project were in the colours red, yellow and

⁶⁵ See Maclean’s (2018) analysis of the comments in social media and their aftermath in her discussion of the cultural trope of the rich indigenous woman who can displace (white) people in urban areas.

⁶⁶ Act No 045, *Ley Contra el Racismo y Toda Forma De Discriminación*, from 2010.

⁶⁷ Information from web page: <https://www.facebook.com/miteleferico/>; (‘Mi Teleférico’, n.d.). Page accessed 2017-04-24, print screen saved.

green. Of course, in no way incidentally, these are the colours of the Bolivian flag.

The second phase of the project would increase the number of lines. Their colours would instead piece together the flag *wiphala* (Página Siete Digital 2015a). The *wiphala* has been used as a symbol of Andean indigenous movements. In the Constitution from 2009, the specific version of the *Aymara wiphala* is also declared to represent the state (in Article 6).⁶⁸

The project of the cable car worked to literally and metaphorically cut through the social and geographical lines dividing the cities. The philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991: 44) argues that “what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein.” By cutting through, the infrastructure/state upset the boundaries of the city to initiate a process of stitching together places – producing space – in accordance with the political project of decolonization. The cable car transgressed geographical boundaries that construed bodies as belonging to specific places. So, speaking with Lefebvre, the *representation of space*, as projected by the government, was the construction of the cable car (Lefebvre 1991: 42).⁶⁹

The spirit of unity had spread. Even if the *alteño* David had been angry and sad whilst talking about the social media discussion, he still was optimistic about the future. I asked him whose lives the cable car’s slogan “uniting our lives” referred to. “[The cable car] unites *alteño* ways of thinking that before barely reached the *Zona Sur*”, he answered, “because *Zona Sur* was like, a residential area where they didn’t let anything in.”⁷⁰ For him, the controversy was the beginning of something new, made possible by the infrastructure. “The cable car is our spearhead to be able to blend what you didn’t blend before.” Others made the same point. For example, in an opinion piece in a newspaper, the cable car was seen as instrumental in a process to “integrate the indigenous La Paz with the creole La Paz,” argued to be “a bridge that should unite us” (Iturri 2015).

⁶⁸ *Wiphala* is a flag consisting of seven colours. There are different versions of the flag. The *Collasuyo wiphala* is used by Aymara populations. See Nicolas and Quisbert (2014) and Tórrez and Arce (2014: 88) for a discussion of the *wiphala* as a symbol for the plurinational state. It is seen as one of many examples of the “Andean centrism” that characterizes the plurinational state at the symbolical level.

⁶⁹ Lefebvre (1991: 42, 47) grants the construction of the *representation of space* a particularly important role in the production of space. Through the construction of the representation of space by way of the cable car, the government infuses the spatial texture. The texture speaks the ideology and establishes a spatial code.

⁷⁰ About *Zona Sur* being a closed space, see López Illanes et al. (2006: 26).

The bodies under transportation, hovering the skies, had not only a literal, but also a metaphorical and political life of their own. Munn's (2003) concept of bodies as "mobile spatial fields" – as making space when they move about, explains how. With the cable car, the number of bodies in the mall rose. These bodies, when seen as "mobile spatial fields", were a part of the political changes concurrently developing in other spaces. They brought these changes to new places. The bodies not only occupied space for themselves, they also disrupted, contested, and produced new space. They turned the mall into a highly charged political space, opening up its doors and interior to the public gaze.

As I have shown, the members posting negative comments longed for the mall's preservation to remind them of another time and place – a space-time where the future still could be imagined through an ad and incarnated by white kids and teenagers in t-shirt and jeans. Because indeed, there was another body, seen by some as "out of place", that projected other futures.⁷¹ Another kind of racialized "space" underwent processes of change.

National space and the body politic

People have struggled to come to terms with "having an indian occupying the highest elected office in the land", Canessa (2012: 264) argues. He points at the abundance of jokes and proliferated gossip about the president Evo Morales that reveal how disquieting it was for some to have the national body "re-dressed" (Canessa 2012: 265). In Russell's (2011) sense, the president's body was overloaded with materiality. It "stood out".

For some of the young people, he "stood out" in a positive way. They expressed admiration for the president. They were amazed that someone like him, a man with indigenous background and with scarce resources growing up, had come to be the country's president. Nancy, an *alteña* in her mid-teens, was one of them. The first time I met her she looked at me from under her long fringe that often would fall in front of her eyes. She came to talk about how the situation for indigenous people had changed. Discrimination and racism had lessened, and she attributed the changes to the president. She had never expected a man with a background similar to hers to become president, a man who did not have much whilst growing

⁷¹ Félix Cárdenas, the incumbent for the Vice Ministry of Decolonization at the time, declared in a speech that he imagined the future as indian. The Vice Ministry of Decolonization published a transcription titled "El futuro es indio", a part of a sentence of the speech (see Cárdenas 2014: 25). In the speech, Cárdenas outlined the vision of a new paradigm with the indian as its historical subject.

up, she stated. At a later point when others were not around, she would talk, in tears, about her family's poor circumstances. But this time she continued talking about the president that, in contrast with his predecessors, gave back to the people. Because, as she explained it, he knew how it was not to have much.

Nancy's perspective echoes how Rousseau (2010) characterizes Morales in a comparison with the former president of Peru, Alberto Fujimori. Though differing in many respects,

Both personally embody socially significant experiences affecting the poor, which accounts for their populist appeal. They exemplify new political leadership models that, by virtue of their social and ethnic origins, contradict the common imagery of powerful elites in the Andes as invariably *criollos* (i.e., 'white'). (Rousseau 2010: 140)

For the good-humoured and well-liked *alteño* David, it also mattered who got to represent the body politic. First he talked about societal changes he saw in the shape of women dressed *de pollera* that before would not enter *Zona Sur*, lest they worked for the rich residents of the area. He continued, "But now you can see a change, it's not that big /.../ but you can see a change." I asked him where the changes came from. "It was a major step forward that an indigenous president came to power", he answered, "that the people [*el pueblo*] could choose this president." He continued, "Although I don't agree with all his politics, I am very pleased by the fact that an indian [*indio*], a peasant attracts attention."

David's and Nancy's focus on the president's background, a part of the configuration of his racial identity, signals the importance of who get to represent a nation's body politic. It mattered for other young people as well.

Social inequality was a recurrent theme amongst the young *paceños/as* and *alteños/as*. They talked about decreased racism, about less discrimination against indigenous people, better laws protecting women, and policies that alleviated the economic situation for poor people. The president was an important figure in these changes. They could be highly critical of Morales, the content of his politics, his style of governing, and what they perceived to be a concentration of power to both him and his party. Despite this, they often connected the positive changes concerning social inequalities to the circumstance that they now had a president who had also been poor, and/or that he was indigenous. He, so to speak, "knew the hardships of life". It held currency that his background broke against the traditional order.

So what does it all add up to? The framework of embodied citizenship links the initial exchange about the youngsters' choice of colour with their reproductions and negotiations of the ideal of racialized whiteness, the production of racialized places, the ongoing negotiations of the "process of change" and the young people's relationships to the president. The theme of social hierarchies and how they connect to citizenship relations in the past and present runs through them.

Intersections of race, class and place positioned young people differently and affected their sense of inclusion. Young people from La Paz held a more advantageous position in comparison with their *alteño* peers. The theoretical framework elucidated the complex configurations of belonging and the interrelatedness of different societal levels (Yuval-Davis 1999; 2011b; 2006b). This affected sensations of who could claim what spaces, and essentially, their sense of belonging. As the *alteña* Isaura put it, "you don't want the society to reject you. You want to be accepted."

The young people's everyday experiences interplayed with historical and current projects of nationhood in which projects of belonging and ideals were produced and negotiated. They had grown up with the government's grand narrative of change and with the highest political office held, for the first time, by a man who embraced his indigenous background. The government's "process of change" questioned earlier projects of nationhood and citizenship relations based on the exclusions of indigeneity and people with poverty-stricken backgrounds. It could safely be argued that the *alteños/as* practices of choosing colours that could lighten up the skin contradicted the values and norms underlying the new project of nationhood.

However, they did not uncritically accept and embrace the idea of the desirability of whiter skin. Instead, both *paceños/as* and *alteños/as* took a critical distance. In the context of urbanity, the young people questioned the construction of racialized whiteness and social hierarchies. As Nancy expressed from under her long fringe, it mattered that they had a president who broke the traditional order. Simultaneously, however, they participated in their reproduction. They were deeply entangled in structures and practices that reinforced them. Some of them felt it to their bones that the ideal of racialized whiteness had not lost its force. As Álvaro expressively stated: he had felt like a black sheep.

Furthermore, the discussion on the role played by bodies as "mobile spatial fields" (Munn 2003), creating space as they move around, elucidates

citizenship as an ongoing process, continuously in the making. It underscores the importance of paying attention to how practices at the micro level can play a part in social change (Beasley and Bacchi 2012). To see the body as a “mobile spatial field” opens the analytical gaze to seemingly mundane practices of everyday life. The young people’s reproductions and negotiations of social hierarchies in everyday life are likewise citizenship practices. They reproduce or contest the norms underlying citizen stratification (Yuval-Davis 2011b: 157–58). Ultimately, these different aspects point to citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life.

From the production of race, class and place, the next chapter turns to the mundane practices of young men who questioned and negotiated what being a young man really was about. In a changing sexual-political landscape the young men redefined the terms of their citizenship by enacting masculinities very different from those performed at the national political level.

5. Emergent masculinities? (Re)making masculine citizenship

Before you looked down on women. Now you look down on men and the woman is like the hero. – The *paceño* Santiago in his early twenties

At a state-televised event, the Vice president Álvaro García Linera seized the moment to teach young women a thing or two about men.⁷² The event was organized to reward students with the “bonus of excellence”⁷³, a bonus given to students with the best results. Now the bonuses would be ceremoniously handed over in the Presidential Palace by the vice president to a group of *bachilleres*, some young men and women about to graduate from *colegio*. As reported in the newspaper, the vice president spent a few good minutes during the act to offer the young women some advice (Corz 2017). In describing men, he was straightforward. “Don’t trust them, a man never tells the truth to a woman.” He counterintuitively qualified his account by saying, “Believe in what I’m telling you, I’m a man.” His general point was that men would stand in the young women’s way to pursue their studies, because “Men usually tend to look for maids [*empleadas*], not partners.” Succinctly he outlined what the young women could expect: “They will squeeze you dry [*exprimir*], they will kick you out and he will look for another woman” (Corz 2017). The vice president had on a number of occasions expressed similar things (see for example García Linera 2017). However, this was not his one-off characterization of men. Rather it tapped into a stream of similar accounts that I heard throughout the time in La Paz and El Alto.

There are different discourses on men and masculinity in Bolivia. Nevertheless, as the opening suggests, one dominant framing in the urban milieu was the discourse of men-as-machistas (sexists). The constructions of masculinities and public framing of men naturally played an important role

⁷² The information about the event comes from the newspaper article by Corz (2017).

⁷³ A bonus of 1,000 bolivianos (about 148 US dollars at the rate in 12th of December 2017, around the time of the event).

in relation to the work and goals of CYRI, the organization where I did my fieldwork. So how did the urban boys and young men at CYRI understand and live masculinities in their everyday lives?

At the national political level, leading male politicians embodied and reinforced ideas of political space and citizenship as predominantly masculine. In conduct and speech, they played out notions of men-as-machistas. These notions haunted the male youngsters of the organization, exhorting them to dissociate from them. The young men questioned, negotiated and reinforced norms and values underpinning what they perceived to be an outdated, though ever present, ideology of machista thinking. Different levels interrelated and illustrated citizenship as multi-layered (Yuval-Davis 1999).

Their embodied citizenship (Russell 2011; Bacchi and Beasley 2002; Beasley and Bacchi 2012), that is, their meaning-making, senses of belonging at different levels and practices at the micro level – were different from the masculine citizenship tinged with machista ideologies performed by male politicians at the national level. Furthermore, their versions of masculinities were illustrations and parts of a changing sexual-political landscape.

Masculinities in theory and practice

“Men are machistas” is something I heard throughout my stay in La Paz and El Alto. Both women and men often talked about men and male behaviour in a negative way. The umbrella term *machismo*, or that someone was a *machista*, covered a variety of negative male behaviour towards women. It encompassed physical and psychological abuse, dominance, possessiveness, sexual jealousy and infidelity.

The anthropologist Carina Heckert (2017) shared similar experiences to mine in the Bolivian city Santa Cruz. When people referred to *machismo* it was to describe men’s faulty behaviour in relation to women, such as “wife beating, womanizing, and drinking too much” (Heckert 2017: 159). Her study shows how discourses of blaming men shape health practices. The popular discourses of men as *machista*, conjoint with global health narratives, leads to an unreserved “blaming-machismo” attitude. Discourses frame men as victimizers and transmitters of disease, and women as their victims. And though Heckert recognizes that “multiple forms of

masculinity exist”, she emphasises that “machismo continues to pervade social understandings of masculinity” (Heckert 2017: 159).

The topic of machismo is inevitable in research on men and masculinities in Latin America. The anthropologists Matthew C. Gutmann and Mara Viveros Vigoya (2005: 123) note that “the word machismo has become a bellwether term in nearly all discussions of men and masculinities in Latin America.”⁷⁴ However, the term does not explain the complexities of men and masculinities. Studies show that to economically provide for your family and to do remunerated work is a central part of adult masculinity in many parts of Latin America,⁷⁵ and that fatherhood plays a crucial role for groups of men.⁷⁶

Moreover, in summarizing studies on masculinity in the Andes, Paulson (2007: 262) writes that the works “identify two poles of ideal characteristics, often referred to as *machismo* and *hombria*, that take different forms and precedence depending on a man’s social context, relations and age.” Young men most often feel the pressure to be macho, which connects to displays of virility. With advancing age, practices of masculinity are instead performed in relation to “work, family and community, realms of dignity associated with *hombria*” (Paulson 2007: 263; on work, dignity and masculinity, see Albro 2007: 298–99).

Three studies on young people in El Alto, La Paz and *Zona Sur* reproduce these age-related constructions of masculinities. In analysing young men’s practices, orientations, and meaning-making, the pole of machismo orients their readings. For example in a study by the social scientists Germán Guaygua, Ángela Riveros, and Máximo Quisbert (2000: 64), the authors emphasize how young *alteños* are taught important male characteristics by their male peers, such as to be “aggressive, competitive, and insensitive”. Despite the fact that the authors note and describe several

⁷⁴ For example the anthropologist William Dawley describes the Costa Rican popular narrative of machismo as “a destructive masculinity, animated by impulsiveness, bravado, and despair” and equated with violence (Dawley 2018: 81; see Viveros-Vigoya 2016 on masculinities and violence in Latin America). In the anthropologists Marcia C. Inhorn and Emily A. Wentzell’s (2011) study on Mexican working-class men, machismo is connected to (toxic) sexuality, sexual aggressiveness, infidelity and emotional detachment.

⁷⁵ In Latin America in general, see Gutmann (2003b: 13–14); Paulson (2017: 212); in Peru, see Fuller (2003: 138).

⁷⁶ See Gutmann (2003b: 15); in Peru, see Fuller (2003). For overviews on research on men and masculinities in Latin America, see for example Aguayo and Nascimento (2016), Gutmann (2003a), Gutmann and Viveros Vigoya (2005); Gutmann (1997), Viveros-Vigoya (2016) and Viveros Vigoya (2003).

other norms and practices that are more connected to the pole of *hombria*, they do not suggest that these practices are significant for how young men learn the adult male role (Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 60, 67–69, 71, 100).

In a study on criminal and non-criminal youth gangs in La Paz, young men's masculinity is linked to practices of violence, safeguarding their and the group's honour, and displays of being "macho" by enduring physical pain. The street is essential in the production of masculinity. Here they hang out, brag about sexual adventures, and protect their territory. As they grow older, many increasingly incorporate themselves into the "adult world" by dedicating themselves to studies, work and/or family. Gang-involvement is framed as a period of opposition to the adult world, a parallel time (Mollericona P. 2015: 88–89, 143–45, 150).

The third study focuses on well-off youth life in *Zona Sur*, the south part of La Paz. Young elite masculinity plays out in socialization practices in places signalling economic power, display of material assets, and a strong interest in their physical appearance. The male model is connected to foremost a competitive attitude, and "strength, audacity, assuredness, rationality and dominion" (López Illanes, Jemio Peralta, and Chuquimia Vélez 2006: 91–92).

Machismo-related notions and practices are important in understanding the meaning-making and everyday practices of the boys and young men I met. Even so, to lean too heavily on one of the age-connoted poles of machismo and *hombria* undercuts the complexity of their lived experience and ongoing processes of socialization. Furthermore, it can also detract from how social changes affect constructions of masculinities. Therefore, I will make use of the concept "emergent masculinities" developed by the anthropologists Marcia C. Inhorn and Emily A. Wentzell (2011), which takes local discourses, complexity and social change seriously.

Inhorn and Wentzell (2011) take stock of how men's practices and conceptions of masculinities have undergone rapid transformations in response to societal changes. To capture this dynamism together with a pointed focus on male embodiment, physical changes and processes of ageing, they propose "emergent masculinities".⁷⁷ They draw on anthropological studies that demonstrate how "men's understandings of their own actions are powerfully mediated by stereotypes of local masculinity" (Inhorn and Wentzell

⁷⁷ The concept builds on Raymond Williams's concept of "emergence" and R.W. Connell's work on "hegemonic masculinity" (see Connell 1987: 183–90; Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

2011: 801). In their own studies on men and masculinities in the Arab Middle East and Mexico, sites conjuring images of “toxic” masculine practices, their informants were acutely aware of these stereotypes (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011: 812; Wentzell and Inhorn 2011). The Mexican men constantly referred to machismo, denouncing it as an unviable road to pursue in a modern society. It led “men to behave badly, especially in terms of drinking, being unfaithful, and being emotionally closed when they were young” (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011: 806). Their informants were older and working-class men who had experienced a decrease in erectile function. This physical change opened up for embodying an alternative masculinity. For the men it was a “mature” masculinity that contrasted with the macho masculinity of their youth. Many of them rejected medical treatments that could have helped them pursue their old ways. Instead, they focused their time and energy on evolving deeper and more affectionate relationships to their family and female partners. It bestowed them a sense of pride to embody a masculinity they considered more befitting to their age (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011: 810; also Wentzell and Inhorn 2011: 311).

The concept of emergent masculinities is fruitful for capturing the lived masculinities of the boys and young men I met due to the analytical attention it pays to social change, popular discourses and how processes of ageing and changing bodily materialities shape constructions of masculinities. Young urban masculinity in El Alto and La Paz was profoundly shaped by popular discourses of machista behaviour and social constructions of age. It was also shaped by the changes in constructions of femininities that the previous large societal transformations had led to, the transformations that paved the way for women’s increased participation in the job market (outlined in Chapter Seven). Despite these latter changes, some areas of public life were still strongly associated with men. The body politics of politicians strongly played on and reinforced popular discourses that underpinned machista notions of male dominance.

The body politic(s) of the President and his men

Politicians at the national political level reinforced the link between masculinity, power and citizenship. Through the different sexual-political controversies tinged with machista ideologies that regularly played out, com-

bined with President Morales' embodiment of the project of the plurinational state, political space and citizenship were reinforced as masculine premises.

Male politicians at the national level figured in a number of sexual-political controversies.⁷⁸ Despite the critique and public debate these occasioned, they did not remotely jeopardize the politicians' political careers. For example, the strong mayor of the largest city in Bolivia, Santa Cruz, had earlier been caught groping and insulting women at public events. During my stay, the ageing man got himself in the news again. This time for placing his hand on the thigh of a young female journalist at a public event. Cameras captured the struggle that ensued (El Deber 2014).⁷⁹ She steadfastly tried to remove his hand. He clutched even tighter. Insistently she pulled his hand away and firmly placed it on his thigh. Defeated, he called her "stingy" (*tacaña*) into the microphone he held in his (other) hand (Azcuí 2014). Despite the critique his behaviour raised, it presented no obstacle to him securing his position as mayor for the sixth time in the elections the year after (André and Sejas 2015). Other public controversies included a member of the ruling MAS Party and candidate for senator, who stated on TV that women should be taught how to behave and dress properly to reduce the number of attacks on women (eju.tv 2014). Despite the controversy that broke out, the female head of the party's national campaign publicly backed him up (André 2014).

Government representatives were no strangers to sexual-political controversies. Quite the contrary. Notions of men-as-machistas were nourished by declarations of what men were like combined with their own real or rumoured practices of the sort. The vice president, for example, not only gave advice to female high-school students on how to deal with men. He offered the Minister of Health and physician by profession, Ariana Campero, a similar counsel. He knew men, he said to her at a public event. Adding, "Men will be men [*hombre es hombre*]"'. Therefore she would do best to marry before submitting to a man's bid for a "little proof of love [*pruebita de amor*]"', that is, to have sex. Otherwise, he jokingly continued, she would be abandoned and left hanging with the proof (namely a child) (Diario Página Siete/ANF 2015).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ On womanizing and local level politics, see Albro (2000: 74–75n13).

⁷⁹ The recording can be watched at YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teYH2Lv6Ivo>, (El Deber 2014).

⁸⁰ The rumour had it that the vice president was himself quite a "ladies' man". See Canessa (2012: 278).

The same Minister's love life titillated the president as well. During one of Morales' speeches, he found the Minister of Health speaking to a woman instead of paying him due attention. Jokingly he commented that there she was falling in love. Continuing, he remarked, "I don't want to think she is a lesbian" (La Razón Digital/EFE 2015; BBC Mundo 2015). The Minister was the youngest minister sworn into Evo Morales' government at the time.⁸¹ Probably this fact, combined with her being a woman, could have something to do with the number of sexual comments dropped by senior men. At the point when a lower-ranked MAS Party member starred her in a very vulgar sexual joke, the minister replied. She called out on the "machistas" in her party and the patriarchy at large, and that she would be neither quiet nor submissive (*ni callada ni sumisa*) (BBC Mundo 2015).

Throughout the years of his ruling, Morales was regularly criticized for an incessant stream of sexist, misogynist and homophobic jokes. Sometimes they vividly echoed the colonial structures he claimed to contest (see La Razón 2011; Emol.mundo 2012; El Universo 2012; Galindo 2009; 2010). Several researchers have discussed the president's proclivity for chauvinistic jokes and how they tap into constructions of male dominance and colonial structures (Postero 2017; Díaz Carrasco 2014; Geffroy 2016). Canessa (2012) argues that the president was deliberately cultivating a "metropolitan" mestizo-creole masculinity to distance himself from its counterpart – indigenous masculinity.⁸² Historically both indigenous men and women have been feminized (Canessa 2012: 221, 245) and Aymara couples described as "nearly asexual" (see Larson 2005: 41, quoting José Salmón Ballivian's study from 1926). Therefore, through sexually-racially charged jokes, by wrapping himself in the company of white beauty queens, his many girlfriends, and the abundance of gossip and rumours about the unknown and known children he had fathered, Morales performed virility (Canessa 2008; 2012, chap. 8). This did not jeopardize his position. Virility was rather "a testament to his ability to rule" (Canessa 2012: 278). Furthermore, with Morales in power, the already existing link between power and masculinity was strengthened (Canessa 2012: 270–71; on power and hypermasculinity, see Gill 1997).

In the most general sense, a country's highest authority is naturally an important figure. In Morales' case, it added up to so much more. Nicolas

⁸¹ In January 2015.

⁸² See Maclean (2018: 718) on the representation of indigenous masculinity as non-sexual in popular culture.

and Quisbert (2014: 197) describe how the political project of the plurinational state became “incarnated” by Morales. A “cult” formed around “Evo”, achieved through grand state performances, narratives produced and disseminated by government bodies, conjoined with the large production of books and movies about him (Nicolas and Quisbert 2014: 223, 228). Postero (2017) similarly analyses state performances and how the imagery of the nation was re-enacted through Morales’ body in presiding over mass weddings of indigenous couples. With him being head of the state and usurping the power of the Church through the ritual of the wedding ceremony, dual patriarchal powers were activated. Morales galvanized and embodied the church and the empire, the “strong masculine state”, as he oversaw the act and the state’s subjects (Postero 2017: 83). With the president’s embodiment of the plurinational political project and the State, together with male politicians featuring in sexual-political controversies, the national political arena served to play up and reinforce an already pre-existing link between power, politics and masculinity. Furthermore, the link was imbued with machista ideologies.

A few of the male youngsters I met in the youth spaces expressed disappointment concerning the president and the possibilities for change in relation to CYRI’s strivings. Jaime for example, the confident young *paceño* who knew how to swing an argument. He found the statements that the president and vice president had made when they visited rural areas offensive. According to word of mouth they had said, “‘Get children and come here to La Paz because I will create policies [*normas*] so that they will give you houses in the cities’,” Jaime recounted.⁸³ He found it distasteful that they meddled with women’s own reproductive choices, urging them to have children with, according to Jaime, empty financial promises. He added: “Things like that, even really satirical to persuade them.” Jaime was concerned about the government’s work within the area of sexual and reproductive rights. According to him, the legal framework protecting women, for example, had developed considerably. However, the laws had little effect in practice because nothing had changed at the societal level. He exemplified with the new law protecting women against violence.⁸⁴ “You as a woman, you go to make a denouncement, but the policeman is a

⁸³ Even though rumours might not contain any truth, they are frequently discussed and commented amongst people and are thus an important source for understanding social phenomenon. See for example Canessa’s (2012: chap. 8) discussion of the circulation of rumours around President Evo Morales.

⁸⁴ Act No 348, from 2013, *Ley Integral Para Garantizar a las Mujeres una Vida Libre de Violencia*.

man”, he explained, “he doesn’t want to go against a, against another man because he is also a man.” For Jaime, the introduction of the legal framework instead of actually helping women, served as a political strategy to stay in power. “So they have given you what you need, or maybe what you don’t need, but it is only to stay on in the government.” The staff at CYRI expressed the same concern. Many important new laws had indeed been introduced. However, they had not been implemented. A UNFPA report reaches the same conclusion. “Despite advances in legal and policy frameworks, key implementation gaps still hamper the full enjoyment of those rights,” referring to sexual and reproductive rights (UNFPA 2017: 2).

Like Jaime, David also expressed doubts about the president. David was the good-humoured and well-liked young *alteño* who had worked abroad for a year to save some money for studies. He struck me as a reflective, bright young man whose opinions carried weight amongst his peers. As discussed in Chapter Four, he was pleased that the people had chosen a peasant, an “indian” (*indio*), to steer the country. It was a step forward considering the sufferings of past and present-day discrimination. Nonetheless, he saw other problems. “The president still has a conception, firstly, adult centric, and secondly, very patriarchal in which he believes that the man stands above the woman up until reaching a machista point of view,” he said.

His view was not unique. For example, in an opinion piece in a newspaper, a sociologist and researcher deemed the president to be the principal representative of chauvinism and misogyny. She held that his jokes legitimized the symbolical and physical violence women were subjected to. Furthermore, she also wrote that women were experiencing an increasing fear of violence. Even though “we have laws that make feminists in other countries envious”, she wrote, “they do not come to life in the practices and in the actions of the political leaders”, or in public policies, she added (Wanderley 2014).

The president and his men, the male politicians featuring in sexual-political controversies, formally represented the body politic. They made abstract spaces like the state, politics and laws come to life. At the national political level, there was the vice president leading the chorus of “knowing what men are like”, singing the popular tunes of men as machistas. On top of it all – literally – was the president. He not only spelled out “what men are like” in jokes and comments, he also fleshed it out with practices and with substantiated and unsubstantiated gossip and rumours. With their

groping, paternalistic advice, and sexist jokes, they performatively construed a masculine body politic – where displays of citizenship came saturated with machista ideologies. In speaking with Munn (2003), it could be suggested that politics was not only construed and reinforced as masculine, but as a “negative space” for women. A space to be avoided, where practices and discourses work to keep women at bay, lest they be used as handholds for constructions of masculinity, power and status.

But the punchline was not only on women. It was also on men. The citizenship performatively construed by the male politicians in relation to women, and with a nudge-nudge to other men about knowing what they were like, did not resonate with the young men and boys at CYRI. This was not the kind of relationship to women or to citizenship that they desired.

Nonetheless, the young men and boys were bound to relate to and negotiate these popular urban discourses portraying men negatively and the machista ideologies reinforced at the national level of politics (Yuval-Davis 1999; Inhorn and Wentzell 2011).

Narrow frames of masculinity

I’m not like that

As mentioned, the boys and young men I met at CYRI distanced themselves from and negotiated popular urban discourses that portrayed men in general negatively. The cultural scripts at hand did not, however, leave them unaffected. To an extent the scripts legitimized practices, even if they were considered undesirable (Heckert 2017: 159).

Basically, CYRI’s perspective was that irrespective of sex, boys and girls should have the same rights and possibilities.⁸⁵ They should not be limited by norms and values underpinning traditional gender roles, differentiated sexual norms depending on sex, or assigning one or the other sex to specific tasks or occupations. In this sense, the machista attitudes and practices were clearly seen as out of time and place.

In a study by the anthropologist Claudia Fonseca (2003: 71–72), sisters and mothers could publicly boast about their brother’s or son’s womaniz-

⁸⁵ Quotes from CYRI’s stated guiding principles: “Igualdad de derechos y oportunidades para todas las personas” (“Equal rights and opportunities for all people”), and “Compromiso con la equidad de género” (“Commitment to gender equality”).

ing and strong appeal to the ladies. And, as discussed regarding the president's allegedly many women, womanizing as equalling virility connotes agency and the ability to rule (Canessa 2012: 278; about virility in subordinated masculinities, see Paulson 2017: 212). Within the organization however, it was a source of shame to be publicly labelled a "womanizer".

This became evident one day in El Alto. A few of the youngsters, the male facilitator Emilio and I were hanging out in the youth space. Álvaro, the young man who had talked about having "felt like a black sheep" amongst his white friends, initiated a conversation with me that came off as a bit flirty. It was one of the first times I met him, so I gathered that he didn't know much about me. I therefore made him aware of my status as married to a woman and the mother of two children, to steer the conversation off into a new direction. Emilio had stood within earshot throughout our conversation, listening with an amused smile. Now he started chuckling. Clearly entertained by the scene, he repeated that I was married to a woman. To make the situation even worse for Álvaro, Emilio teasingly called him a "playboy." Despite never using English otherwise, Emilio used the term in English. Álvaro gave off an indistinct smile; he looked a bit embarrassed and puzzled at the same time. Since he did not reply with a snappy comeback, I wondered if he had understood what "playboy" meant.

He had not. During an interview later on, this became clear. Álvaro started talking about men who were called "womanizers", using the Spanish term *mujeriego*. He clearly did not include himself amongst these *mujeriegos*, so I pointed out that he himself had been called precisely that. "What?" He got positively confused. I reminded him of the "playboy incident" and translated the word. "Was that what he called me?" Álvaro said, looking a bit hurt. He then abruptly got up out of the chair. Smilingly, he said that he would go and talk to Emilio. He made the parody of buckling his fists, pretending that he would hit him. In fact, Emilio was sitting in the adjacent room. Then he sat down again. Despite his little charade, Álvaro still looked offended. "But no, I'm not like that."

The two exchanges open up for various discussions. One could be how the first worked out for Emilio, who could differentiate himself from Álvaro's unknowing embodiment of the playboy. It suffices to point out, however, that Emilio's teasing filled the purpose of shaming practices of womanizing. As for Álvaro, he was clearly uncomfortable to be ascribed the kind of masculinity "womanizer" entailed.

Certainly, in an all-male space his reaction might have been different. According to Mollericona (2015: 135–36), it was important in the *paceño* youth gangs to share stories of sexual conquests known to be exaggerated. The “masculine sexual culture” conveyed through storytelling, reinforced and strengthened the ties amongst the male members of the group.⁸⁶ Writing about the social setting of Bolivian middle-class men, Paulson (2007: 268) similarly suggests that telling stories to other men about (real or less than real) sexual adventures is significant.

Back at the youth spaces of the organization, the boys and young men knew that their female peers were not keen on womanizing. “Girls today they realize, which guy is a dog [*perro*],” as Santiago told me. “I’ve seen that a lot [that girls warn each other], ‘Ha! That guy is a dog, you can’t trust on that one’.” Moreover, when Adrian dated three girls at the same time, his male and female friends reacted differently. He told me how his male friends had nothing but positive things to say. His female friends, on the other hand, called him a dog. He said that their recurrent negative comments had made him change his mind. Now he had settled with seeing only one girl at a time.

Otherwise it was stated on several different occasions during my stay that women easily forgave their cheating men.⁸⁷ One female staff member talked about the consolation her mother had been offered upon her husband’s repeated “mistakes”. Her female friends had comforted her that “the other women are churches, but you are the cathedral.” She used the example in a girl’s only-activity, as a point of comparison that this type of expression would surely not be used today. Santiago and Adrian’s statements indicate that heterosexual gender relations and cultural scripts might be changing amongst younger generations. At the very least, they were under negotiation.

In a number of different situations, the young men and boys acted to counter and dissociate themselves from popular discourses of men-as-machistas. This became noticeable, for example, in a project run by the male youngsters in La Paz. Students at different high schools (*colegios*) could hand in anonymous questions about sexuality in boxes set up for the occasion. The young people running the project would answer their questions, and nail them on a physical wall at the school for all students to see. The

⁸⁶ See Shefer, Kruger, and Schepers (2015) about peer pressure and young masculinity in South Africa.

⁸⁷ And noted in the literature, see Tapias (2015: 37–38) on female and male infidelity; see also Harvey (1994: 75).

so-called *wall of truth* would clear up any misunderstandings or lingering myths, as it was described.

Some of the students' questions tapped into the popular discourses of men as womanizers. For example, "Why do men only want sex, why do married men harass female teenagers [*molestan a las adolescentes*]?" The male youngsters of CYRI replied, "Not all of us men only seek sex." Further, "Many men act like that only to prove their manliness." Thus, by dissociating themselves from the type of behaviour and pointing to how constructions of masculinity shaped some men's practices, they questioned notions imbued in popular discourses of all-men-are-alike and all-men-are-machistas.

Another example of how the young men and boys acted to counter machismo-related ideologies played out during a classroom talk. One of the facilitators visited a school together with a few of the young men and boys from the organization. In one of the classes a discussion came up about alcohol and sexual abuse. Two students, a girl and a boy, argued that girls had themselves to blame for being sexually abused if they had been drinking alcohol. The facilitator questioned their argument, and the discussion went back and forth. One of the two young men who had accompanied the facilitator to the classroom had remained silent during the entire talk. However, when the discussion arose between the students and the facilitator, his posture changed. Before he had stood still, leaning against the wall. Now he straightened his posture and eagerly followed the discussion. He seemed to search for a moment's pause, and when the opportunity came, he broke his silence. Without adding anything new to the discussion, he repeated the facilitator's arguments. It was just not acceptable for men to take advantage of women just because they were drunk. Sexual abuse was a man's sole responsibility. "And what kind of a man does such things?" he asked rhetorically.

Later on, I walked back to the youth space together with the young men and boys who had visited the school. The two of them who had been in the classroom, described what had happened to the others. As they discussed what had been said, Wilson, one of the oldest young men who soon will be presented in more detail, explained to me that those kind of opinions and practices were common. That boys took advantage of girls that had been drinking. Thus, in the classroom and during the walk, the boys and young men questioned and negotiated the terms of appropriate gender and sexual

relations. They distanced themselves from the kind of sex-driven omnipotent masculinity connected with the imagery of the machista who abused and degraded women.

In relation to the norms of masculine citizenship, these young urban men did not feel “out of place”. On the contrary, their bodies merged with the norms. The materiality of their bodies needed no explanation (Russell 2011; Ahmed 2014). Indeed, everyone already knew what men were like (Yuval-Davis 1999). It was written all over them. This became a part of the young men’s political subjectivity. The different examples convey the young men’s sense of obligation and answerability. They were bound to answer to this pending accusation. And the answer was there in Álvaro’s “I’m not like that”, and written on the *wall of truth*, “Not all of us men.”

This predefined truth had consequences. The upcoming case of Wilson, a *paceño* in his mid-twenties, illustrate how profoundly circumscribing local stereotypes of young masculinity could be.

Gendered vulnerability and suffering

Wilson was one of the oldest *paceños* who visited the youth space. He was also the only one who had children. As a young man and father of two small children that he did not live with, he struggled against being stereotypically viewed as the machista-cum-father. However, the complex ways he had come to embody this negative figure were erased by stereotypical ascription of how young men supposedly acted and felt. These notions limited his potential to develop desired relationships with his children and shaped his interactions with their mother.

Wilson was not in a good place. He seemed to have nowhere to drop his anchor. He clearly did not feel comfortable in his parents’ home. He spent the days out, only to return late at night to crash in bed. His sisters and he were not on good terms. They had felt put aside by their father. And indeed, Wilson acknowledged that a preference for sons had given him a better education. He had gone to a private school; his sisters had had to settle for a public school with lousy conditions. They resented this fact. Now when he had not lived up to his family’s expectations and made something of himself, his sisters threw this in his face. They had recently also managed to turn their mother against him, he said.

He did recognize that his father had favoured him. Still, that he had been better off was difficult to feel when he talked about how things had been while growing up.

I didn't have a male role model, like I told you before, my father was not very attentive to me. It was more about drinking, drinking, drinking and he just came and yelled at me and nothing more. He would hit me and then take off again, he came back drunk, and when he was drunk [he'd go] 'beautiful little son' then he would treat me good, give me money, and my sisters saw that and it made them jealous.

To financially support his children, Wilson quit his studies to work instead. He was patently ashamed of his low-salaried job. His family's sacrifices to give him an education at a private school had raised expectations for what he would achieve. When he prematurely quit his studies and took a low-salaried and low-status job instead, he failed to meet these. Furthermore, his greatest sorrow was the sparse contact he had with his kids. He could not be together with their mother he explained. According to him, she had violent outbursts of jealousy. She had constantly accused him of looking at other women and that he would surely leave her for someone else. Fights were recurrent. At one point, she had started hitting him. He had felt lost. He did not know how to handle her unfounded jealousy and great insecurity. Since he did not want his children to live with all the screaming and fighting, he had chosen to leave.

Despite his status as a father and having a job, he had not reached the mature masculinity of *hombria* with its key pillars in work and family (Paulson 2007, 263). The ingredients of absence, abandonment and intra-familial violence so prevalent in popular discourses of men-as-machistas, were thus present in Wilson's situation. However, they were present in non-stereotypical ways. He left his children's home because he did not want them to experience the violence of recurrent fights and screaming. If their mother's jealousy was well-founded or not, remained unknown to me. However, jealousy and uncertainty were abundantly nourished. They were fertilized by the flood of discourses portraying men as machistas, meaning womanizers. That Wilson, a young man, would chase after other women was thus only what she could expect.

Now Wilson felt miserable, longing for his children. He persistently distanced himself from how he believed that other men acted. "It's really hard for me, a man, it hurts", he said. "I'm not like any other man who, let's say, just easily leaves his children and 'now I'm off' and goes to Santa Cruz, goes to another country." In describing other men, he thus repeated local, stereotypical notions of male behaviour that meshed with the popular imaginary of the machista-cum-father.

At best, it seemed, a father should be non-frightening. An exchange during a lunch at the national office of CYRI suggested this. Some staff members and I were sitting outside in the garden, eating lunch together. One of them, a well-educated and well-off woman, proudly said for all to hear that her children had never been afraid of their father. “Never”, she repeated to emphasize the significance of her words. Just before stating this, she had turned to another woman at the table to tell her that she found her husband to be machista. By first framing someone else’s husband as machista, and a person who was furthermore a staff member in a lower-salaried position and with lower formal education than herself, her husband’s qualities could also come out a bit clearer. Another woman joined in in the critique. Between the chewing, they portrayed this lower-ranked colleague’s husband as controlling. “Why didn’t you come to the staff party?” The women insinuated that her husband had prevented her. The woman with the alleged machista husband gave an explanation why. From the sound of it, it had been her husband’s female relatives instead who had swayed her to stay in. With one of the kids sick, her duty as a mother was to stay at home. Apparently, they did not think the father’s presence was sufficient.

Men and violence were solidly linked in machista discourses (see Viveros-Vigoya 2016; Dawley 2018). It was an integral part of the national discourses of gender violence (discussed in Chapter Six). This link was reinforced, for example, when a girl wanted to enter one of the last remaining boys-only schools in La Paz. Both the male students and their parents vigorously opposed it. The female head of the school’s parents’ association (*junta escolar*), commented to a newspaper that the girl was welcome. However, it would be “dangerous” (*peligroso*) for the girl, considering that all the students were male (W. Pérez 2014). The female head did not elaborate on how the male students would pose a threat to her. Presumably, one of them was her son. Maybe it went without saying, considering the popular narratives in flow.

When Wilson talked about his situation, it was important for him to distance himself from violence. He could never hit a woman nor a child, he told me. He could not stand to see mothers who physically castigated their children in public; he would urge them to stop. His own mother insisted that he use a “firm hand” with the eldest child who was lately acting rather spoilt (*malcriado*). But he just could not do it. “I can’t. I tell him, ‘Don’t shout at your mom, behave well.’ That’s it. I stop there. I can’t be any firmer. I can’t hit him; I can’t.”

In Wilson's story, he continuously countered stereotypes of how he, a young man, supposedly behaved. No, he could not just take off. No, he did not believe in the "firm hand" advocated by his mother. Furthermore, the stereotypes of the absent, emotionally detached father also worked to solidify the institution and high status of motherhood, which he was up against.⁸⁸ Women were routinely given the custody of children, he said. He felt that "nobody knows anything about the situation of men either, as the laws here are more for women". He knew many men who cried for the loss of their children. He did too.

Emotional restraint

However, "Men have no right to weep", as anthropologist Olivia Harris (1994: 60) was told during fieldwork in northern Potosí, Bolivia. Together with her female informant, she watched a young man's anguish not long after his wife had left him. "We [women] are the ones who suffer at their hands", her informant continued. These quotes still capture in what a gendered way suffering was framed during my stay in La Paz and El Alto. Men and boys should stay emotionally sober. Little boys were told to not cry like a girl (cf. Paulson 2007: 263; Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 64). The young people in the youth spaces often referred to this saying when describing differences in how men and women, and boys and girls, could express emotions. They always did it as point of critique, because it had consequences. As Heckert (2017: 163) notes, "Discourses of blaming machismo assume that men are always socially dominant, and frame gendered suffering as a uniquely female experience".⁸⁹ Suffering as a female experience in Bolivia taps into national discourses exalting the "self-sacrificing mother" and the grieving mother (*mater dolorosa*) of the Catholic

⁸⁸ On contextual agency, see Ortner (2006)

⁸⁹ See Fonseca's (2003: 76) study in a Brazilian working-class neighbourhood. She found another type of "masculine vulnerability" that juxtaposed the stereotypical understanding of men's omnipotence of women and the latter's "eternal victimization". Men were often ridiculed as cuckolds in everyday talk. Gossip and jokes were a rich source for understanding gender relations, which departed from dominant depictions. If a man were to be cheated on, he would do best to keep it to himself. He received nothing but shame and stigma if he openly bemoaned his female partner's infidelity. This departed significantly from the pity and support a woman could garner when openly bemoaning the same.

Church.⁹⁰ For Heckert, this discourse “fails to recognize that men, especially those who are socially marginalized due to social class, race, and/or sexual identity, experience distinct gendered forms of suffering” (Heckert 2017: 163).

Heckert’s recognition explains the gist of Wilson’s saddened, “Nobody knows anything about the situation of men”, when he talked about the many men he knew who cried whilst drinking.⁹¹ In Wentzell’s and Inhorn’s studies, the Mexican men perceived machismo ways to be destructive and outdated. This ideology had worked to emotionally cut them off when they were younger (Wentzell and Inhorn 2011; Inhorn and Wentzell 2011). Similarly, in the Andes, women are conceived as more emotional than men. For Tapias (2015: 52) this assumption of “gendered emotionality” clouded “the many ways masculinities were threatened, reconfigured, and redefined” by political and economic changes in their surroundings.

In the youth spaces, the facilitators worked against what was framed as traditional gender roles and stereotypes that moulded gendered patterns of expectations and behaviour. Wilson for example explained that if a young man would lose control of himself, “you would be called *maricón* [faggot]”. Enrique similarly invoked the *marica* (an effeminized man, male homosexual or coward). He was a middle-class *paceño* in his mid-teens whose father had recently passed away. He was struggling to keep up with things in the midst of his sorrow. He explained that he would only talk to his girlfriend about feelings and such things, because “feelings are for girls as they say, girls are more emotional”. His male friends would call him a *marica* if he were to turn to them.

However, even if the young people could be critical of the stereotypical numb man in theory, the alternative of caving in was easy to do in practice. The hardships of everyday life could just feel too much in one’s body, as Angelo conveyed.

During an activity in El Alto when the newcomers drew and cut out paper silhouettes in full human sizes, the theme of emotions surfaced.⁹² The facilitator Emilio framed the exercise in terms of the fact that we all needed our bodies to be able to feel anything and that our bodies were a condition to live our sexualities. He then asked the gathered youngsters if anyone

⁹⁰ See Stephenson (1999: esp. 21, 24, 27); Canessa (2012: 126); Tapias (2006: 98). On motherhood as a political position in Latin America, see Craske (1999); for criticism against this analytical framework, see Cubitt and Greenslade (1997).

⁹¹ On alcohol and emotions, see Tapias (2015: 52–53).

⁹² They worked with the same activity over a few weeks. In the opening scene in Chapter One, the same activity was described, though that scene took place at a later point.

would like to live with one of these paper silhouette bodies. The paper bodies that had not felt the cut of the scissor or the sensation of being kissed. All the gathered female and male youngsters answered in the negative or shook their heads. Angelo broke the murmuring rejections. "I wouldn't mind living like that from time to time," he said. "How come?" Emilio asked. Everyone remained silent, waiting for Angelo's answer. "It must be kind of nice to now and then be shielded from everything that happens around you", he replied. "To not have to feel so much."

Stereotypical notions thus connected young male bodies with emotional detachment and, as earlier discussed, an excessive display of virility in relation to women and girls. At the juncture where men were cast as a bunch of emotionally numb machistas, sexually harassing female teenagers or taking advantage of inebriated female peers, one is left wondering what kind of positive role models boys and young men were left with.

Alternative masculinities?

That there was a lack of positive male role models was precisely Santiago's point. He was a *paceño* in his early twenties who started visiting the youth space in his early teens. Now he had come back to work with the youngsters who presently visited the youth space, to direct a play he had written. Five youngsters rehearsed under his guidance. They would later stage the play in public as part of the organization's outreach activities.

Santiago was disappointed with what he perceived to be a one-sided characterization of men that only zoomed in on the negative sides. "Because when we talk about men," he said, "men are only batterers [*golpeadores*], they are machistas, they go out to drink." He wanted to put forth other male images. "We don't talk about those men who do have a family, who do take care of their family, who sometimes are exemplary fathers still, and I think that we have lost this scope." He explained that his theatre play was a tribute to the hard-working man – the *trabajador* – who cared for his family.

When Santiago talked about his own father, it surfaced a possible background to his play. His father worked as a handyman, doing a little bit of everything in maintenance work. "My dad has been very straightforward", Santiago explained, "he doesn't want to see me [ending up] like himself." As he looked sad, I asked him what he thought about his father's words.

“It hurts, because sometimes he himself demeans his own work.” He continued, “I have also seen how they treat the [handymen] /.../ there are people who are really exploitative.” He talked about the importance of remembering and honouring one’s roots. The hard work of his grandparents and parents had made it possible for him to have an education. However, “we do not acknowledge those people who /.../ are working like this for their family /.../ they are struggling to establish themselves better in society.”

In Santiago’s story, the intersection of class and gender clearly comes to the fore (Yuval-Davis 2011b; 2006b). The machista is embodied through a negative popular class masculinity, coupled with images of violence, control of women and alcoholism.⁹³ Santiago felt that no one positively recognized his seniors, not even his father himself. Instead, his father incarnated himself into a cautionary tale about exploitation, humiliation and an uneven struggle to move forward in society. Albro (2007: 306) remarks that popular men and masculinities have not received the same analytical attention as women in research on gender in the Andes.⁹⁴ In discussing masculinities in Bolivian local politics, Albro argues: “For popular men, stigma is reinforced through this relatively uncritical history of the construction of negative male figures or types” (Albro 2007: 306; about the *maleante*, see Heckert 2017).

Like Santiago, Jaime, the confident young *paceño*, also referred to a narrow representation of manhood. First, he talked in general about how harshly people reacted when one did something against the grain. According to him, there was little acceptance in Bolivia for anything other than a small window of normality. His hairstyles for example often provoked people. They had also caught my attention. Small girls could often be seen in a hairstyle he donned; with one small braid decorating each side of the face. He explained that there was a need “to see also several images of how to be a man”, instead of “not only always seeing one male image.”

However, as already illustrated, the young men and boys did not merely wait for these alternative imageries to surface. They materialized them through negotiation acts, embodying ongoing, *emergent* and alternative ways of being young men in the urban milieu. With his hairstyles, Jaime stretched the limits of acceptable performances of masculinity. Santiago wrote a play, staging counter performances to dominant notions. What the

⁹³ As Luykx (1999: 33) writes, “Drunkenness is essential to the image of the degenerate Bolivian.”

⁹⁴ On rural masculinities, see Paulson (2017).

examples show is citizenship done in practice, filling the gap between “citizenship as sets of rights and lived citizenship” (Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey 2018: 2). The young men renegotiated the terms of masculine citizenship. In what follows, I extend this argument to discuss the young men’s role as brothers and how this role played an important part in their lived masculinities. As will be shown, kin relationships were in this regard a nexus for political practices in everyday life. These relationships figured as sites for questioning and negotiating dominant gendered expectations and putting flesh to the desired multiple imageries of being men.

Brotherly love

In relation to the poles of machismo and *hombria*, family relationships and practices of caring are connected to the more age-advanced masculinity of *hombria* (Paulson 2007: 262–63). *Hombria*-related practices are often discussed in relation to fatherhood and establishing a social position in the community. However, the young men of the youth spaces embodied a young version of *hombria* in their role as brothers. They displayed practices of caring, assuming responsibility and showing affection, towards their siblings and younger kin.⁹⁵ In downplaying these important features of lived masculinity in everyday life, both in the literature and in popular urban discourses depicting men in a negative light, their complex makings of masculinities are overshadowed and unidimensionally characterized.

As discussed above, in three studies on young people in El Alto, La Paz and *Zona Sur*, the age-related pole of machismo stands centre stage when discussing young men’s practices, orientations, and meaning-making (Mollericona P. 2015; López Illanes, Jemio Peralta, and Chuquimia Vélez 2006). For example, in the study by Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert (2000), the authors describe various practices that underpin constructions of *hombria*. Older brothers are expected to take responsibility for their siblings; boys work from a young age and contribute economically to the household; they help male relatives with “men’s work”. In addition, they write that boys, too, are taught to take care of others. However, the authors describe it as a mere time-filler. In fact, *hombria* practices are in general

⁹⁵ Even though to be a father of and raise children was depicted as significant for many of the young men I met, this was planned for later. It was an important part of how they imagined their lives would be in the future. In the present, a child would stand in the way for more pressing concerns or desires.

downplayed in the boys' lives. Instead, the analytical gaze gravitates towards the pole of machismo (Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 58–60, 63, 67–69, 71, 100).

Nevertheless, amongst the boys and young men I met, it was clear that they assumed much responsibility for their younger siblings and cared for their well-being. Most often, the young men displayed practices of care in relation to their younger sisters. According to them, girls were more easily exposed to dangers or troubles. Consequently, this increased the stakes and the responsibility for their well-being. Nevertheless, younger brothers were equally cared for, but this was often expressed in other ways.

Angelo for example, the *alteño* newcomer who previously sided with emotional detachment, stepped forward to ask for help on behalf of his little brother. However, to do so was not easy for him. During an interview with Angelo, he even talked about how difficult he found it to ask people for help. Independence was important for him. From early on he started working to have some money of his own. He did odd jobs on the side and talked with pride about his different jobs and means to earn money and independence. Even though it posed a challenge to his character, he reached out when his little brother needed help.

This particular day Angelo's morning got off to an awful start. Daniela, a facilitator in her late twenties, and I were making small talk as he walked in. He was the first of the young people to arrive to the morning's activity in the youth space. As he walked towards us, he looked sad, hardly meeting our eyes. After greeting us, he took seat next to Daniela on the worn-out sofa, never raising his eyes from the floor. Daniela and I hastily looked at each other with raised eyebrows. I asked how things were. "Fine", he answered. Since it clearly was not fine, I repeated my question. "So-so", he answered this time. He then told us about his miserable morning. On the minibus to the youth space, he had gotten into an argument with the driver. The driver accused Angelo of not paying the fare. Angelo *swore* to us that he had already paid it. The driver did not budge. Nor did Angelo, and the argument intensified. At the point when even the police came, Angelo decided it was best to pay the one peso, just to end the argument. But he *had* already paid, he repeated yet again to us. The accusation throbbed inside him.

Then he turned to Daniela. "There is another thing I want to talk about." He took a deep breath and explained that his brother recently had been diagnosed with a medical condition. He was in need of medical treatment, but they could not afford it. Could CYRI help in any way? Daniela gently

explained why they could not. Upon hearing her words, he leaned forward with his hands pressed against his face. Tears came. Quickly though he stopped, wiping his eyes dry. When his peers soon after came in, he acted as if everything was just top notch. After all, men were not supposed to cry.

The young men's care practices were often expressed in relation to a perceived higher degree of insecurity in the cities, with kidnappings, assaults and robberies (about a general sense of insecurity, see Mollericona P. 2015: 27–31). During the time of my fieldwork, there were a number of cases of children and youngsters who had gone missing and possibly been abducted. According to a report, “Bolivia is one of the five countries in South America with the highest number of cases of human trafficking, mostly affecting women, young girls and children” (UNFPA 2017: 3). A law against trafficking passed two years before my fieldwork was equally a part of the discourses around the rampant sense of insecurity.⁹⁶ The young men took it upon themselves to watch the backs of their younger siblings, to pick them up from school and keep a check on their whereabouts.

Like Álvaro for example, the young *alteño* who was unknowingly labelled as a womanizer. He was afraid that something might happen to his little sister. “That’s why I’m always in touch with her. I ask her, ‘Where are you going? Who are you going with? What will you be doing?’ And I have to keep on calling because with this lack of safety, like I told you, each day more disappear, it’s scary even now.” German, a *paceño* in his late teens, expressed the same concern for his two younger sisters. He lived within the comforts of an upper middle-class family and was studying to pass the exams for admission to higher studies. If he was accepted there, these studies would open the way for a prestigious occupation. He was listing horrible things that could happen to his little sisters. After finishing, he added, “So I get scared you know. It drives me crazy that one day this could happen.” After school, he waited on his sisters to accompany them home. He told me that they found him overprotective. But for him, “it’s my way of showing that I love them.” This mattered a great deal for him. He explained, “I don’t want to be like those brothers who don’t care a dime for their little sisters.” In fact, other boys and young men repeated the same thing. In contrast to how other peers supposedly felt or acted, they *did* care for their younger siblings. It was a part of their self-image; they distanced themselves from a masculinity that did not embrace this.

Thus, in the young men’s everyday life and production of masculinity, practices of care and close relationships to their siblings and kin played an

⁹⁶ Act No 263 from 2012, *Ley Integral Contra La Trata Y Tráfico De Personas*.

important part. This part of young masculinity was overshadowed by popular discourses with a pointed focus on young men's heterosexual liaisons, highlighting instead sexual practices and conflicted relationships. Socio-cultural notions of life phases and life trajectories, heavily invested with a heterosexual narrative and temporalities (see Halberstam 2005), stressed features of heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless, in the young men's "early" version of *hombria*, they traversed the age-connoted poles of machismo and *hombria*. These examples did not only illustrate negotiations and questionings of gendered expectations and narrow frames of young masculinity. They also illustrate the importance of taking age seriously in analyses, and how constructions of age seldom follow straight lines in practice.

Emergent masculinities and remaking masculine citizenship

The issue of gender roles (*los roles de género*) was a recurrent theme amongst the young people, both male and female. The theme is unsurprising considering the framework and goals of CYRI. In the youth spaces, they spoke about discriminating attitudes and unjust situations that saturated their everyday lives. They often experienced these in their homes and close relationships. Besides illustrating how young men's practices of care were often manifested through the theme of gender roles, these discussions also illustrate how practices at the micro level can be a part of larger social changes (Beasley and Bacchi 2012).

The young people were often very critical of how their fathers embodied traditional gender roles. In this respect they felt similar to the teens in the study of Nelson et al. (2014: 197). Martín, for example, was annoyed with his uncles. When his stepdad found out that he was homosexual, he ran away from home to live with his uncles instead. Despite his uncles' accepting his sexuality, Martín did not think they were free from prejudices when it came to gender roles and expectations. "They don't allow their wives to work", he said. Impersonating their perspectives, he continued, "Since I am the man, I will provide for her /.../ my wife is here to raise my children and nothing else, to be in the house." To his unmarried uncle he had expressed doubt about the uncle's intentions. "Do you want a servant or want her to be your wife?" he had asked. "So if you want a servant you can hire someone to do your household tasks and you can remain unmarried."

Many of the young people described how they tried to change gender relations at home. There were different strategies of how to go about with it. From careful and sensitive descriptions of their perspective, open negotiations, to outright opposition and protests.

German talked about the gendered dynamics in his home. “My dad is in a process of change, because before he was really machista”, he said. “Then I started talking to him.” Sometimes these “talks” resulted in conflicts. And sometimes, as in German’s case, the young people could see changes over time. Before, German had been the only one allowed to accompany his father to work. Meanwhile his sisters stayed at home with their mother, doing household tasks. German had questioned this. He could also help in the home. He found it enjoyable to cook food. At first his father objected. His son could not cook food; he might turn *marica*!⁹⁷ After some time of persuasion though, his sisters would now accompany their father to work. And German could help his mother, with the cooking.

As I noted during my time in La Paz and El Alto, mothers were predominantly blamed for reinforcing machista ideologies. Since mothers had the main responsibility for children’s upbringing, they were the ones who allowed their sons to reproduce machismo patterns (argued in the literature as well, see Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 60–61). Some of the young men expressed resentment of how their mothers reinforced traditional gender patterns. It became particularly problematic when it involved their sisters or other female kin.

Álvaro, the *alteño* who had felt like a black sheep amongst his white friends and was labelled a womanizer before, recounted a discussion he had had with his mother. A couple of days earlier, it all began when he asked his mother what his little sister would study. She had turned to her daughter and said, ““You’re a woman, why would you study?”” And to Álvaro, she had replied, “No, she’s woman, she will go to her husband. Her husband will maintain her.”” Her words had startled him. “Do you want her husband to maintain her?” he exclaimed. “Do you want her husband to mistreat her because she is uneducated? No way!” He was still upset while retelling the discussion.

David, the young *alteño* who had been working abroad a year, had also had discussions with his mother. First he talked about mothers in general. “It’s mostly the mother who encourages a woman to fulfil the cliché of a woman at home”, he said, “the woman who has to cook, who has to take care of the baby and who has to attend to the husband.” Then his focus

⁹⁷ *Marica* meaning an effeminized man, male homosexual or coward.

changed. “I don’t like it when my mother does this, you know, that she buys dolls for my niece and that she makes my niece treat her dolls like her baby.” He tried to thwart his mother’s influence. Instead of dolls, he bought his niece didactic books. He was not alone in his objective. “My brother doesn’t want it either”, he added. “He says, ‘my daughter will not cook, she will work.’”

The examples discussed in this chapter point to aspects that Inhorn and Wentzell (2011) find important to capture with their concept “emergent masculinities”. They write about the “changes in social history that involve men in transformative social processes” and the “new forms of everyday masculine practice that accompany these social trends” (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011: 803). And indeed, Bolivia witnessed several transformations in relation to gender. For instance, women’s situation has undergone radical changes.⁹⁸ From the censuses taken between the years 1976 and 2012, there has been a steady and profound decrease in the gap between men’s and women’s literacy levels and school attendance, where men earlier on had markedly higher levels.⁹⁹ Women’s percentage of the population categorized as “economically participating” has increased (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015a: 37, 40, 47; Benería and Floro 2006), and their political representation has climbed sharply the last decades.¹⁰⁰ These changes affect men as well.

The dynamics of masculinities are steadily interacting with changing social realities. In David’s everyday practices of care he questioned traditional gendered patterns of child rearing and of representations of femininity. In reinforcing representations of femininities that do not centre on “the cliché of a woman at home”, downplaying a femininity perceived to belong to social realities of the past, young men like David questioned and produced new gender relations. They negotiated new ways of being young men. Thereby they also negotiated the terms for masculine citizenship.

Talks with parents and caregivers, siblings, peers, and extended kin, were not merely “talks”. They were embodied political practices enacted

⁹⁸ See Chapter Seven, which briefly describes women’s changing situation.

⁹⁹ The gap between men and women’s illiteracy levels was 24.5 % in the year 1976. In 1992 it had decreased to 15.9 %, in 2001 to 12.4 %, and in the last census from 2012 it had dropped to 5.2 % (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015a: 37). In the same time period women’s school attendance increased from 58 % to 87.4 % whilst men’s increased from 68.9 to 87.1 %. Women’s participation is thus slightly higher than men’s in the last census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015a: 40).

¹⁰⁰ In the lower house from 10 % in 1993 to 53.1 % in 2014. In the upper house from 3.7 % in 1993 to 47.2% in 2014 (UNDP 2014; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019).

at a micro level. These practices – when a young man opposed the division of house chores and cooked food together with his mother, when another stood up for his sister’s opportunities for education, when a third one defied an order legitimizing male sexual predatory practices (even if a girl is drunk) in the class room, when a fourth negotiated gendered visual expressions in the hairstyles he donned – they all played a part in how social changes came about and were lived in everyday life. And as Beasley and Bacchi (2012: 115) argue, practices at the micro level form a part of understanding larger social changes.

These practices are furthermore citizenship practices. Even if citizenship in Bolivia is understood as masculine (Gill 1997; Canessa 2012: 275), with a “strong masculine” state embodied by Morales in spectacular state performances (Postero 2017: 83; also Nicolas and Quisbert 2014), this was not the kind of citizenship or the kind of masculinity the young men and boys expressed that they wanted. The kinds of masculinities envisioned and embodied by the male youngsters were in the making. They were “emergent masculinities” (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011).

The young men were furthermore creating a sense of societal belonging via the making of place through the flesh. By imagining bodies as “mobile spatial fields” (Munn 2003), the young men created new spaces with their movements/practices. Through their practices at the micro level, young men and boys recreated the home, the street, the school, the public and private places they visited and inhabited into political spaces. By doing so, they put into effect their alternative perspectives and visions. They produced and embodied narratives of what being a man could be, opposing the popular tune of “knowing what men are like”. This embodied citizenship produced desired and aspirational alternative images and concrete practices of emergent masculinities.

The next chapter looks into how young bodies materialized through notions of appropriate life trajectories and temporalities in relation to sexuality. The chapter initiates the analysis and tracking of the emergence of young people as new political subjects – making a claim to be included in the body politic.



Figure 2. View of La Paz. *Photo: Nika Rasmussen*



Figure 3. Central La Paz. *Photo: Nika Rasmussen*



Figure 4. Buildings in El Alto near the cable car station of the yellow line.
Photo: Nika Rasmussen



Figure 5. Graffiti in El Alto. "My city is changing". *Photo: Katharina Berndt Rasmussen*



Figure 6.
View of
Zona Sur.
Photo:
Nika
Rasmussen

Figure 7. “We
are all equal
before the law”,
announced on
the doors of
the mall
MegaCenter.
Photo:
Nika Rasmussen



Figure 8.
Participants
in the
apthapi
organized
outside
MegaCenter.
Photo: Nika
Rasmussen



Figure 9. The yellow cable car line climbing all the way up to El Alto. The cable car station in yellow is located in the far left corner.

Photo: Nika Rasmussen



Figure 10. Alternatively, one can go by *micro* or minibus. Picture taken in central La Paz. *Photo: Katharina Berndt Rasmussen*



Figure 11. Carnival time in La Paz and the city government has a message.
Photo: Nika Rasmussen

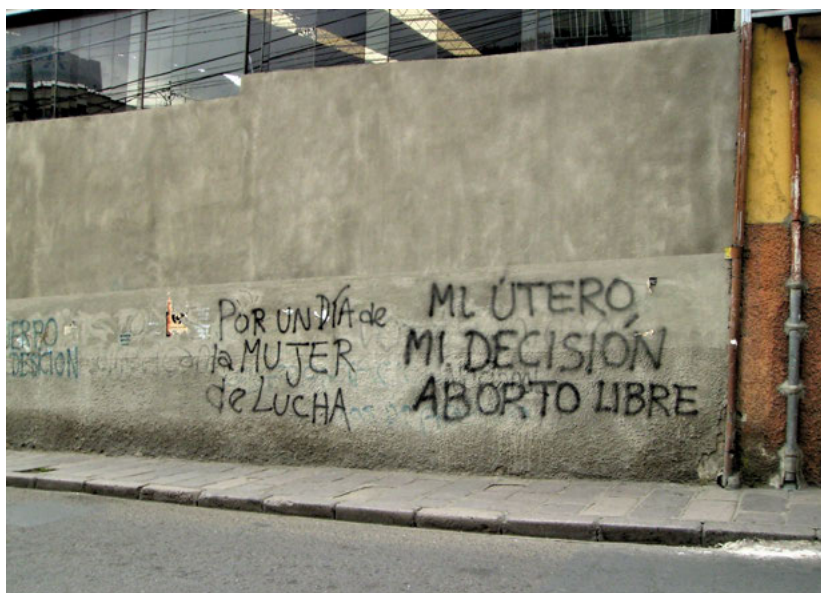


Figure 12. Graffiti in central La Paz. “My uterus. My decision. Free abortion”. *Photo: Katharina Berndt Rasmussen*



Figure 13. Women dancing dressed *de pollera* in the major religious celebration, the Festival of *Gran Poder*, in La Paz. Photo: Nika Rasmussen



Figure 14. Young women dancing in the Festival of *Gran Poder*.
Photo: Nika Rasmussen



Figure 15. Young men dancing in the Festival of *Gran Poder*.
Photo: Nika Rasmussen



Figure 16. Pride in El Alto, celebrations of the *Día del Orgullo Gay*.
Photo: Nika Rasmussen



Figure 17. Crowds of people waiting to enter the *Plaza Murillo* to commemorate the anniversary day of the founding of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.
Photo: Nika Rasmussen

6. Adult-centrism and the young body: Sex education, pregnancies and violence

Isabel and Hernan's relationship was turbulent. During one of CYRI's outreach events I came to know that physical violence was a part of it. The newcomers to the youth space had been invited to listen to the talks of an education day arranged for school principals in El Alto. At the first break, when everyone was helping themselves at the table of refreshments, I noticed that Hernan sat by himself, looking downhearted. His peers, amongst them his girlfriend Isabel, paid him no attention. I went over to ask him how it was. "So-so [*más o menos*]", he replied without looking up. He kept his eyes on the floor, with an expression of sadness on his face. "How come only so-so?" I asked. To my surprise, this question opened up a stream of words. They just kept pouring out. Things were over between him and Isabel. He had treated her badly; he had cheated on her and now she had decided to leave him. Then he told me about how he had lived a life full of violence. And he had beaten *her*. "I have wronged her", he said remorsefully. "I really want to change."

In the weeks to follow I saw the two of them speaking to each other during activities. I wondered if they were back together. Three weeks after I had spoken to Hernan, Isabel confirmed that in fact they were. She was sitting opposite me with her long black hair hanging over her shoulders, dressed in the pair of worn-out sweatpants with bobbles that she usually wore. She looked me steadily in the eye and answered my question, "No, I'm not afraid of him now", she explained, "because we really talked it through." She wanted to give him a chance to show that he had changed.

This story about violence is but all too familiar. It repeats and reproduces the dominant discourse of machista men and female victimhood introduced in Chapter Five. It is a story often told and heard.

This chapter, however, addresses violence from another angle. It discusses whose stories were not told or heard to the same degree. The stories of violence that boys and girls, young men and women, experienced in their

homes were not that often told nor heard. They did not fit into the framework of understanding violence as gendered partner violence. These stories were encouraged within the youth space, however. Furthermore, they were growing in importance and were a part of processes in which young people (and children) emerged as bearers of rights.

Violence was thus one of the ways that marked young and adult bodies differently in Bolivia. Sexuality was another.¹⁰¹ Sex education in schools played out the body of youth as a site for intergenerational struggles of power (Honwana 2012; Durham 2000; 2004; Cole 2008). Young bodies materialized as excessively sexually charged and through notions of appropriate life trajectories and temporalities in relation to sexuality. These were shaped by adult-centric structures and perspectives. The norms and values surrounding the impending threat of teenage pregnancies structured young women's citizenship. In everyday life, young female bodies constituted a nexus for negotiations of change and reproductions of the social order – accomplished through adults' and peers' practices of gossip, slander and control.

The young peoples' perspectives in relation to the themes of sex education, teenage pregnancies and violence make visible how their positions were construed. Most importantly, the themes elucidate the terms for young people's inclusion in society. The terms were asymmetrically demarcated by adults and opposed by the young people. They were important elements in young people's meaning-making and furthermore, a basis for developing political subjectivities.

Sexuality – the hot spot of relationships

Bolivia has signed a number of different international agreements and conventions to protect and expand sexual and reproductive health and rights to its citizens. The role of sex education to children and adolescents is recognized to further this goal, and these groups have a right to receive sex education through the school system.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Sexuality is used as a broad term that includes sexual practices, for example. This reflects the broad understanding of sexuality used within the organization.

¹⁰² For a list of the international conventions and agreements Bolivia has signed in support of sexual and reproductive rights and the plan regulating public policies for preventing teenage pregnancies in Bolivia, see the document developing the guide lines for the national health system for children and adolescents (Ministerio de Salud y Deportes 2013: 36, 39). In Act No 548, *Código Niña, Niño y Adolescente*, Article 22:2:

However, the actual teaching and the quality of the sex education is another matter. The young people I met at CYRI almost unanimously expressed disappointment with their sex education at school. They criticized the content *per se*, its timing and their lack of influence in deciding what topics to be approached. This critique reflects a heated field of negotiations where intergenerational struggles of power were played out and delineated the young body in relation to the adult.

Since young people often are framed as mobile and located in-between, they are put in the hot spot of the societal gaze. The tension generated when the social order is at stake is played out in the negotiations of reproduction or change. In these young people and adults stake out the future in intergenerational processes (Cole 2008: 100–101). The field of sexuality was a particularly intense site for negotiating their entanglements.

Framing and content

The young people's criticism of their sex education had different angles. Several of them said that the teachers' poor knowledge or own political and ideological views negatively affected the teaching (about teachers' reproduction of the traditional gender system in Bolivian schools, see Cardozo, Sawyer, and Simoni 2015). Their critique raises the general question of how young people were positioned in relation to adults in their surroundings, what was transmitted to them, and how the young people negotiated these messages, and intergenerational relationships.

The *alteño* Martín, the only one who was openly gay, described for example how he had argued with his biology teacher about her take on, amongst other things, homosexuality. "She used words that bothered me in a certain way", he told me. "She said that AIDS and HIV and those venereal diseases are punishments from God /.../ that homosexuals have been a part of the disease." I asked if the teacher at the time knew that he was homosexual. "Yes, she knew", he said, "the whole school knew that I was homosexual, starting from the principal and ending with the school's porter, you could say."

children's' and adolescents' right to sexual education is stipulated. See also the Latin American Ministerial Declaration from a meeting held in 2008, "Preventing through Education" signed by the ministers of health and education in Bolivia, promising *inter alia* to strengthen access to sexual education in schools (Ministerial Declaration 2010).

Martín's quote illustrates how teachers' own political and ideological views shone through in their teaching of sex education. Martín's experiences were not unique. In a newspaper article, an NGO representative expressed concern that often the sex education students received was "marked by religious or conservative tendencies" (Correo del Sur 2018). Furthermore, in another article in which sexologists argued for the need to strengthen sex education for children and young people, one of them remarked that the teaching should furthermore be left to professionals in the field (Soliz Roca 2015).

When the young people elaborated on their inadequate sex education at school, the most recurring theme was the teachers' too "biological" perspective, focusing on anatomy, reproduction and diseases. This was also considered a main problem amongst sexologists (see Soliz Roca 2015; cf. Ramírez Aguilar 2013: 153). Rosa, for example, mentioned this when she talked about her experiences of sex education in school. Rosa was a young *alteña* whose mother was a market woman and dressed *de pollera*. She always conveyed an air of calmness and had a soft and reasoning way of talking with which she managed to catch her peers' full attention. She explained that "in biology I have mostly been taught about the reproductive system and contraceptives." Ignacio had similar experiences. He came from a large family. He and his seven siblings and parents lived crammed in a small apartment in El Alto. First he talked about how the organization's framework had caught him by surprise.

I was very surprised [to know] that there are sexual and reproductive rights. Maybe if I hadn't come here ... I don't know when I was gonna find out or maybe I would never have found out that /.../ that it is your decision how many children you will have, when you want to have sex and sexual intercourse. I didn't know all that and it surprised me.

Ideas of individually based sexual and reproductive rights had been unknown to him. I asked if no one had talked to him about that before. "In that way no", he replied, "Maybe at school, 'this is the body of a man, of a woman, that's how children are made', but more in detail no." The sex education he had received through school thus focused more on the teachings of biology. It did not open up to more in-depth discussions of if, how, when, and why young people should engage in sexual practices. The perspective that sexual practices could be discussed in relation to individual rights was transmitted to him by the organization. Experiences from his home could be interpreted otherwise, I gathered, when he described the

following situation. First of all, Ignacio had a very difficult relationship with his father. He seemed to have lost hope that his father's drinking problem would ever get better. He described how, after a night out with too much drinking, his father could come home and wake everyone up.

We are all sleeping and he comes and tries to wake my mom, 'Laura, Laura [hissing out his mother's name],' he starts to bother her, he wants to have sex with my mom and my mom doesn't want to because he is drunk and you could say she doesn't feel like it either. And there are times when my brothers or I get up and, 'Dad, let her be,' because once he starts insisting ... by now he raises his voice and, 'Well so you don't want to, probably you have someone else right? You want me out of the house' /.../ then he starts arguing with us also, grabbing us, like, 'Ah, you're in this together!'

In light of Ignacio's experiences and of how sex education generally was perceived as too biological, it was clear that the young women and men wished for more in-depth-discussions about sexuality that encompassed a broader perspective. Understanding only the physiological processes of reproduction and how contraceptives worked seemed insufficient for them in navigating a messy reality. They were still left with negotiating societal norms and values and gendered sexual expectations.

Often the youngsters also spoke about teachers' and parents' supposed belief in a domino effect. The belief was that any talk about contraceptives and sexual practices would somehow induce young people to have an earlier sexual debut or have more sex. Consequently, they preferred to put the lid on sex talk. Similar beliefs were documented in an ethnography of a project in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (Nelson et al. 2014). One important aim of the project was to foster "open communication" between parents and teens; it was deemed significant for the outcome of sexual and reproductive health. However, some parents believed that the mere talk about sex also encouraged their children to actually have sex (Nelson et al. 2014: 198).

The young people I met said that society's general message to children and young people was to stay away from sexual practices. Rosa, the *alteña* who had a soft and reasoning way of talking, expressed that sexuality was coupled with negativity. "From the time a person is born they tell them, 'sexuality is bad'," she said, "because 'sexuality is pornography, sexuality is pregnancies'." Rosa illustrated this general notion of sexuality equalling something bad by connecting it to two stigmatized phenomena in Bolivia:

pornography and (teenage) pregnancies (see Rubin 1993: 11 on sex as inherently bad, sex negativity). The social scientist Beatriz Cofré Espinoza's (2014) study amongst Chilean youth (15-17 years old) also confirms this fear-inducing framing of sexuality. When they spoke about the theme of sexuality it was saturated with notions of fear and risk. Sexuality was intimately coupled with diseases and unplanned pregnancies. Adults reinforced this framing by locating sexual experiences to the temporality of adulthood, stable couplehood and procreation.

Some of the young people connected the inadequate sex education to a societal "taboo" against talking about sexuality. The existence of this "taboo" was confirmed by professionals within the area (Soliz Roca 2015; Gil Vargas 2019). The word "taboo" also featured in the headline of a newspaper article, covering how staff at several pharmacies in La Paz had insulted and stigmatized adolescents who asked for information about contraceptives and refused to show or sell them any products (W. Pérez 2015b). Formal rights established in laws that guarantee minors information and education regarding sexual and reproductive health¹⁰³ are substantially lost in the face of a reality where sexually active adolescents are depicted as "filthy" (*cochina*), as a girl was called. In the article a sexologist pointed out the prevalence of a societal "double discourse". She stated: "We live in a society that is constantly inciting people to have erotic encounters, intercourse, and after having incited through advertisements, discourses and speech, denies young people this possibility, by subjecting this group to criticism, prejudice and taboos when they express their desire to have safe sex" (W. Pérez 2015b). A survey also showed that nine out of ten sexually active young women in the ages between 15 and 19 years did not use any contraceptive method (Instituto Nacional de Estadística and Ministerio de Salud 2017: 25).

On a local political level, young people's use of contraceptives was actively promoted, however. One of the strategies could also be described as a "double discourse". The city government of La Paz had organized large banderols hovering over the streets during the Carnival in February 2014. The banderols had the image of a young woman and man, lying next to each other. With a determined gesture, the woman held up a condom in the

¹⁰³ In Act No 548, *Código Niña, Niño y Adolescente*, Article 22:2, children's' and adolescents' right to information and education about sexual and reproductive health is established. It does not stipulate, however, that it should be provided by staff at pharmacies, rather parents, caregivers and the educational system.

man's face. This was accompanied with the text "unwanted pregnancy? protect yourself" (see figure 11).

The woman's resolute gesture was markedly different from how young *paceñas* and *alteñas* described young women's possibilities of negotiating the use of contraceptives. I was told that if girls proposed or demanded the use of condom, they might be interpreted as "loose". A young *alteña* summarized this general notion: "Loose women use a condom, because they carry one around all the time." The *paceña* Gabriela who was in her late teens, outgoing and vivacious, with an appetite for life, used herself as an example. "Here the boys misinterpret a lot", she explained, "If I say to him 'you know what, I would like to have sex with you,' something like that, 'but we would do it with a condom'," she suggested hypothetically, "this person would go around talking about me that I'm a whore more or less. That's the way it is here."

These different examples show how young bodies materialized through notions tied to sexuality. Sexuality was written all over their bodies. Remember Martín; everyone at school "from the principal and ending with the school's porter" knew he was homosexual. Young bodies materialized with overcharged sexual significance (Russell 2011) in a complex context involving a societal taboo, the domino effect and "double discourse" on sexuality, and through teachers' focus on reproductive organs and the negative consequences of sexuality – pregnancies and diseases. Their bodies were excessively material – corporeally centred on their reproductive, sexual organs. The city government's message to the young people determinedly hit the same spot. Its relationship to the young body was publicly stated with an "in-your-face condom".

Temporalities

Another critique against sex education was the young people's lack of influence over the subject. Sex education was for example introduced too late, according to them. The timing was a point of contestation between adults and young people. They were engaged in a struggle regarding how to define proper life trajectories where sexuality-related themes played an essential role.

Blanca, for example, was concerned about the late timing of sex education. She was a forthcoming and very ambitious *alteña* who described her

family as *mestiza*.¹⁰⁴ She long planned ahead for her next birthday party when she would turn fifteen (her *quinceañera*¹⁰⁵). She told me that her class had not had any sex education, and that they would have to wait until their last year in *colegio*.¹⁰⁶ She would be about seventeen years at that point. This, she considered, was too late. “I think that from when we’re children we should learn. I see children who touch their private parts and some moms who tell them that ‘don’t do that’.” She insisted that introducing sex education at an earlier age would be a good idea, arguing, “but the child is touching their body and wants to know what they have.”¹⁰⁷ Her argument could be supported by an NGO report covered by a newspaper with the headline: “In Bolivia, 4 out of 10 girls don’t know what menstruation is” (Zapana 2014). Another newspaper article was titled “3.2% of Bolivians receive sex education”, referring to an unnamed report done by “the International Society of Sexology” (Soliz Roca 2015).

Even if these statistics and what they actually mean raises questions, not only the late timing but also the quality, content and actual dissemination of sex education were also recurrent concerns amongst people working in the field (staff at NGOs, psychologists, sexologists) as well as government representatives (Miranda 2017; Gil Vargas 2019; W. Pérez 2013; Soliz Roca 2015; Correo del Sur 2018).

When the young people talked about the late timing, they most often referred to principals or teachers who deliberately delayed the subject. Mateo’s example involved a parent instead. He was a *paceño* in his mid-teens whose middle-class family resided in central La Paz, in one of the old working-class neighbourhoods that had taken some steps up in recent years. He dressed smartly and always behaved very politely towards me. He told me how a parent intervened to shut down sex education for his

¹⁰⁴ In relation to Blanca and her specific context, I interpret her framing of herself and her family as *mestiza* navigated the terrain of performing practices that would socially and culturally whiten her.

¹⁰⁵ *Quinceañera* = a 15-year-old female. In many Latin-American countries, depending on the socio-cultural position and religious views of the family, girls’ coming-of-age when turning fifteen years is celebrated with a party. Most of the *paceñas* and *alteñas* I met were older than fifteen and probably they did not talk about it much for that reason. However, one of my *alteña* informants, Nancy, in her mid-teens, strongly lamented the fact that her family never organized a *quinceañera* for her. She interpreted this as a sign of her family’s hardships and general lack of money, as well as their lack of affection for her.

¹⁰⁶ The last year of the secondary level.

¹⁰⁷ In the dissertation “they, them and their” are used as gender-neutral pronouns when the informants use a non-gendered expression in Spanish or when it is unclear which gender the informant refers to.

class. “They closed the subject”, Mateo explained, “because the father of an upper-class boy came to the school.” Mateo described how the father had approached the female teacher: “‘*Profesora* please, how can you talk about this with the students, the students are young.’” The teacher pleaded their case. “‘But *señor*, the young people have to be informed, they are growing.’” Mateo recapped the father’s objection. “‘No *profesora*, they are still small.’” He was sixteen at the time.

The quotes show the temporal aspect of sex education and constructions of children versus young people. The teacher and parent expressed different understandings of the temporalities. The teacher framed her students as “young people” (*jóvenes*). They were developing and needed to be prepared for soon-to-come experiences. The parent, on the other hand, categorized them as being too “small” (*pequeños*). Too small to be taught about sexual experiences that presumably belonged to the far-off future. Furthermore, the discussion took place between the adults. The students were not invited to give their opinion. Instead, they were reduced to the role of object and audience. The situation bears resemblance to Cole and Durham’s (2008: 7) argument that “when new chronologies of the life cycle are introduced, the temporality of growing up often becomes a source of tension, with different age groups claiming the privileges of a new social space.”

Studies in nearby countries show a similar pattern regarding sexuality-related themes and the relationship between young people and adults. In Chile, the world of adults constructs biographies for young people, defining the temporality of and the required steps in their life stories (Cofré Espinoza 2014). The same goes for sex education in Colombia. Young people’s process of subjectification is equally tied to a specific life trajectory with predefined temporalities defined over their heads when every “sexual and reproductive event” will occur (Viveros Vigoya 2006: 162–63; see also Halberstam 2005 on heteronormative life trajectories). The social scientist Francis Ramírez Aguilar (2013) shows how Chilean young peoples’ perspectives and inputs are absent from state policies, and from programs and policies regulating youth’ health and sexuality. Furthermore, young people are framed as threats to the order and morals of society. These programs understand “the juvenile body /.../ as a field of risk that must be controlled, disciplined and punished” (Ramírez Aguilar 2013: 152). In Argentina, young people’s input in the field of sexual and reproductive rights is likewise unwanted and absent (see Gutiérrez 2003).

The literature supports the finding in my material that Bolivian adult perspectives define the temporal construction of young people’s

knowledge about and experiences of sexuality and the body. This forms an important part in understanding the formation of young people's embodied citizenship. In predefining young people's life trajectories, the body of youth materializes and is contrasted to the body of adulthood. The asymmetrical power relation between adults and young people establishes the terms for young people's positioning in society and for their sense of recognition and inclusion.

Intergenerational differences

Besides the issue of how adults imposed the late timing of sex education, the young people described other generational fissures. They commonly expressed that there was a discrepancy between them and the older generations regarding sexuality-related norms and values.

David, the young *alteño* who had been abroad for a year, described for example how older generations held on to the view that girls should preserve their virginity until marriage (cf. Luykx 1999: 81–82; Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 54).

If she's not a virgin, then she is a tainted [*sucia*] woman, she is a woman not worth the trouble. This line of thinking is still very strong in El Alto /.../ it is strong because of our parents' ideas. I believe that the first group of people that we as an organization should educate, as young people, would be our own parents.

David was not alone in depicting parents this way. In fact, organizations and professionals working within the area pointed out parents and families as hindering the educational efforts of children and young people or spreading misinformation and myths to them about sexuality. Parents were therefore often target groups for educational efforts to “raise their awareness” of the utility of sex education (see Opinión - Diario Digital 2015; Gil Vargas 2019; Correo del Sur 2018; Soliz Roca 2015).

In my material, the idea that virginity held importance was located to El Alto; the young *paceños* and *paceñas* never raised the theme. Furthermore, most young *alteños* and *alteñas* stated that girls' virginity was more on their parents' minds than theirs. They described how just for the sake of appearance, girls would keep up a façade in school and publicly maintain the importance of preserving their virginity. They added that the girls' practices spoke otherwise.

Virginity was not important in the rural areas of the Bolivian Andes where Harris (2000) and Canessa (2012) did fieldwork. Among the *Laymis* in northern Potosí, young people were expected to have sexual relations before marriage and a girl's pregnancy did not incur her any stigma (Harris 2000: 154, 185–86). Canessa (2012: 123) notes how sex amongst adolescents is contrasted to adult couples' sexual relations. He suggests: "These acts are not so much immoral as valueless, since they occur in a place far from the community between people who are socially immature" (Canessa 2012: 124).

Back in the youth spaces, only two girls (and both *alteñas*) stated that they would remain virgins until marriage. Most said that this was not an important issue for them; and some of them let me know that they were sexually active. By opposing the older generations' moral world, construing it as different from the norms and values of young people, the young people negotiated the relationship between generations and their own perceived lack of influence.

Intergenerational control

The parent-child relationship was another dimension of understanding the interrelationship between young people and adults. It was described as hierarchical, with practices of control as a natural part, especially exercised by mothers. Through the youth spaces, the young people negotiated parental relationships and the societal taboo against speaking about sexuality.

Samuel for example, who struck me as a calm and low-key teenager, talked about how his parents would react if he had a girlfriend. "They could quarrel and hit me /.../, "yikes [sound: 'ucha'] no, they could totally control me, above all my mother." As the example with Samuel suggests, the issue of children having girlfriends or boyfriends could be sensitive for parents, and especially so for the mothers (cf. Nelson et al. 2014; Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 54).

Another mundane example illustrating parents' control took place during educational talks in classrooms. For this particular day, the facilitator Wilmer had received a call from one of the public schools in La Paz asking him to fill in some schedule gaps due to a teacher's absence. The first class of gender-mixed students were about fourteen years old, attending the second year of the upper-secondary school. Wilmer started out by talking about teenage pregnancies and contraceptives. Then he asked the students if they spoke to their parents about related stuff. Could they for example

tell their mom about someone giving them their first kiss? The students shook their heads, laughed, and said things like “No! She would kill me.” In the next class the reactions were the same, but this time the students were around seventeen years old, attending the fifth year of the upper-secondary school. One of the boys added laughingly that he would be put under house arrest for one month if he told his mother that.

Blanca, the mestiza-identified *alteña* in her early teens, gave another example when she talked about the issue of virginity for *alteña* girls. For her, she stated, it was not a big issue. I asked if patterns were changing. “Yes, you could say that”, she responded, “but yikes [sound: ‘*ucha*’], my mother would kill me.” She continued, “Furthermore, the mothers say ‘I have made you, you are mine’,” and went on to point out that her mother said the same thing.

In these examples, mothers are specifically singled out as controlling and possessive. There are a number of gendered expectations and discourses at work that socio-culturally “legitimize” their claims: mothers’ role as primary caretaker and educators of children, the elevated figure of the self-sacrificing mother in national discourses and the grieving mother (*mater dolorosa*) of the Catholic Church provide emotional-cultural reservoirs to tap into.¹⁰⁸ Another factor that could explain mothers’ greater involvement in their children’s intimate lives was notions documented by Nelson et al. (2014: 196–97). They found that talk about sexuality was considered by some men to be a thing for women and gays, supposedly thus not suitable for “real men” (see also Paulson and Bailey 2003 on women’s responsibility for reproductive choices).

The young people at CYRI talked about a similar parental involvement that Nelson et al. (2014: 194–95) found in the project they analysed. The project’s goal of fostering more open parent-teen communication had unintended consequences. “Some parents understood the project as justifying a return to the socio-sexual practices of previous generations where adolescent partnerships would be subjected to family approval” (Nelson et al. 2014: 194). The parents’ assessments of the suitability of a girl/boyfriend reproduced constructions of racial and class hierarchies. For example, access to economic resources and distance to indigenouness were considered advantageous by the parents.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ In Bolivia, see Stephenson (1999: 21, 24, 27); Canessa (2012: 126); Tapias (2006: 98); in Latin America, see Craske (1999).

¹⁰⁹ See Maclean (2018: 719) on examples from Bolivian popular culture that show parents’ disapproval of their children’s choice of partners by judging them to be socially inferior.

Some of the young people I met spoke about their parents' preoccupation with family names. This encapsulated the production of hierarchies at the intersection of class, race and gender. German was the *paceño* in his late teens, who was studying to pass the exams for admission to higher studies. The studies would lead to a prestigious occupation. His family lived a comfortable life. A close relative of his had a surname with connotations of traditional higher class belonging. For this reason, the relative found his daughter's choice of boyfriend inappropriate. He had the wrong surname. German recapitulated his relative's words. "I told her not to be together with him, because I don't like the Mamani's."

The surname Mamani was mentioned several times during my stay. It was used as a shorthand to point out someone as being of low status.¹¹⁰ In Mollericona's (2007: 33) study on young Aymara rappers in El Alto, he describes the shame many young people feel for having surnames like Mamani or Quispe. They connote rurality, dark skin, lack of money, overall low status. When I asked German what Mamani signified to his relative, he reiterated it as someone positioned far away from the high status and whiteness aspired to by his relatives.

They think they are gringos /.../. They think they belong to high society, and within this high society I think it's bad to have a Mamani or a Quispe.

The example shows that also fathers could be perceived as too controlling and meddling in their children's business and intimate lives. Young people furthermore expected their peers to fight back against this meddling. At least, that was what the *alteña* Nancy expected of Juana, one of her friends, when the latter faced punishments at home.

Juana had been a regular visitor to the youth space for a while but all of a sudden she stopped showing up. I would never come to know the reason behind her drop out, and a few of us overheard a conversation that only raised more questions about what had happened. This particular day, the youth space in El Alto was well attended. The girls and boys had spread out in one or the other of the two rooms of the youth space. Music streamed out from the larger room where the activities always took place. In the adjacent smaller room, some of the girls were teaching me how to play a

¹¹⁰ Luykx (1999: 334n17) also describes it thus: "In one of the more transparent examples of this derogatory attitude toward 'Indianness,' Aymara surnames such as Mamani or Quispe are sometimes used as general epithets for persons thought to be of low social status."

board game. Chairs were scarce; we were therefore sitting on the cold wooden floor. Just a few steps away, Silvia, the young woman who chose colours that would make her skin look lighter, and Nancy, the mid-teen with a long fringe, talked amongst themselves. When Juana's name was suddenly mentioned, my co-players' attention discreetly shifted over to Silvia and Nancy's conversation. Apparently, the reason why Juana hadn't visited the youth space for a while was that she had been sent away by her father. He was punishing her for something she had done. Now curiosity got the upper hand of Elena, one of my co-players. "Why is she being punished?" Elena asked them out loud. At this point, no one pretended to care about the game any longer. Everyone's heads turned to Nancy and Silvia to not risk missing out on anything. At first, Nancy seemed startled and hesitated. She had not been aware of the eavesdropping. Then she answered reluctantly, "She has done something [*ha hecho algo*]." Silence fell. After some beats, Nancy broke the silence and retook the initiative. "As for me", she started, "people can live their lives as they want." "However", she continued, "I don't like how Juana allows her father to control her."

Nancy equally disliked how little her own opinions mattered to her parents. When the young people talked about their parents or caregivers, they often described situations in which their opinions lacked weight (cf. Méndez Padilla and Pérez Sánchez 2007: 51). Nancy, for example, recapitulated her mother's usual words, "'You are a baby [Aymara: *wawa*], what do you know?' That's the term my mother uses." She continued, "'Don't bother me, I'm not your age' [*yo no soy de tu edad*]." Next, her father was up, "My dad also says that to me, [that] I neither have a voice nor a vote [*no tengo voz ni voto*]."

Both *alteño* and *paceño* youth expressed feelings of parental indifference to their opinions. However, when the young *alteños* and *alteñas* talked about interactions with their parents or caregivers, they used words that indicated a clearer hierarchy. They described relationships based on authority, feelings of fear, and strict demands to just be quiet and listen. This was especially the case with fathers. One *alteña* in her mid-teens, for example, expressed this. At first she mentioned that she did not show much of her feelings to her father. When I asked her how come, she answered: "My father, I don't know, he frightens me." She then explained that she had been regularly beaten during her childhood, which had made her afraid of him. Just the day before she had come home with a really bad grade for the first time. Instead of showing it to him, she had hidden the report card, fearing whatever reaction the low grade might provoke. "The fear is still

with me that he'll do something to me", she said, "and that's why [I act] respectfully towards my father, like hardened [*fuertes*], formally." Whilst saying this she demonstrated how she emotionally restrained herself, how she "hardened" in his presence, greeting her father with a lowered head, looking up with a solemn facial expression, and giving a slight nod with her head.

In a study on young people in El Alto, although done as much as twenty years ago, similar rearing patterns are described in Aymara families. The parents' authority and strict demand of respect and obedience of their children are merited on account of the parents' accumulated age (Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 46–54). Tapias' (2015) study in the Bolivian Andes sheds further light on the complexities of intergenerational relationships. She studied bodily ailments as narratives of social and political distress. Negative emotions were believed to cause bodily damage. It was therefore important to have scope for emotional outpouring. Age was significant for the relational possibilities since one could not question or raise one's voice towards an elder. Therefore children, Tapias (2015: 51) noted, "often received the brunt of people's frustration or anger".

In relation to both intergenerational relationships and the taboo against talking about sexuality, it was important for the young people to visit the youth space. There they could learn more about and openly talk about sexuality-related themes, which they found interesting and useful. For example Gabriela, the outgoing, vivacious *paceña*, expressed this. "It's a good space, where you can express yourself, that is, there is no such modesty [*pudor*] to speak about sexuality as there is elsewhere." She continued: "For example, at the University or anywhere else where you start talking about sexuality, there is already like a taboo we have, it's like they are ashamed."

The youth space also filled a gap in an otherwise general shortage of places for young people. They had nowhere to go to hang out with friends and peers, or perhaps engage in some flirting and romance. In the youth spaces they could escape their caregivers' rigid control. Some of them also described the youth space as a "second home". It gave them the possibility of a few hours of distraction away from troubles at home, such as parental relationships at times saturated by tension, fear and arguments.

Nonetheless, the young people's engagement in the organization could also play into adults' and parents' practices of control and the maintenance of prescribed life trajectories. Some of the young people described how their parents encouraged them to attend the activities because they were

concerned about teenage pregnancies (cf. Nelson et al. 2014: 195–96). The organizational engagement worked in this way as preventive care. It played into the reproduction of adult-defined life trajectories. Not to mention the fact that the organizational framework had been developed by adults as well.

The examples demonstrate that intense intergenerational negotiations played out within the field of sexuality at the local level of the school and intimate level within the family. Young bodies materialized as a site of struggle for reproducing and maintaining sociocultural notions of appropriate temporalities and life trajectories (cf. Cole 2008). These negotiations were characterized by adult-centric structures, construed upon notions of a hierarchy based on age, and parents' legitimate authority to control matters concerning their children's intimate lives. Being positioned as young implied per definition that one's opinions and perspectives lacked value if they differed from those of adults. The unequal status that characterized the relationship between children and parents, and especially so in El Alto, framed young people's everyday life and outlined the terms of their position.

Since the field of sexuality played out intense intergenerational struggles it is no small wonder that the next theme, teenage pregnancies, was on everybody's lips.

Teenage pregnancies

Teenage pregnancies were truly “the talk of the town”, both in terms of the gossip they produced behind the backs of girls, and as one of the most important SRHR issues during my stay. The debates, theme weeks, fairs, different projects, info material, etc. devoted to teenage pregnancies were endless. And they were interwoven into young people's everyday life. All of them could recall whispered rumours and peers whose stomachs had started to swell.

In a study made by the city government in La Paz, the top two things worrying young *paceños* and *paceñas* the most was firstly, unemployment, and secondly, unwanted pregnancies (see Rojas 2014).¹¹¹ The worry has to

¹¹¹ On youth and employment in El Alto, see Sánchez Serrano (2010: 67–70), on unwanted pregnancies, see pp. 78–81.

be put into the Bolivian context where abortions are illegal.¹¹² And stories abound of illegal abortions that ended badly.

In a national survey from 2016, 14.8 % of women in the ages between 15 and 19 years had been pregnant. For the Ministry of Health it was a “national priority” to reduce the number of pregnancies amongst adolescents (Instituto Nacional de Estadística and Ministerio de Salud 2017: 13, 37). According to the statistics, lower education, rurality and municipal poverty increased the risk for teenage pregnancies (defined between 15 and 19 years) and if the first language had been other than Spanish. This could for example include Aymara and Quechua, the largest indigenous languages¹¹³ (Instituto Nacional de Estadística and Ministerio de Salud 2017: 35–36). Teenage pregnancies can thus be seen as part of intimate, physical processes of materializing racialized and class-marked bodies.

The statistic was deeply sensed and embodied in Guillermo’s family. He was in his late teens and a newcomer to the youth space in El Alto. He started work early in the morning every day, helping a relative to deliver groceries. In the afternoons he attended school. He told me that two close relatives of his had become pregnant. Out of fear and embarrassment, they had run away from home. One of them, a girl in her mid-teens, had already had her baby. And the younger of the two, now in her early teens, was soon to give birth to hers. Both of them had dropped out of school. They now lived with the families of the boyfriends. First Guillermo stated that their boyfriends had assumed their responsibility well. Then he quickly reversed this in the case with the boyfriend to the younger girl, “Because, the thing is that he is drinking, he loses lots of weeks in this way.” When I asked how family members had reacted to the news, he responded that his

relatives have been a bit sad to see her like this ... as they say here in Bolivia that when you have a child you have ruined your life, because it is already more difficult and worse for a woman, that is what they say. [Some relatives] have reacted in that way, [another relative] with anger.

Since the beginning of 2014, pregnant girls could no longer be expelled from school (Diario Página Siete/EFE 2008; cf. Luykx 1999: 82). Even so, despite their formal right to continue their studies, many girls opted to leave school, as Guillermo’s close relatives did. The ostracism, the gossip, the

¹¹² Abortion was illegal except on two occasions: when the woman’s health or life was in danger and if the pregnancy was a result of a sexual assault or incest.

¹¹³ “Other” would include the other thirty-four indigenous languages recognized in the Constitution, Article 5, but also foreign languages such as English etc.

being set-as-the-bad-example by teachers described to me by the youngsters, made it hard for pregnant girls to pursue their studies. In other cases, the parents forced their pregnant daughters to stay at home because of the public humiliation the parents would otherwise suffer.

Gabriela, the outgoing and vivacious *paceña*, had four friends who had gotten pregnant during their time at *colegio*. When she told me about her friend's experiences, the stigma of teenage pregnancies became clear. Her friend Ana had confided in Gabriela and another girl, telling them about her pregnancy. The other girl betrayed the trust. Instead of keeping it a secret, she spread the news on the walls of the restroom in school, writing that Ana was pregnant and a whore. I asked Gabriela how the other students had reacted to the news of the pregnancy. "Like, 'oh no, what will now become of her life'," she exclaimed, "'now her life is ruined!'" Soon thereafter Ana changed to night classes at another school. She had felt that everyone was staring at her. From then on, the teachers had used her as a bad example, "'That's why you have to study, if you're not careful you'll wind up like Ana,'" Gabriela retold the teachers' words of admonition. In the end, three of her four friends who had gotten pregnant in *colegio* left before finishing their studies. The fourth could take her exam before the pregnancy started to show.

Gossip and slander thus grew together with the swelling stomach. But why does a teenage pregnancy constitute this immense problem? Besides the medical risks for a young body carrying a pregnancy, another stake is the interruption and break of a predefined life trajectory originating from adults' perspectives. Under specific circumstances, a pregnancy could be considered an ideal outcome of a sexual relationship (at times the only reason to engage in one). In this urban setting, a pregnancy was stigmatized outside the time of productive and procreative adulthood and instead connected with the construction of youthhood and the sociocultural temporality of "too soon".

The established fact of a teenage pregnancy means that adult society and caregivers have lost control over the defined life trajectory of their child. A defined life trajectory can be an outcome of adults reproducing their own position through their children, as argued in a study of young middle- and upper-class male rugby players in Buenos Aires (see Gerardo Fuentes 2015). Adults can also define a life trajectory from the perspective of a different, better future for their children. They are thus not reproducing their position; they are investing in their children's (and their own) futures (see Tapias 2015: 42 about informants investing in their children). Cole

and Durham (2008: 13) write about the specific temporalities invoked through the continuous monitoring of a child's progress in the U.S. "These practices constitute a particular temporality of childhood and a particular way of conceiving of, and investing in, the future."

In this defined life trajectory, racial and class-based norms and values of sexual morality (see for example Gill 1993) are integrated into the definition of the "right time". This became noticeable, for example, when Juana talked about her father's reactions towards her older sister's pregnancy. One might recall that the *alteña* Juana had supposedly been sent away by her father for doing something she shouldn't have. But before that, I had the chance to talk to her. Juana's older sister had thus had an unplanned pregnancy. Their father was a teacher and as such, felt extra liable in the eyes of others for any slips from the protocol. Her sister "was afraid of my dad", Juana told me, "since he is a teacher, he cares for his reputation." She retold me his aggravated hypothetically put question: "How can a teacher's daughter be like this?" that's what he says." His reputation and position were at stake. Well, now apparently Juana had also done something inappropriate.

Like the adult *alteño* notions of young girls' preserved virginity, the young female body materialized as a locus for adults' anxieties regarding sexuality in both La Paz and El Alto. Even if several young *alteños* and *alteñas* rejected this norm of female chastity, female bodies still materialized in discourses of the maintenance of sexual morality. Moreover, despite the fact that the formal bond between the Catholic Church and the state was severed in 2009 (with the new Constitution), marriage held strong currency for some sectors of the population. As Paulson (2007) points out, the majority of households fall short of the ideal of the Bolivian family as consisting of the married couple with their children (in El Alto, see Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 66–67). Paulson notes, however, that it is continuously pushed for by a surprising set of heterogeneous sectors, including the "national Family law, Catholic catechisms and sermons, indigenist movements that idealize 'Andean complementarity,' feminist organizations that locate gender-based oppression in conjugal relations, and national and international development programs" (Paulson 2007: 251).

Young female bodies constituted the site for negotiations of gender, class, race, sexuality and temporalities. Female bodies opened up as target for interventions and risk calculations, and as such – became the object of scrutiny, developmental concerns and projects (cf. Oinas 2015; Koffman

and Gill 2013). The city government of La Paz for example, had a programme targeting pregnant adolescents and young mothers dropping out of school. The programme would offer them a second chance to pursue their studies. The name of the programme, “Second chance”, could not be a coincidence. It probably referred to the notion of teenage pregnancies as ruining the future (La Razón Digital 2017). And at a national level, the vice president addressed the many single mothers and teenage pregnancies in a speech. He called for a “moral reform in society” to change the “moral relationships of the family” in order to decrease the numbers of teenage pregnancies (García Linera 2017). But how does this relate to the issue of citizenship?

Irresponsible citizens

Citizenship in liberal political thinking has revolved around citizens in specific phases of life, focusing on productive citizenry. Men, as workers and protectors of the country, and women, as reproducers of the new generation, speak of specific age phases as more aligned with citizenship than others (Waylen 1996; Pateman 2001). Motherhood has been used as a claim to citizenship, where women fulfil their obligation to the nation by reproducing future generations (Pateman 2001; Craske 1999). Women have a central role as reproducers of the national collective and/or the ethnic group in nationalist projects (Yuval-Davis 1997a).

However, not all mothers are equally good mothers (see Stephenson 1999 on Bolivian ideals of motherhood). In the example of teenage pregnancies, the actual timing of motherhood is of the essence. The untimely pregnancy of a teenager casts the young woman indeed as a failed and irresponsible citizen of the nation. In definitions of “good” or “bad” sexual citizens, sociologist Diane Richardson (2017:72) writes that

Age also intersects with these constructions of ir/responsible (sexual) citizens. The characterization of (some) young people as impulsive, hedonistic and more likely to engage in ‘casual sex’, for instance, prompts association with ‘problematic’ outcomes such as early pregnancy, single motherhood and sexually transmitted diseases that can lead to the labelling of certain individuals and social groups as irresponsible.

But what does this mean in young women's everyday life? To clarify the somewhat abstract connections between nation, citizen and teenage pregnancies, it is important that we attend to the meaning that citizenship can have in everyday life.

In Lazar's (2008) ethnography of the political spaces of everyday life, she argues for attending to the local level to understand the relationship between the state and its citizens. Adult *alteños/as*' relationship to the state are mediated through associations at the local level, like the neighbourhood councils (*junta vecinal*), parents' associations at schools (*junta escolar*) and trade unions (see also Albó 2006; Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. 2007).

The school holds a similar place for children and young people. It constitutes the primary site connecting and integrating children, boys and girls, young men and women into the nation, as part of the citizenry and state projects.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, in the young people's everyday life it was a space of meaning-making, negotiation and reproduction of the social order. Schools are therefore sites at the local level that configure inclusions and exclusions that connect with productions at different societal levels.

Young women's and girls' inclusion in school was provisional. Because, as was described to me – and covered in newspapers – pregnant girls were kicked out of school despite the legal prohibition (see Villena 2015). “They had to cut the rotten apple from there so that the others won't rot”, as the *alteña* Juana explained and continued, “This is what society thinks, that a pregnant woman is a bad apple who will rot the rest.” And now, according to hearsay, Juana's father had sent her away.

Furthermore, many girls opted to leave on own account due to practices of exclusion. Formal rights lost their force in practice. This “provisionality” of young women's inclusion amplified the stakes involved. The gossip, slander and the high degree of worry around the issue of teenage pregnancies reflected this (Rojas 2014).

Nevertheless, the legal change that prohibited expulsion of pregnant girls signalled an important change that potentially could reconfigure young women's citizenship relations. Anthropologist Francesca Rickli's (2019) study for example elucidates the processual character of citizen status and the importance of attending to age and temporalities. Rickli (2019) studied elderly people in Switzerland who lived with long-term effects of having contracted polio as children. Through studying people's life course,

¹¹⁴ In Bolivia see Luykx (1999); Lazar (2010); Van Vleet (2005); Larson (2005); Stephenson (1999).

not only bodily changes were revealed, but also changing frameworks (policies, laws and regulations) for how to claim citizens' rights (as workers, patients, pensioners, etc.) and changing notions of how to be a "good citizen". Rickli's informants had to navigate these changes and articulate their bodies in different ways. This illustrates that citizen status is not a once-gained and then permanently held status.

The different examples show how teenage pregnancies encompassed different levels and belongings. Young women's relationships to their peers, teachers, parents, relatives, schools, and as targets of programmes, laws and discourses at the local and national level, constituted important elements of the processual relationship and multi-layered constitution of young women's and girls' embodied citizenship.

Other changes were happening as well. In 2014, the same year my field-work started, the government introduced a new law, prohibiting all corporal punishment of children and adolescents.¹¹⁵ The process of institutionalizing a new body of rights, recognizing the child and youngster as right-bearing subjects, was thus in the making. The introduction of the new law signals an important change in the relationship between the young people and the government/state. Beside institutionalizing new terms between them, the law also regulates the relationship between parents and children, and parents and the government/state. Chapter Eight details the emergence of young people as rights-bearing subjects. For now, the framework for understanding violence highlighted others than young people or children. Their experiences remained in the periphery.

Violence

Violence was one of the most recurrent themes throughout my stay in Bolivia. It was woven into the texture of young people's everyday life. However, I suggest that the overriding framework of understanding violence in the home as heterosexual partner violence eclipsed the young people's age-inflected experiences of violence. This framework of violence was another facet of the adult-centric structures that characterized young people's positionings at different levels of the Bolivian society. At the intimate and local level, it shaped their relationship within their families and to other adults in their surroundings (such as teachers); it shaped their sense of being taken

¹¹⁵ In Act No 548, *Código Niña, Niño y Adolescente*, Article 146, from the year 2014.

into account or not. Through their organizational engagement, violence became a point of developing a political subjectivity, of questioning their position in relation to adult-centric structures at large.¹¹⁶

I start with the most common stories I heard. Several of the young people told stories about different types of violence they experienced in their everyday life. Most often these stories centred on the psychological and physical violence their mothers were subjected to in the home. Indeed, domestic violence was a recurrent topic in newspaper articles, radio, and television.¹¹⁷ In 2017, the UN urged the Bolivian state to declare “national alert” in response to the high levels of violence against women and girls and femicides within the country.¹¹⁸ A country programme report from UNFPA stated: “Rates of sexual violence and femicide are among the highest in Latin America” (UNFPA 2017: 3). In El Alto, high levels of domestic violence have been documented.¹¹⁹ These were experiences lived amongst many young *alteños* and *alteñas* I met in the youth space.

Two *alteñas*, Fernanda in her mid-teens and María in her early teens, both told me about how their mothers had suffered miscarriages after being physically abused. Fernanda, whose family had struggled hard to make ends meet, carried much resentment towards her father. One reason was his recurrent infidelity. Another was that “my dad used to be a kind of abuser”, she told me, “he hit my mom a lot and also me and my sister.” She continued and talked about a significant absence in her life. “My brother would have been 23 years,” she said, “but I think that my father made my mom fall and she had a miscarriage [*aborto*].”

The absence of an elder brother played an important role in how Fernanda related to her older sister’s difficult situation. Her tone was desolate when talking about her sister’s no-good abusive man. She desperately wanted to come to her aid. In her mind however, the only one who could was the unborn big brother. “There is no one who defends us”, she said, “if my brother had been around /.../ maybe he would have stopped it.” She continued, “He could’ve at least put that guy in his place and said, ‘If you treat my sister like that I’ll hit you’.” Fernanda ruled out the possibility that she could do it. “I can’t tell him that, because of the classic, ‘you’re a girl,

¹¹⁶ Chapter Eight details these processes of political subjectivity further by looking into young peoples’ engagement in and relationship to local and national political spaces.

¹¹⁷ See for example La Razón Digital/EFE (2017); Ministerio de Comunicación (2014); M. Villa (2014); Camacho Guzmán (2014); Mendoza (2014); Erbol Digital (2015).

¹¹⁸ See for example La Razón Digital/ABI (2017); Reynaldo and Alanoca (2017); Diario Página Siete/ABI (2017).

¹¹⁹ See Baldivieso (2010: 105) and Rozée, Rance, and Mulder (2016).

what do you know’.” Different temporal moments in her life, gender and age thus coalesced into the image of an older, male sibling who could have defended her sister’s body – and presumably hers too if she were to face similar problems.

María had another background than Fernanda. María lived in a middle-class area of El Alto and had not experienced the same economic distress that Fernanda shared with me. In relation to violence though, their stories shared similar features. “My dad was violent towards us”, María said, “he hit us and our mom too.” A long time ago, her father had moved away to live with another woman after cheating on her mother. Like Fernanda, María blamed her father for her mother’s miscarriage. “It came to the point that he caused my mother’s miscarriage, she lost a baby.” These experiences shaped how María framed her present and future relationship to her little brothers. They would not repeat their father’s behaviour, she would make sure of that. “Because if they ever hit a woman”, she continued, “I won’t consider them to be my brothers”, she said uncompromisingly. “That is not what being a man means.”

If we hastily consider the examples, we might be tempted to analytically read practices of violence from a narrow gender perspective that cast men as perpetrators and women as victims. The framework of gendered partner violence represents a strong force in Bolivia. It was repeated in various ways, for example, through newspaper coverage of new laws in the area (for example Act No 348 specifically addressing women as targets of violence), cases of violence and women’s and girls’ (and also some men’s and boys’) routine-like statements of men’s machista behaviour (cf. Heckert 2017). However, this framework does not elucidate the complexity of violence in Bolivia. Indeed, the anthropologist Krista E. Van Vleet (2008) criticizes the one-sided construction of the perpetrator.

Domestic violence is increasingly part of the public discourse in Bolivia. The hegemonic discourses about domestic violence, and the law itself, emphasize social relationships that only partly coincide with the social and material realities of Sullk’atas [her informants]. Most significantly, the assumption that domestic violence emerges solely from a relationship of power asymmetry between men and women obscures the significance of those relationships that extend beyond the married couple. (Van Vleet 2008: 161)

Van Vleet (2008: 171) argues that this focus, reflecting national and transnational discourses of gender constructions, neglects local configurations of power and other important social relationships besides those between

men and women. Instead, she studies the relationships and instances of violence between mothers and daughters-in-law and between sisters-in-law's. Van Vleet's important point is that even though partner violence occurred during her fieldwork, a narrow-minded focus on that particular relationship does little to explain other cases of violence.

Furthermore, in the literature on violence in the Andes, adults are in focus. Like Van Vleet, Rivera Cusicanqui (2008: 210–11) criticizes the same framework of how violence in the home is conceptualized. The law against violence within the family leaves out the symbolical and physical violence that housekeepers, often living in the homes of their employers, are subjected to. Canessa (2012: 238–43) discusses partner violence in relation (though not limiting it) to men's frustrated sense of racial inferiority and social immobility, which are embodied by their female partners to a higher degree. Amongst the *Laymis*, Harris (1994) discusses four contexts and levels for the use of physical force between adults. One of them is domestic violence understood as wife-beating.¹²⁰ Physical punishment of children is not included. The reason for this, Harris explains (1994: 45) is that it is not asserted and most parents consider it to be wrong, even if it happens on rare occasions. This contrasts with the perspective taken on physical punishment of children in the Peruvian Andes, where the anthropologist Penelope Harvey (1994) did fieldwork. In a discussion of primarily practices of violence amongst adults, she describes though how children are beaten from early years. These are “an expression of a relationship of hierarchical respect” which children are obliged to accept from parents and older siblings (Harvey 1994: 69–70). Beatings were frequent and uncontested practices of establishing kinship. At least with hindsight, adults perceived the beatings of their childhood as acceptable and legitimate.

In the study of youth in El Alto by Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert (2000), beatings within Aymara families are equally described as a regular and accepted methods for parents (and older siblings) for raising a child in exchange for the care given. Beatings are legitimized for the child's own good so that he or she will become a “good person”. Without discussing it further though, the authors observe that “while the society identifies and calls attention to spousal violence [*violencia conyugal*], almost no one

¹²⁰ Harris (1994) includes 1) territorial claims between different communities (*ayllus*), 2) individual and group fights at *fiestas* (due to tensions and quarrels), 3) the ritualized violence of the *Tinku* battle where men, but also women, fight contenders from other moieties, and 4) domestic violence understood as wife-beating.

questions the parents' right to discipline and [physically] punish their children as they see fit" (Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert 2000: 53).

Hence in the (mostly anthropological) literature, the discussion of violence in the Andes has in general revolved around adults. Nevertheless, in my material children and young people were considered possible and likely targets of violence. It struck me when pondering Fernanda's and María's stories of violence that the violence they themselves were subjected to was minimised. They focused instead on their mothers' and sister's experiences. Fernanda's and María's choice of focus can be interpreted as a reluctance to talk about the sensitive issue of being physically abused. It may be easier to talk about someone else's experiences instead. Without precluding this, it is possible, however, that their choice and focus also were shaped by how their mothers' and sister's experiences readily corresponded with hegemonic discourses of how to talk about intrafamilial violence, that is, with a man as perpetrator and his female partner as victim.

This, I argue, confirms Van Vleet's (2008) and Rivera Cusicanqui's (2008) points. The flipside of an overriding framework of how to understand violence could be that some experiences and relationships become fronted whereas others are left behind. My impressions were that in general, less attention was given to the young people's mundane, routine-like experiences of violence in the home. The overriding discourses reading domestic violence as gendered partner violence, shadowed the fact that boys and girls, young women and men, were also targets of violence in their homes by both female and male caregivers, mothers and fathers. When Samuel, who was a new visitor of the youth space, for example, previously told us that his parents would hit him if he were to hook up with a girlfriend, he laid no stress on the aspect of being physically castigated. That fact seemed self-evident and in no need of being lamented, explained nor even questioned. As sociologist Kenneth Plummer (1995) argues, stories need an interpretive community in order for them to be heard. The community supports and bestows recognition upon the story.

However, an interpretive community was in the making. Within the youth spaces, the facilitators worked with the topic of violence that addressed young people's experiences. I came to know how this had particularly affected one of the *alteñas*. Sara, was in her late teens and came across as rather shy. There was a lingering tinge of sadness over her comportment. She did not interact much with her peer *alteños* during the activities, nor did she take part in the playful joking and talks before or after. When she talked about the activities and people at CYRI, they nevertheless seemed

very important to her. She emphasized the significance for her of feeling that she was not the only one with problems at home. An activity in the youth space had made her realize that. “When we talked about the issue of violence,” she said, “I started to think.” She continued:

When [Emilio, the facilitator] asked us, like, ‘How do you endure the violence in your homes? When was the last time you got hit? When did they shout at you and you were hurting?’ He asked me like that and I answered him and started crying, and I also listened, I wasn’t the only one but all of us, ‘When was the last time you got hit?’ ‘Yesterday’, ‘Recently’, they all responded.

The talks at the organization had encouraged her to take a stand in her home. “For me”, she started, “this has been something that has made me say, ‘Here I stop everything, here I stop the violence.’”

The attention given to young people’s experiences of violence informed them that violence against youth/minors was illegal, depicting it as morally wrongful behaviour, and a violation of their bodily integrity. Some of them had developed a notion of themselves as rights-bearers. This became especially clear in relation to the girls and young women who often pointed out the difference between themselves and their mothers who were exposed to domestic violence. They said that they knew their rights – implying that their mothers did not.

In fact, the notion of children and young people as bearers of rights was growing in general in Bolivia. This development ties into processes at the international level. Boyden (1997) describes the gradual growth of a global standard of childhood, with norms and values stemming from the North, and disseminated to the South through colonial relations, international organs, and international conventions. This standardization has increasingly aligned with rights discourses, with the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, developed in 1989, signed and ratified by Bolivia in 1990,¹²¹ as a defining event in this regard. In Bolivia, a law specifically targeting young people, the Youth Act (*Ley de la Juventud*) from the year 2013 is an example of this. Another is the law prohibiting all corporal punishment of children and adolescents, from the year 2014.¹²²

This rights-based perspective that the young people learned through the organization could be contrasted with the perspective of Mateo, the always

¹²¹ For the information, see United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2020).

¹²² In Act No 548, *Código Niña, Niño y Adolescente*, Article 146, from the year 2014.

smartly dressed middle-class *paceño* with polite manners. Instead of seeing the physical castigation his teacher meted out to him as a violation of his rights, he instead saw it as an expression of care.

I think it's a way in which you yourself can notice that the teacher cares for you. He doesn't want to see you there roaming about the streets, he doesn't want to see you begging for money, he wants to see you become a professional [*un profesional*] /.../ and even if it is with blows [*golpes*] /.../ he wants to see you make something more of yourself.

Mateo was the only one to talk to me about physical castigation in this positive way. It countered the kind of framework the organization worked for. It contrasted with the growing legal recognition of children and young people as political subjects and bearers of rights detailed in Chapter Eight. It struck me, however, that I would have found it more unlikely to hear a young woman advance this perspective. With hegemonic discourses of women as victims and notions of female suffering, moreover, in light of constructions of masculinities that castigated male expressions of vulnerability and emphasized their role as providers (see chapter five) – his perspective in fact made perfect sense.

The stories, discourses and practices around sexuality-related themes and violence bring to light intersections of age, gender and sexuality and some of their pertinent temporalities. Young bodies materialized – they became visible or overloaded with significance in specific ways that differed from adults' bodies. This conflux materialized young bodies as specifically intense sites for struggles of change and reproduction of norms and values (Cole 2008). The themes and the young people's positionings formed an important part of their meaning-making, their relationships with adults at the local level, and with their parents/caregivers in the intimate spaces of the home. The social division of age asymmetrically positioned youth in relation to adults, which affected their sense of being taken into account. Young people questioned and negotiated the terms for their inclusion. Nonetheless, they often found themselves without “a voice nor a vote”, to paraphrase the words of Nancy's father.

The next chapter also looks into gendered expectations, negotiations and changes taking place in the sexual-political landscape. Young urban desires are discussed in relation to representations of the *señorita* and the *cholita* and how these are linked to projects of nationhood. Whereas some of the young women actively strove to embody the *señorita*, others rejected her *persona* for being submissive and playing by the rules of men. As will be

shown, depending on their positionings in crosscutting hierarchies, young women had different roads before them. They were nevertheless shaping femininities in ways closely aligned with their own aspirations and projected belongings.

7. Beyond the *señorita* and *cholita*? (Re)making feminine citizenship

When I entered the youth space in La Paz for the first time, the facilitator Wilmer was just heading out. He had been invited to a school to talk to a group of students. Hurriedly he said that I could join him. Seated in a crowded minibus, Wilmer commented on the students' background that we were about to meet. He said that their parents mostly were migrants from the countryside who had come to the city for jobs. Their mothers, *señoras de pollera*, often worked as domestic workers in the more affluent neighbourhood close by.

We continued the bumpy journey towards the school. Little did I know that one of the students soon would deliver a joke that opened up for understanding the historical and current productions of femininities and socio-political hierarchies.

Upon arrival Wilmer quickly initiated his talk. He spoke about HIV prevention, contraceptives, teenage pregnancies and violence in romantic relationships. After this, he asked the students, about 15–16 years old, to respond anonymously to a question on a piece of paper. The question was, "What would your ideal girlfriend/boyfriend look like?" I ended up sitting close to a boy prone to making jokes. While his peers jotted down their answers, he took the opportunity to remark "I like *cholitas*" in a jocular tone. The boys within earshot laughed while they continued writing.

Shortly afterwards Wilmer collected the notes. He divided their answers into boy and girl piles, and started reading the girls' answers aloud, one after the other. It soon became clear that physical height was important. Nearly half of the girls' answers specified that their ideal boyfriend was tall. When one answer revealed a girl's yearning for a boy "with muscles", the boys disappointedly exclaimed "Noooo!" When another girl wanted her boyfriend to be "a bit daring [*atrevido*]", her male peers booed stridently.

Then came the turn for the boys' pile. "Tall, beautiful and one year younger", someone had answered. "Nice figure, with a waist", a second boy opined. "Tall, sexy and beautiful hair", a third boy wrote. As Wilmer

worked his way through the pile, the students offered lavish feedback. However, one response clearly stood out from the rest. When Wilmer read, “I like *cholitas*”, the students, boys as girls, burst out in unison loud laughter. They filled the big classroom with commotion. Several male students lay across their desks, bent double, pounding it with their fists while they were laughing. Others cheerfully clapped their hands whilst chuckling.

The students’ laughter triggered questions. I turned to the young people at CYRI and asked if they could explain why the high school students had laughed so uproariously. Their answers detailed the desires, expectations surrounding and productions of young urban femininities. The *cholita* materialized complex and ambivalent sediments of notions with roots far back in time. The “tall, sexy” (white) *señorita* with “beautiful hair” surfaced as the *cholita*’s desired opposite. Hierarchies of femininities and processes of differentiation were reflected in the logics of the heterosexual market of desire.

The government’s projected “process of change” had been turning its wheels for a decade. Despite this, norms and values remained firmly in place. Gender ideals and sticky structures from earlier projects of nationhood echoed in the laughter. It illuminated a continuous production of bodies as in and out of place. The young women I met at the organization negotiated the positionings of the *señorita* or the *cholita*. These negotiations were contingent on their location in crosscutting hierarchies at the local and national level, combined with the critical juncture of the current project of nationhood. Analyses of intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality and age elucidate the young women’s and girls’ different possibilities to negotiate ideals.

Furthermore, the organizational focus on *los roles de género* (gender roles) resonated with the young people’s experiences in their everyday lives, understood as experiences of injustice and discrimination. The young women’s and girls’ organizational engagement aligned with the development of alternative femininities and a political subjectivity that questioned and negotiated femininity-positions writ large. Their embodied citizenship countered characteristics of the *señorita* position, understood as submissive and playing by the rules of men, together with the rurally connected *cholita*, uneducated and unaware of her rights and associated with untimely pregnancies. Nevertheless, these representations simultaneously informed the young women’s practices, choices and aspirations in everyday life. These ongoing processes illuminate citizenship as continuously in the making.

However, in order to understand the current productions of femininities and their relationship to citizenship a glance back in time is necessary.

Gender ideals and nationhood

Competing images of the ideal woman are one aspect of the contradictory process of nation building in Bolivia. (Gill 1993: 72)

In the project of building a modern nation state, intellectuals proclaimed the *criolla*,¹²³ the upper-class lady, to be the mother of the nation. Her uterus would give birth to the nation's new citizens, to prosperity, and progress (Stephenson 1999: 20). At the time, bodies were believed to contain innate differences. Physical differences naturalized the hierarchical order based on gender, race and class (Stephenson 1999: 12–13; see also Barragan 1997 on law and discrimination).

From the beginning of the twentieth century, hygiene was implemented in the curriculum of rural schools. Here the creole elite's interests took concrete form. "Dirt and pollution constituted racialized signifiers of disorder deployed by hegemonic discourses to designate the native Andean and working-class *cholo* peoples" (Stephenson 1999: 112). The way forward was through "the making of a disciplined, gendered peasantry at the margins of modernity" (Larson 2005: 35).

Schools in general increased their importance in socializing girls to their different future roles in Bolivia. In a work of literary analysis, Marcia Stephenson (1999) finds how upper-class girls were prepared for life as *amas de casas* (housewives), with motherhood as ultimate goal and source of recognition (Stephenson 1999: 17–18). The *criolla* was the pure mother composed by selflessness and love. She was "not 'of the flesh'" (Stephenson 1999: 18). Instead she was described as a flower, angel, apostle etc., with wordings found in religion and nature.

The role of the teacher was intimately bound up with the upper-class imageries of motherhood. It was not only women's natural responsibility,

¹²³ Quoting Stephenson, "the term 'criollo' originally designated people of Spanish descent born in the Americas, in the Andean region, [but] it has come to mean a member of the oligarchy, someone who holds sway over economic, legislative, and judicial power. Often referred to by Indians as '*los blancos*' [whites], criollos speak Spanish and identify generally with western notions of civilization, progress" (Stephenson 1999: 2).

but also their social responsibility to foster the new nation's inhabitants. With these arguments, women's organizations fought for their right to education and to work as teachers (Stephenson 1999: 21). Despite that their claims were founded on women's role as mothers, which linked them to the private sphere, "social motherhood" legitimized their presence in the public sphere. Upper-class women could thus move around in previously closed public spaces, implementing social assistance programs and working as teachers (Stephenson 1999: 27–28).

According to a thesis presented in 1932, the Aymara woman's flesh was moulded into "steel" by the exigencies of the austere environment at the high plateau and the Aymara culture. Argona continues her description of the Aymara woman: "Her will power is stronger than that of any other race on earth" (María Frontaura Argona 1932, 36–38, 40–41, cited in Larson 2005: 41–42). Unlike *criollas* who fought for the right to work, Aymara working-class urban *cholas* already belonged to the workforce and moved around in public spaces. They had other interests than those of upper-class women's organizations. Furthermore, in their private lives they questioned the link between the Mother and the Home. They rejected state-sponsored practices and institutions like marriage for how they undergirded colonial structures (Stephenson 1999). For example, unionized *cholas* took the *pollera* as their symbol. For them, it represented an alternative femininity. It undercut the legitimacy of the national project, representing instead working-class struggles and alternative life-worlds (Stephenson 1999: 29–30, 34).

In the decades of 1920–1940s, women's organized resistance in women-only unions increased rapidly (Stephenson 1999: 176). Meanwhile, the upper classes grew concerned about how the boundaries between classes and ethnicities were being transgressed. Indigenous bodies were seen as sites of contamination. During the 1920s–1940s, the public gaze increasingly fell upon urban *cholas*' bodies and clothes. The *pollera* became the physical marker and crossroad of "race and pathology" (Stephenson 1999: 142). Medical and health policies targeted *cholas* with the aim of restricting and regulating their movements, to separate them from the domains of the upper classes (Stephenson 1999: 146).

In the 1940s, the national project took a new turn. *Mestizaje* (here "racial-cultural fusion") would lead the way forward (Larson 2005: 33). However, the homely mother and wife still polished the way to true womanhood. Upper-class ideals of femininity continued to set the standard. All

women, irrespective of racial or geographical belonging, were now expected to fit the ideal of housewife and mother (Larson 2005: 46–48). Instead of uniting the indian and the white nation, the split was reproduced through imposing the same ideals as before (Stephenson 1999: 35).

The revolution in 1952 brought about major changes. Nationhood post-revolution sought to eradicate and obfuscate ethnic and racial differences. *Campesino* (peasant) officially supplanted the highly derogatory word *indio*. Universal suffrage was introduced and education expanded. Furthermore, the agrarian reform favoured individualized land rights to the detriment of communal land holding. With the revolution, the *criollo* upper class lost much of its former economic and political power. Mines were nationalized and the prohibition of the forced-labour system, which had provided the upper class with free labour, destroyed the hacienda-system (Gill 1993; 1990).

In La Paz, many upper-class women had to seek employment for the first time. Women's educational levels and participation in the labour market increased. With an expansion of the urban economy in the 1960s and the 1970s, the city saw the growth of an emerging middle strata and a new upper class. In these new groups, many old gender patterns could live on. The wives who had husbands that could economically provide for the whole family could dedicate themselves fully to the duties of being wife and mother. Simultaneously large numbers of men and women from rural areas migrated to the city. Sustained livelihood from agriculture became increasingly difficult. Poverty, population growth and inheritance patterns in the rural areas, combined with more employment opportunities for younger women as live-in domestic workers, resulted in more women migrating. A majority were young and unmarried. Their presence in the city disturbed the sensibilities of the well-to-do classes. They also jeopardized the relative social gains of female Aymara merchants, the *cholas paceñas*, who had managed to successfully establish themselves in the city. For them, fashion and elaborate clothing became means to distinguish themselves from the poor young migrant women. With more exclusive fabrics, specific colours, patterns and accessories they created a more expensive version of being dressed *de pollera* (Gill 1993; 1990).

The *pollera* has thus been used in various ways to assert difference. Furthermore, in Andean Bolivia, women have maintained the use of traditional clothing to a higher degree than men. They are the ones who most clearly display racialized markers vis-à-vis their selection of clothes, hairdos, lan-

guage, and by their spatial locations (see Cadena 1996; Paulson 2002; Stephenson 1999: 4, 151). As Canessa states: “There can be no doubt that social and racial mobility is most clearly inscribed in the dress and bodies of women” (Canessa 2012: 232–33).

The *pollera* continues to animate political struggle. It has renewed significance in state projects emphasizing national heterogeneity. “The *chola* is promoted in Bolivia as a key symbol by elites and indigenous intellectuals to animate indigenous-derived accounts of Bolivian nationhood” (Albro 2007: 304). Albro (2007) supports his argument by referring, for instance, to the presence of women dressed *de pollera* in the national legislature, as MAS representatives, and appointed to the cabinet of Evo Morales (see also Díaz Carrasco 2014). The anthropologist Charlotta Widmark (2012) also notes their presence when she compares official photographs from different political administrations. She concludes, “bodily expressions of ethnicity follow political conjunctures. In the plurinational state of Bolivia in 2010, a dress code that clarifies or emphasizes ethnic differences is expected by parliamentarians and members of government” (Widmark 2012: 123). And the geographer Kate Maclean (2018) discusses the emergence of a trope in popular culture, the wealthy Aymara woman with the ability to displace (white) people in urban areas with money earned in the informal sector. This cultural trope reflects the social changes taking place in later decades with Aymara merchants’ growing economic wealth, combined with a positive revalorization and assertion of indigenous heritage.¹²⁴

The *chola* utilized as a symbol for the multicultural nation or the plurinational state thus stands in marked contrast to nationhood according to the previous *criollo* version, “the male *patria*” (fatherland) (Albro 2007: 304; see also Stephenson 1999: 87, 104).

The changes towards an increased revalorization and assertion of indigenism were noted amongst the young people. David for example, the *alteño* who had been abroad for a year, talked about changes in his surroundings. “I have seen how my friends little by little have started to dress *de pollera* when they go to parties”, he said, “to make a statement, ‘I have money,’ you know.” Martín also commented the changes taking place. “Because now they see *chola* as a status, as an economically strong social position.”

¹²⁴ The economic success of some people coming from the lower classes has made a notable difference in the landscape of architecture, style and fashion. International and national newspaper articles paint the picture of a changing society where the previously discriminated *cholitas* now take the lead (see for example Dear 2014; Miranda 2015; Colazi 2015; Colanzi 2015; Gracia 2014; Zuazo D. 2015).

However, as will be shown, despite these positive trends the more overpowering notions amongst the young people condensed the *chola/cholita* in the negative. Let us return to the laughter that accompanied “I like *cholitas*.”

Hierarchical femininities – landscapes of desire

When the young people of the organization were asked about the joke, their answers rendered clear a continuous production of bodies as in and out of place (Russell 2011; Ahmed 2014). Their answers connected to previous and current gendered ideals in projects of nationhood and mapped out the heterosexual-racial landscape of desire in contemporary Bolivia and the production of hierarchical femininities.

The *señorita*, translated as miss, young lady or understood as a (younger) unmarried woman, appeared as the *cholita*’s opposite. The *señorita* was loosely tied to the historical ideals of young ladies belonging to the *criollo* elite. However, like the *cholita*, the *señorita*-position was complicated. Some girls openly rejected the positioning of this urban, middle-class ideal. Others actively aspired to it.

The relationship between young women and their positionings, negotiations, reproductions and projected aspirations, illustrates the interrelatedness between belongings at the local and national level. These interconnected relationships convey citizenship as lived, embodied experience in everyday life and as an ongoing process of creation.

Rural fighters and urban docile bodies

A señorita is very different from a cholita, because I think that here in Bolivia you set them apart. The señoritas who wear pants and the cholitas with their skirts. – The alteño Guillermo in his late teens

A chola: in essence, an indigenous market woman—loud, vulgar, uneducated, and, of course, not white. (Canessa 2012: 271)

The young people almost unanimously made it clear to me that the joking and laughing about liking *cholitas* was an outcome of discriminatory notions. Despite the facts that many of the young women’s and men’s mothers dressed *de pollera*, lived in urban areas, and that the *pollera*, as it is worn

today, developed in the city (Gill 1993) – the *cholita* still materialized life in rural areas. Sticky associations lingered on.

Like when the *alteño* David talked about the joking. We may recall “the slap” David had felt in his face about the negative comments encircling a photo of women dressed *de pollera* (see Chapter Four). The slap hit home because his mother used the *pollera* herself. When I asked him about the joke, he focused on the influence of the family. “I think that all the boys have picked up some kind of idea from their family”, he said, “that *cholitas* are for the country boys and that women dressed in pants are for boys from the city.” Despite that his mother wore the *pollera* herself, she would not approve of her son getting together with a *cholita*.

Maybe my mom would not have approved of me liking someone dressed *de pollera* because, she thought that to be *de pollera* is not good, that people dressed *de pollera* are always from the country, that they haven’t studied so much, that they will soon get pregnant and that it is let’s say not someone who can reason. Even my mom had this opinion because ever since she was a child they have instilled in her the same.

The associations about being uneducated and not being able to reason echo the construction of rural residents in discourses at the national level (see Van Vleet 2008; 2005; Canessa 2012; 2005). By internalizing the negative representations of her childhood, the message from David’s mother to her son was clear. A *cholita* was not good enough.

In a study on El Alto-youth, albeit some twenty years ago, Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert (2000: 107–10) describe how mothers who used the *pollera* themselves did not want their daughters to follow their example. Owing to the discrimination the mothers had experienced, they encouraged their daughters to resemble the *señoritas* of the middle class instead. Reigning beauty ideals and norms of racialized whiteness prescribed other clothes and aspirations than the ones signalled by the use of the *pollera*.

Jaime, the young *paceño* who sometimes did up his hair with girlish hairdos, and Rosa, the young *alteña* with a soft and reasoning demeanour, referred to the contrast between *cholitas* and the media representations of feminine beauty ideals. Both of them had themselves mothers who dressed *de pollera*. But the female bodies they referred to in commercials and telenovelas were thinner, taller and whiter. Their high heels, tight fitted clothes and hair let down, sculptured their silhouettes (about shoes as racial

markers, see Van Vleet 2005).¹²⁵ For Jaime, the message was clear. To count as a man, you should be together with a woman who embodied these beauty ideals. Otherwise, you are reduced to a nobody. He said, “Basically I think it’s because of this globalization, for these beautiful commercials you see”, Jaime said, “for all these beautiful women you see, and who say to you, ‘well if you aren’t together with any of these women you are a nobody’.” Rosa made the same connection. Referring to the same media images and beauty ideals, she said, “I think that this is what made them laugh.” She explained, “A boy could not get together with a *cholata*, because there are no *cholitas* on TV.” She stopped to correct herself and added, “Yes now there are more, but before there weren’t.”

Samuel, a calm and low-key teenager, talked about the pervasiveness of these beauty ideals. He was a *paceño* in his mid-teens whose family some years earlier had experienced economic hardship. Now the situation had improved. His father had found a job, did work as an artisan, and his mother did a little bit of everything, mostly some cooking and cleaning. Samuel came to talk about the combination of phenotypes most desired amongst his surrounding peers. “If you ask someone at a school”, he started off, “most of them will say that they like a blonde girl, with green eyes and a nice body”, he said matter-of-factly. “They will always respond in that way, few would [venture to] just like that say that they like a *cholata*, a coloured person.” This was despite the fact that a majority of the students at his school had mothers who dressed *de pollera*.¹²⁶

Canessa (2008) observed this “economy of desire” during fieldwork in the Bolivian highlands. White bodies covered the walls of restaurants, bars and hair salons, despite the fact that white people never frequented them. Images of indigenous bodies, both non-erotic and erotic, were absent. Like Canessa, I also noticed the fair skin tone of the faces covering the walls of different establishments, of beauty salons, of advertisements at large hoardings, or of the participants in the many beauty pageants. For Canessa, the

¹²⁵ Shoes and clothing index race, class and gender in Bolivia. Van Vleet (2005) tells the story of a girl, scolded and called “*india*” by her teacher. The girl points towards her shoes – tire sandals – to explain why her teacher pejoratively used “*india*.” Tire sandals are commonly worn in the countryside and link the wearer to indigeneity, rurality and backwardness.

¹²⁶ In Samuel’s statement, it becomes clear that one has to be mindful of the possible difference between what is publicly voiced and actually felt. The professed likings of “a blonde girl, with green eyes and a nice body” can be an outcome of peer pressure and/or the desire to belong to a group. When studying young people, peer pressure and group dynamic are especially important to consider (about peer pressure, see Lashbrook 2000; Shefer, Kruger, and Schepers 2015; on group dynamic, see Pascoe 2007: 234).

abundance of erotic pictures depicting white female bodies together with pictures of Swiss chalets, suggest an “economy of desire” where eroticism is equated not only with the white female body, but also with aspirations. Whiteness is linked to ambitions of progress, civilization, urbanity and modernity (Canessa 2008: 49–50), and indianness to its counterpart, backwardness, disorder and rural areas (Stephenson 1999; Larson 2005; 2004).

Even though sharing the critical perspective that the joking was an outcome of discriminatory notions, some of the boys and young men could not see themselves together with a *cholita*. Furthermore, while I outlined the event, a few of them impulsively started to giggle. Like Mateo for example, the always smartly dressed middle-class *paceño* with polite manners. While he said the following, he continuously giggled, “*Cholitas* are real fighters, they are really fighters, they won’t give up easily.” He continued, “And well they are really chatty: ‘Ya, ya, ya, ya, ya’ like that, so when people see a *cholita* they giggle, because they say, ‘aahh that *cholita*’.” He uttered the last bit with a sigh of amused delight.

The characterization in Mateo’s statement illustrates that the past is alive and well. The strident, unionized *cholas* who took the *pollera* as their symbol come to mind, and notions of the Aymara woman as made of steel, and with a unique “will power” (María Frontaura Argona 1932, 36–38, 40–41, cited in Larson 2005: 41–42). Notions of *cholitas* as fighters are bolstered by the well-known *Cholitas luchadoras*, female wrestlers who perform in costumes based on the *de pollera* outfit.¹²⁷ The characterization also dovetails an often-voiced saying, “To shout like a *chola*”. This saying was used as an insult, thrown in the faces of those considered to behave too vulgarly and talk too loudly. What Mateo and the saying made clear were that the *cholita*’s conduct was different from other women’s. Moreover, they made clear that she was not the one setting the standard for appropriate femininity in Mateo’s urban, middle-class context.¹²⁸ She, unlike other women, fights for herself. She, unlike other women, does not refrain from talking.

¹²⁷ The anthropologist Nell Haynes (2013) analyses how the female wrestlers use and juxtapose notions of tradition and modernity. See also Maclean (2018: 714) for the ideal Andean woman as “hardworking” and “savvy”.

¹²⁸ It is important to keep in mind that constructions of desire and appropriate femininity look very differently depending on the geographical, cultural and social setting. In more rural settings *cholitas* are much sought after partners (see Van Vleet 2008; 2005) and the *pollera* has within specific contexts bestowed the wearer a higher social status (see Widmark 2003).

These negative representations, reproduced in contemporary Bolivia despite the “process of change”, explain the laughing that accompanied “I like *cholitas*.” Race, gender and class hierarchies affect the choices people make. In analysing articulations of race and sex in Latin America, Wade (2009) connects interracial sex, *mestizaje*, beauty ideals and eroticism to “the notion of political economy in the sense that they all operate within a kind of ‘market’ of erotic, affective, economic and status values” (Wade 2009:156; see also Van Vleet 2008). Wade’s idea of the market illuminates why the *cholata* articulates as a problematic object for young men to desire and for young women to embody. At the intersection of race, class, gender and place, her body is overcharged with significance; she “stands out” and is perceived as out of place (Russell 2011). This makes the mere thought of her as an object of desire laughable. As such, one can observe her from a distance, and refer to her in an endearing, jocular tone, “aahh that *cholata*.”

So, if the *cholata* was perceived as a problematic object, who would make a better match in the “market”? In Weismantel’s following account of the notions encircling the *pollera*, the notions oppose other feminine characteristics.¹²⁹ Weismantel (2001: 130) holds that “the *pollera* announces the rejection of certain aspects of femininity, in which dress and body language express an implicit promise to be nice, to be agreeable, to be passive.”

Indeed, several girls at the organization felt the pressure to be precisely agreeable and passive. Camila for example. She was the lively, sociable teenager who embodied normative beauty ideals with her tallness and fair skin. Both her parents had high levels of education, and her family belonged to the Christian Evangelical church. After soon finishing high school, higher studies awaited her. This was expected of her in her middle-class family. The first time we met, she enthusiastically and with lots of smiles subjected me to a thorough cross-examination, asking me all kinds of questions. She often made jokes, teasing her peers and was quick to respond to any comment or joke made by others. I was therefore not too surprised (considering constructions of femininities) when she told me how she often was sent to the principal’s office for talking back and discussing

¹²⁹ See also Gill (1993: 81); Van Vleet (2005; 2008) and Canessa (2012: 271). Furthermore, Weismantel’s (2001) intersectional analysis illuminates the many different associations the *persona* of the *chola* conjures, depending on the position of the onlooker. For example, poor rural men feel threatened by the *chola*. Her wealth makes her white and frightening and incites associational links to the *señoritas* of La Paz (see Weismantel 2001: 245–46, referring to Andrew Orta, 1996: 15–16).

too much. In one of these occasions, a teacher had instructed her to sit like a *señorita*. Instead of obeying, she had snappily responded, “No, I can sit however I like.” Again, she ended up at the principal’s office.

However, her un-lady-like sitting was not the main problem. “I went [to school] wearing pants and they told me, ‘No, you have to wear a skirt’.” She protested, arguing, “‘No, the pants are also a part of the school uniform,’ because they were”, she explained. Furthermore, “I felt more comfortable with pants. And besides that, I am very sensitive to cold.” Nevertheless, the harsh and cold climate of the Andean high plateau, combined with unheated classrooms, were not legitimate reasons for girls to wear pants. Only boys should. When the teachers had threatened to lower her grades, Camila succumbed to the decree of the skirt.

Marta shared with Camila a similar experience of having a teacher thrusting the *señorita* ideal on her. Marta was a bright and socially easy-going *paceña* in her early teens. During the premiere for a girls-only activity in the youth space, the girls came to talk about gendered expectations, body language, and objectification of women. Marta wanted to share one of her experiences from school. It would illustrate differences in acceptable female and male body language. While telling us about it, she physically staged it. She stood up from her chair, turned it around with the backrest facing us, sat down with her legs widely spread, crossed her arms, leaned them on the chair and rested her head on the arms. She said that she had been bored and really had done nothing more than sit like that. All of a sudden, a male teacher had come up to her. “Close your legs, you are a *señorita*”, he had said brusquely.

But there was more to the *señorita* than body language, gendered clothes, and expected deference to authorities (teachers and principals). Pilar, a *paceña* in her early teens, wrote a social-media post that caught my attention. It oozed resentment and anger. She likewise criticized the ideal of the *señorita*. The *señorita* was “refined”, “submissive” and “played by the rules established by men”. Furthermore, Pilar criticized the notions that a woman could not go dressed in a miniskirt or display a cleavage without being called a whore. This line of thinking criticized by Pilar was pervasive in the urban milieu. The following examples give an idea of how the sexual morality of the *señorita* position was delineated.

The *señorita* and female respectability

The representation of the *señorita* surfaced in different situations. At a school talk in La Paz a discussion rose around young women's escalating alcohol consumption and the high incidence of sexual abuse.¹³⁰ The facilitator made the remark that sexual abuse escalated since some boys took advantage of inebriated girls. Two of the students, a boy and a girl, commented that a girl who had drunken alcohol was partly to blame in case anything happened to her. After the three of them had exchanged a few rounds of different opinions on the matter, the male student took a new turn. He remarked that women who wore miniskirts were only looking for attention. He added, "What kind of a lady or *señorita* wants to dress like that?" in a tone brimming with contempt. The subtext was clear. A real *señorita* – a decent girl – would *not* dress in miniskirt. Several girls in the classroom reacted. They shook their heads and looked irritated with frowned foreheads. Still, only one girl openly contested him. She would later prove to be in the know about how some contraceptives worked. This prompted another boy to jokingly ask, "How come you know all that?" He thus insinuated that she used contraceptives herself. How would she otherwise know? Young female respectability hung loose on a thin thread (about female respectability, see for example Montoya 2002; Ambjörnsson 2004).

As Camila and I were talking, these *señorita* characteristics appeared again. This time in the shape of her sister. Camila was quite annoyed by her few-years-older sister. She described her as a boring goody two-shoes who needed to loosen up a bit. Camila took it upon herself to help her sister with that part. For example, her sister was in a serious relationship with a boy. Under giggles, Camila recounted how she had offered her sister a condom, "just in case", only to provoke her. Moreover, Camila had also lied to her about losing her virginity. "I like to tease her. The thing is that she always follows the rules, and I am the one who breaks those rules." So seemingly haphazardly, she told her sister, "'I have already done it [had sex], it didn't hurt', even though I haven't done it. The thing is I want her to get used to the fact that she can't control me."

I don't know if Camila succeeded in this. But she did manage to get her sister upset – both by the insinuations the condom symbolized (that the sister had, or was soon about to have, an active sex life) and by (pretending) that she had lost her virginity. Camila framed her sister as an indubitable

¹³⁰ It is also discussed in Chapter Five.

señorita. “My sister, who is an evangelical Christian, she is truly a *señorita*.” Camila continued, “She puts on make-up, she styles herself, little dresses you know.” Thus, for Camila, her sister embodied the *señorita* by endorsing specific beauty ideals and by highlighting her religious devotion and morally more conservative views on sexuality compared to Camila. The *señorita* thus loosely resembles the gendered ideals of previous projects of nationhood harboured by upper-class *paceñas*. She is linked to the *criolla* as “not ‘of the flesh’”, and the acculturated mestiza, religiously devoted and upholding the norms of sexual morality (Stephenson 1999: 18; Gill 1993).¹³¹

The *paceñas* Marta and Pilar and the *alteña* Camila felt caged in by being positioned as *señoritas*. People in their surroundings – teachers, principals, peers, and family members – policed the girls’ body language, clothes and behaviour. The girls, however, openly questioned the practices, norms and values associated with the positioning. Even if Camila eventually put the skirt on – since her grades were held hostage by the dictum of the skirt – she had utilized available strategies set by the limitations of the context (Ortner 2006; Durham 2008). Camila rejected her positioning and questioned its content and imposition. However, her protest fell on deaf ears. The teachers noted her defiant behaviour. But they ignored – or were unable to recognize – the political message of her protest. She called out against the constricted construction of what proper expressions of femininity entailed, against the disciplining of her body. The “rebellious girl” was silenced (Oinas 2015: 125).

Nevertheless, the rebellious girl refuses to keep silent. She will return. Besides, not everyone rejected the positioning of *señorita*. On the contrary,

¹³¹ See Anna Babel (2018: 186–90) on the sexual morality of *cholitas*, juxtaposed to the morality of *señoritas*. Babel did an anthropological field study in the Santa Cruz valleys. In the literature there are numerous references to the *chola* as a “sexual object” (Albro 2000). Stephenson (1999: 71) writes about the “*chola* as the embodied sign of the eroticized feminine Other”, and imaginings of “a luscious, promiscuous woman” (1999: 173). Weismantel (2001: 62) holds that “elite men imagine the *chola* as sexually available” and writes about the images of the market woman’s “large sexual appetites” (2001: 63). For Albro, *cholitas*, in their capacity as younger and unmarried, “are much more associated with the erotic and sexual dimensions of fiesta contexts” compared to *cholas* (Albro 2000: 79n26). Despite these many different references, only one of the young people I met gave an example that connected a *cholita* with sexiness. The example was notably also retold as said-by-someone-else. Different reasons might lie behind their coyness. Many of the young people had *de pollera* mothers. This probably rendered the topic more sensitive. Moreover, the topics of sexiness or eroticism were also in general more sensitive to talk about, irrespectively of whom one was speaking about.

some pursued the position that for them promised a sense of inclusion, to be able to rest – *merge* – with the norm (Ahmed 2014; Russell 2011).

Girls making nationhood?

Claiming the *señorita*

Sociocultural backgrounds, aspirations and political conjunctures shaped the terrain and space to negotiate, contest or reproduce ideals of young femininity. Projects of nationhood and boundary making were played out at the site of young women's bodies. While some girls openly questioned the imposition of the ideal of *señorita*, others struggled to embody the ideal in the eyes of others. Because the *señorita* was not simply up for grabs. Not everyone could successfully claim her.

Silvia was one of them. For her it was important that she was a *señorita*. As may be recalled Silvia was the young *alteña* who found it important to choose clothes in colours that would leave her skin lighter (*más clara*). This made her feel comfortable (*cómoda*) (see Chapter Four). She assisted her mother in her little shop every day. Her mother wished her daughter would also use the *pollera*, just as she did. Silvia objected. "But I have said no to her. My sister dresses *de pollera*, she always wears the *pollera*. I don't." She continued, "Nor does my other sister, [she is] also a *señorita*."

As earlier shown, sticky structures lingered on which rendered the *pollera* more problematic in the urban context. By claiming to be a *señorita*, Silvia projected her own aspirations of social mobility and desires to belong. These were interrelated with the productions of femininities at the local and national level. Fashion can be an important means to project belongings. Cole (2008) argues that through performances of fashion, one can understand class as it is presently lived. In her study on Malagasy urban youth, she finds that young people's "fashion practice simultaneously signals aspiration, personal performance, and broader social links" (Cole 2008: 121), and captures "a sense of self enmeshed in ties with others" (Feeley-Harnik 2003: 70, quoted in Cole 2008: 120). And just like the Bolivian girls and young women in Van Vleet's (2005) study of citizenship practices, Silvia too projected belonging through fashion practices.

Silvia's rejection of the *pollera* might be less of a surprise, considering the many layers of meaning it materializes in the urban milieu. However, her explicit claim to be a *señorita*, whilst other peers felt at liberty to reject

it, might need more clarification. When comparing Silvia's claim with Camila's rejection, the young women's respective backgrounds become important.

Both Camila and Silvia were *alteñas*, but Silvia was the daughter of a woman *de pollera* who worked as a small merchant. Silva had also entered CYRI through a project especially targeting youth in a socioeconomic "vulnerable situation". Though I found that the degree of her vulnerability could be discussed, her socioeconomic background did differ from Camila's. Camila came from a middle-class family. Both her parents were highly educated, and it was natural that Camila would pursue higher studies as well. Considering physical characteristics, Silvia was both the shortest amongst the young people (a subject that "popped up" in different circumstances), and she had relatively dark skin too.

Camila, on the other hand, more closely embodied a normative beauty ideal of whiteness. Her considerable height, fairer skin complexion, and slimness aligned with ideals of whiteness. Hence, by comparing sociocultural backgrounds and physical differences, Camila could "afford" to distance herself from the position of *señorita*. Her rejection would not untie her from the position in the eyes of others. Silvia, however, was intimately connected to the *cholita* position. In terms of sensing inclusion, of feeling "comfortable", there was consequently more at stake for her. She had to actively claim the *señorita* position just to keep it within arm's reach.

Interestingly enough, Silvia's relationship to the *pollera* became the object of scrutiny. She unpredictably and unknowingly starred in an emotionally strong narrative from one of the facilitators.

Power relations at work

As I was interviewing Emilio, a man in his mid-thirties working in the *alteño* youth space, he used the example of Silvia to make a point. Just before this, Emilio had recalled a strong memory from his youth. With a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes, he told me about the time he was just about to enter the hall of his high-school graduation ceremony. His mother had arranged for him to go in with his godmother, a woman dressed *de vestido* (in western clothes). Emilio however insisted that she, a woman *de pollera*, should accompany him instead. Despite her protests, he did not yield. "You have encouraged me to study, you have given me food", he said to her, "How could I enter with her?" In the end, he won the argument. They walked in together. He became the school's first student ever escorted by

a woman *de pollera*. With a chuckle he added that the others would surely never forget that moment. Throughout the time we spent together, Emilio returned several times to the discrimination his mother had experienced as a woman *de pollera*. His emotions spanned feelings of sadness, resentment and pride. In relation to this, he talked about the government's project. Even though the government had its faults, he said, it still ventured a project that had made a great difference for people with indigenous backgrounds, like his mother. If the government and the MAS Party were to be voted out in the upcoming elections, he and others expected a swift return to how things had been before. Shame, fear and discrimination would return, he said.

Keeping Emilio's deeply personal experiences of discrimination in mind, I found it easier to contextualize the following conversation he initiated, encircling Silvia and the *pollera*. As we continued our talk, Emilio wanted to show me a photograph. It would illustrate that shame – “to not accept who you are” as he put it – still characterized people's relationship to the *pollera*. Emilio then entered Silvia's personal page on a social media site. She had posted a photo depicting her. She was dressed in a black blazer and short skirt, a white shirt and black high heel shoes with several thin straps from one side to the other. White confetti was sprinkled in her hair; some of it had fallen on the floor. She was looking at someone/thing on the left side of the photographer with an indistinct little smile. She had recently graduated from high school, so I figured the picture had been shot on her graduation day. On her left side, one could see long lilac stripes. Someone stood next to Silvia. The stripes appeared to belong to the typical scarf that women dressed *de pollera* wear. When I did not immediately realize what Emilio wanted me to see, he stated a bit impatiently that the photo had been cropped. I agreed with him, the format looked rather odd. He asked me who had cropped it. “Silvia maybe?” I responded. “This means to still not accept”, he remarked. He continued, pushing his analysis by incorporating me and some visitors from the day before. “But what if it had been a Nika, physically speaking I mean”, he said. “Did you see how the boys and girls took pictures with the visitors yesterday?” I recalled the day before when representatives from the foreign donor organization had visited the youth space. They had patiently posed numerous times as the young people enthusiastically took loads of pictures of them, side-by-side. When I affirmed, he concluded, “Then you already understand.” Emilio's point was that if someone physically resembled and/or wore the same type of clothes as me and the visitors, the photo had not been cropped.

When Emilio showed me Silvia's photo, he targeted her for her supposed shame. He also placed an implicit moral burden on her. Emilio did not explicitly say Silvia *should* dress *de pollera* like both their mothers did. However, he did take issue with the fact that she did not stand tall next to the woman dressed *de pollera*, as he had done at his graduation.

The reason why specifically Silvia was pinpointed depended on the critical juncture of their relational positions (Yuval-Davis 2011b: 13; De los Reyes and Mulinari 2005). At the intersection of race, class, gender, place and age, they shared some experiences, and diverged in others. They both lived in El Alto and had mothers who dressed *de pollera*. Emilio therefore claimed to know something about her supposed identity. This, in combination with his position of authority (adult/older, male, university exam, successful process of social mobility, her facilitator), "substantiated" him a say about her supposed identity. He did so with an essentializing vocabulary. The photograph exemplified "to not accept who you *are*", He thus tied her to the *cholata* position, irrespectively of her own claim that she was a *señorita*.

Another reason for why she was pinpointed related to the government's "project of change". Remember how important it was for Emilio. As outlined earlier, the *chola* is used as a "key symbol" in the multicultural and plurinational projects of nationhood (Albro 2007: 304; 2000). Furthermore, women are more tied to indigeneity in the Andean Bolivia, whereas men have played a less significant role in the maintenance of tradition. Therefore, the weight to carry forth a national project tinged with indigeneity falls disproportionately on women and girls. Because of this, it is their relationship to the *pollera* that falls under scrutiny. The critical task to carry forth the political project weighed more heavily on Silvia's shoulders. Or hips in this case.

Knowing your place

Besides that fact that the weight of carrying forth the national culture was placed on (young) women (Yuval-Davis 1997a), the *señorita* position was furthermore only accessible to some. Depending on one's location in cross-cutting hierarchies, only some young women could embody the *señorita*.

Camila made this clear when she came to talk about a general loss of culture. She had earlier on worked extra at a guesthouse (*pensión*) together with two young women. She told me how she had asked them where they came from. The first young woman responded by referring to a semirural

area on the outskirts of El Alto. After that, the second young woman responded, “‘Oh, I’m not from there, I’m a *señorita*’,” according to Camila. She continued retelling what the young woman had said. “‘I dress *de pollera* because I have to work here, but I’m a *señorita*, I’m from downtown’ [*de abajo*, meaning La Paz].” Camila found this hard to believe. “But it was obvious from the way she dressed, her own face”, she said, and continued, “Let’s say, you notice when a person comes from here, from El Alto.” I gathered that by referring to the young woman’s “own face”, Camila subtly wanted to signal that the young woman had a rounder face, indexing indigenous belongings. I had heard this before. Camila continued; apparently the first young woman had shared Camila’s scepticism. “And then the other *cholata* says to me, ‘Oh I don’t understand how they can reject their own background like that’,” Camila recounted.

In describing this exchange to me, Camila established and reiterated boundaries that circumscribed the *señorita* (Staunæs 2003; West and Fenstermaker 1995),¹³² a position she was safeguarded within. Neither Camila, nor her colleague, believed the young woman’s own account – that she had merely dressed the part of a *cholata* to make a living.¹³³ Therefore, she became an object of disparagement for unsuccessfully trying to pass for a *señorita*. However, stories including social climbing or downfall were common. And as Luykx states, “That ethnic mobility is seen as dishonorable is evident from the sanction it receives both in everyday conversation and in numerous literary works. It is nevertheless a common phenomenon,

¹³² The anthropologist Claudia Liebelt (2019) develops the notion of “aesthetic citizenship” to capture the significance of beauty ideals when women claim belonging in and exclude other women from “one’s own” urban spaces. Aesthetic citizenship emphasizes women’s dissecting stares of other women, their acts of self-scrutiny and the performance of bodily beauty practices in order to claim feminine urban citizenship. Camila’s evaluative and dissecting stares could unquestionably be described by Liebelt’s “aesthetic citizenship”. In Liebelt’s focus on consumption practices and bodily modifications – like surgical operations, make-up, manicure and pedicure – she orients her version of citizenship more, however, to the practices of adult women than those accessible to girls and young women, especially when they have very small economic resources.

¹³³ In the windows of small eateries and shops in El Alto, one could often see handwritten signs announcing that they were looking for staff. However, they were not looking for just any staff in general, rather *cholitas* in particular. Two of the girls I met in El Alto commented that they had thought about using the *pollera* instead of pants because it was much easier to find a job that way (cf. Van Vleet 2005: 118). *Cholitas* were popular as workers; they were perceived to work hard and to know how to cook (cf. Widmark 2003: 157).

due to the social barriers confronting those of indigenous background” (Luykx 1999: 21).¹³⁴

I asked Camila what it meant for her that someone tried to hide her background.

We have lost our culture, and our cultural identity. We’re in this process of transculturation [*transculturación*] of wanting to change and well no, a person with darker skin, *cholita*, a genuine [*neta*] *cholita*, if you put high heels on her and a miniskirt, you dye her hair blonde – she will continue to be the same *cholita*.

According to Camila, the prospects for changing one’s identity were limited. A *cholita* would always remain a *cholita*. Camila lamented their general loss of cultural heritage. At the same time, she bestowed the task of preserving it on the *cholita*.

This essentialized, static version of identity depicted here, differs from how racialized identities are often discussed in Bolivia. For example Paulson (2002: 140–41) points to the fluidity and multiplicity of identities (see also Chapter Four). But the examples involving Emilio/Silvia and Camila/colleague illustrate how boundaries are enforced and sometimes difficult to transgress.¹³⁵ The young women’s possibilities to negotiate their positionings were circumscribed and contextual (Ortner 2006).

Thus, the examples show that not only should female racialized bodies materialize the cultural heritage by wearing the *pollera*. They should furthermore *surmount* past and present discrimination by embodying the “process of change” and materializing it with their bodies. For what would the project of nationhood be without its key symbol – the *chola* (Albro 2007: 304; 2000) – concretely materialized in people’s everyday lives? The women dressed *de pollera* epitomised and implemented the government’s project with their bodies as “mobile spatial fields” (Munn 2003). They created new spaces in the national assembly and the government, in high posts and at universities – in spaces previously occupied by other bodies.

¹³⁴ For similar examples of disparaging talk, see Peñaranda Davezies, Flores C., and Arandia D. (2006: 60–65) and Babel (2018: 192–94).

¹³⁵ The young woman’s failure to pass for *señorita* illuminates Ahmed’s (1999) critique of analyses of practices of *passing*. The analyses often focus on how the practices work to destabilize systems of racial boundaries. Her point is that the ambiguities they expose can be used to strengthen the boundaries, through for example reintegration and enhanced surveillance of boundaries. And clearly in Camila’s example, boundaries were activated.

The political message of the Evo Morales administration had been that Bolivians should be proud of their heterogeneity and reclaim their indigenous background. During this political conjuncture, Camila's colleague and Silvia instead rejected "who they were", as decided by others. They failed their female role to reproduce and transmit the nation's cultural heritage (Yuval-Davis 1997a). Instead of following the political imperative of the Morales administration, they ultimately withdrew from the citizenship relations it conjured.

However, they were in the midst of shaping their own citizenship. In the youth space, young women and girls produced alternative femininities that more closely aligned with their own aspirations and projected belongings. The production of alternative femininities were interrelated with the development of a political subjectivity that questioned norms and values connected to current and previous gendered ideals in projects of nationhood.

Political subjectivities and alternative femininities

The principle of male dominance is a prominent thread in the tapestry of Bolivian nationalist ideology, inclined as it is toward military exploits and values. (Luykx 1999: 250)

And right there you realize that there are still leaders, and [also] there within the government, who are machistas and who still do not accept the theme of a woman's body. – The *alteña* Teresa in her late teens

Citizenship theorists have illuminated citizenship as gendered in different geographical contexts (see for example Pateman 2001; Waylen 1996). They have discussed how the imaginings of ideal citizens create gaps between people's substantial potentials to make use of formal rights (Young 1990; 1997); how some are "super citizens", whereas others have the formal status of being a full member but are subjected to discrimination (Yuval-Davis 2011b: 157–58). In the case of Bolivia, the male *patria* figured as the ideal for nationhood pre-heterogeneous projects. Neither the ideal of the *criolla* as the nation's mother nor the *mestiza* had a place in the world of politics (Stephenson 1999). Furthermore, Chapter Five discussed Bolivian citizenship as predominantly masculine. And studies on young people

and politics in La Paz and El Alto are primarily about male actors (Moller-Icona 2007; Goodale 2006; Tórrez et al. 2009).¹³⁶

Despite this pervasive image of politics as a masculine sphere, politically engaged young women abound in La Paz and El Alto. The studies made on primarily male actors do not reflect my experiences during my stay in Bolivia. In fact, women's involvement in official political spaces has undergone large changes during the last few decades. Women have gradually increased their participation and questioned the representation of the body politic.¹³⁷ Changes in the legal framework, with the reform of the electoral system in 2010 introducing the principles of "parity and alternation"¹³⁸ for nominees, has effectively increased women's participation. In 2019 the parliament, for example, consisted of 50 % women and men. At the same time, women's growing participation has met resistance. Politically motivated violence against women has escalated, especially at the local level.¹³⁹

The relationship between society, state and women has thus been the topic of intense renegotiation during the last few decades. Not only race and class have animated the forces of social and political discontent (see Chapter Two). Masculine citizenship has been seriously interrogated for the gap between women's formal rights and their substantial opportunities to make use of their formal citizenship rights to, for example, participate *on par* with men in political spaces and contend for political positions.

¹³⁶ Read more in the overview on "Latin American studies on youth and politics", Chapter Three. Furthermore, young male protestors even caught the anthropologist's attention as illustrating the city of El Alto, seen on the cover of Lazar's (2008) monograph about the city and its political spaces.

¹³⁷ In 1997 a reform of the electoral system introduced a quota system to raise the number of women on the lists for the presidential and parliamentary election. The result was meagre in the 1997 elections. The number of women in the lower house rose from 8 % to 11 %. Two years later it was followed by a reform of the lists for municipal elections and internal structures of political parties, equally introducing a 30 % quota for female inclusion. During the subsequent years, a number of reforms have been made to increase female participation in politically important spaces (Htun and Ossa 2013; UNDP 2014).

¹³⁸ Act No 26, *Ley Del Régimen Electoral*, passed the year 2010, establishes the principle of gender equality on candidate lists in Article 2h through the principles of "*la paridad y alternancia*".

¹³⁹ At particularly the local level political violence against women has escalated. After years of struggle involving different women's groups, a law was passed in 2012 that specifically protected politically active women. The intensified mobilization after the torture and killings of female political representatives would tip the balance in favour of the law (Act No 243, *Ley Contra el Acoso y Violencia Política hacia Las Mujeres*) (Htun and Ossa 2013: 11; Domínguez and Pacheco 2018; UNDP 2014: 3–8, 20–22; Guarachi 2018).

Within this changing landscape, the organization's staff worked with developing young women and girls into future leaders.

The organizational framework of young women and leadership

One of the organization's prioritized goal was to develop young people into leaders. As discussed in Chapter Five, the theme of gender roles (*los roles de género*) and how gendered expectations are interrelated with sexuality themes was an important part of the organizational framework taught to young people. *Los roles de género* were considered problematic for how differentiated gendered expectations delimited girls' and young women's opportunities to pursue leadership. Young women's "empowerment" (*empoderamiento*) was therefore a related goal. This aspect was salient in understanding the production of femininity within the organization.

During the time of my stay, the topic of girls and leadership was a matter of more concern in the *paceño* youth space compared with the *alteño*. The *paceño* youth space experienced problems: they had few visitors. For the staff an additional but connected problem was that few girls visited it. Furthermore, boys did the most talking during activities. To deal with these interconnected problems, the female facilitator started a girls-only activity. This would, the facilitator hoped, bring the girls together. It would "empower" (*empoderar*) and enable them to take a more active role during the general meetings as well.¹⁴⁰

At the first meeting of the girls-only activity, the girls and the facilitator discussed different gendered expectations for boys and girls. Marta, who had been brusquely reproached for not sitting like a *señorita*, represented her class in the student council. Even though there were more girls than boys at the school, she was the only girl on the student council. The task of being a student representative was generally assigned to boys. Some of them found her participation a bit unorthodox and bullied her. She told us how her male schoolmates found it amusing to ask if there were no boys in her class. This would explain why they chose to send her, a girl, to the council as a last resort.

When the young people spoke about the possibilities, obstacles and limitations of what boys and girls, young men and women were allowed to do, they many times recounted similar perspectives and experiences from their

¹⁴⁰ For a critique of notions imbued in discourses of empowerment, see Durham (2008); see also Koffman and Gill (2013).

daily life.¹⁴¹ These experiences were often located in their homes. Often, I was told about how the situation had been for women a couple of decades ago. They retold the stories of mothers and grandmothers, and compared these with a present-day, better situation for women, who no longer were limited to the kitchen area. Now they could study and take up any imaginable position in the society. Nevertheless, much remained to be done. In this sense, they had embraced the framework of CYRI.

Or seen from another angle, for many of the young people the theme of gender equality was very important. They expressed a sense of frustration, speaking about what they perceived to be discriminatory attitudes and prevailing injustices that they lived and breathed in their everyday life. This could also have been the impetus for turning to and engaging in the organization and the reason why it was an important space for them.

One example of these prevailing injustices was that I was told that girls were considered of lesser value than boys. The young people talked about practices or norms that symbolized this, like the custom that men and boys were served food before women and girls. Another example was family names. Since girls did not pass on the family name, boys were preferred. Two *alteñas* talked about their personal experiences of this. Both had fathers who, in drunken or sober moments, had exclaimed that they should have been born boys instead of girls. Analuz did not grow up with her father but she had visited him occasionally until she was fifteen. She told me how he, in drunken states, would tell her that he had wanted a son instead to carry on his name. She explained why. “The thing with my dad is that he is very proud of his family name, ‘ha Vásquez!’ like that.”

In an NGO study, covered in a daily newspaper (M. Choque 2014), a majority of the parents wanted a son as their first-born child. A director of the authority in charge of preventing and eliminating gender-based violence commented that the result reflected a “patriarchal” and “machista society”, and the maintenance of beliefs “that by having sons we are stronger and superior.” Women in the study also expressed a preference for a son. This was reportedly based on fear that daughters would have to repeat their fate.

¹⁴¹ In relation to this it is important to point out that many of the young people had participated in workshops and activities designed to raise awareness in relation to gender at CYRI (if and to what extent depended on how long they had been visiting the youth space).

For some of the young people I met, their organizational engagement had engendered a change of perspective. A political subjectivity was produced in relation to discrimination and gendered expectations. As it had done for Teresa. She was a bright, outspoken and forceful *alteña* in her late teens. She spoke with passion about women's situation, their rights, and politics at large. When her mother had yet again been severely beaten by Teresa's father, Teresa was the one who went to the police station to file a complaint against him. And what she really could not stand hearing was how even women degraded themselves. She said:

We women shout at each other and we say to each other "ah, but what do you know, you are nothing but a woman!" To hear another woman say that, to me really, in this whole process that I have gone through, that hurts.

Teresa talked about how things had been before in her home. She helped her mother in the kitchen, and her brothers helped their father. If her brothers ventured into the kitchen, their mother would chase them out with an ironic, "Perhaps you are a girl?" Teresa had not thought about the division of labour until, "There I realized, entering [CYRI] with those *capacitaciones* they have given us. And even more so at the university within the discipline [that she studied] and the thing about defending your rights. There it changed you know."

Adriana, the middle-class mestiza in her late teens whose presumptive boyfriend could be "the shortest boy" from El Alto, clearly felt that life at home was unfair. She was repeatedly told: "You are a woman, your brother is a man and he knows how to take care of himself." Therefore, different rules applied. As a young woman, she was told, it would be more dangerous to be out at night. Therefore, she had to stay in while her brother could roam around as he pleased. "Despite that my brother having been assaulted two times", she added. Her experiences of different rules for male or female siblings were commonly raised and perceived as unfair amongst the young people.¹⁴² Notions tied to the *street* could also threaten young women's reputation. In the earlier Bolivian projects of nationhood, upper-class women's respectability was construed and tied to notions of the home (Gill 1993; Stephenson 1999; Larson 2005). And in the present-day setting of *paceño* youth gangs, only a *chica de casa* (young woman of the house)

¹⁴² And documented in other studies, see Guaygua, Riveros, and Quisbert (2000: 54).

would do to be a young man's formal girlfriend (Mollericona P. 2015: 140; in Nicaragua, see also Montoya 2002).

However, even though the young people recognized a problem with gendered expectations for boys and girls and declared a willingness to work for change, their practices at times suggested otherwise. These situations in everyday life illustrated the ongoing negotiations of gendered expectations and young women's relationship to their surroundings, that is, how society played out at the local level.

On one of these occasions, some of the young people had gathered outdoors in the small cement courtyard, next to the entrance of the *alteño* youth space. It was summertime at the *altiplano*, but today the sun was hidden behind thick clouds. A cool breeze brushed our arms as we were sitting and talking on cement benches. Suddenly Álvaro turned everyone's attention to me; he was curious to know more about my family. More specifically about my children and the fact that they had two mothers, but no father. Then, in a somewhat questioning tone he asked how we would do when our son grew a bit older. "Without a father, who will play soccer with him?" Everyone's ears pointed attentively in my direction. "I will play soccer with both my son and my daughter," I answered, adding, "If they would like to." Teresa backed me up immediately. "Yeah," she said, "she will play soccer with them. Why not?" I knew this was a sore point for her. She was a keen soccer player herself. This was questioned though. Not the least by her own family. The other day she had told me how her uncles had commented upon precisely that. They called her a tomboy (*marimacho*) and said that she acted like a man for wanting to hit the field.¹⁴³ Sticky structures of gendered expectations remained resilient. However, different femininities played the field simultaneously.

The rebellious girl returns

Through their organizational engagements, the young women and girls negotiated dominant representations of femininities and enacted alternatives. A political subjectivity developed through questioning gendered expectations encircling the *señorita* within a conflictive terrain of social hierarchies and different projects of nationhood.

When talking to the young men and women at the organization, I was in fact struck by how few alternative femininities, besides the representations of the *cholita* and the *señorita*, they themselves identified (on other

¹⁴³ On women and soccer in Latin America, see Wood (2018).

youth groups and styles, see Mollericona P. 2015: 109–14; on hip hoppers in El Alto, see Mollericona 2007). There was a sparse presence of different youth cultures the young people claimed allegiance to, or displayed through their choice of for instance clothes or use of make-up. Several girls had a personal negative relationship to reigning beauty ideals displayed in commercials, embodied by actors, models, and beauty pageants participants etc. It affected their wellbeing and confidence negatively. For example, they mentioned eating disorders and/or talked at length about their (lack of good) looks and a problematic objectification of women and girls in general. The organizational engagement was a way to counter the delimiting gender roles, depicting women as inferior to men and passive objects for the male gaze. Its framework resonated with young women's experiences in their everyday lives.

For the bright and outspoken *alteña* Teresa, a “reconceptualization of what gender is” was badly in need. Otherwise, she stated, “we will continue with machismo, we will continue with violence, we will continue to believe that we women will remain submissive.” Through organizational engagements, young women practised and forged alternative femininities, which called into question a female gender role they perceived as delimiting. In this sense the “rebellious girl” cried out to be heard (cf. Oinas 2015).

Teresa also described herself as rebellious. Or rather, this was how her father viewed her. She explained that her brother was always allowed to do anything he wanted. But when it came to her, her father would just say no. “He was always looking for something negative”, she said, “because I was so rebellious, you know.”

And the *alteña* Camila, who refused to wear the uniform skirt to school, was crystal clear when she explained that the ordinary path for women was *not* for her. To begin with, she would not get married, because “the boys around here, the only thing they see is that when you marry someone she has to be the homemaker”, she stated, adding:

She has to cook, she is the one who has to take care of the children and I am not cut out for those things. I want to travel, I want to get to know [things], I want to learn, I want to work, I want to make my own money to buy my own stuff. I want to do many things by myself.

Camila provoked her sister who was “truly a *señorita*.” She claimed to be the one breaking the rules and made sure that people in her surrounding

knew she would not be easily controlled. In this sense, her alternative, “rebellious” femininity was juxtaposed with the docile, properly behaved *señorita* who played by the rules of men.

Beasley and Bacchi (2012) argue we have to take micro level practices into account to understand how social change comes about. In Camila’s messing about with her sister, she questioned and negotiated norms and values underpinning the *señorita* position. The large social transformations creating changes in women’s societal positions – their entry into the professional workforce, the last decades’ increased political participation and the changing legal frameworks – are transformations generated and played out at different levels. These altered citizens relations are negotiated in the sibling bickering of two young women. Their embodied citizenships were patent in their different ways of relating to, understanding and doing femininity.

Teresa, Adriana and Camila opposed the representations of submissive and docile femininity – the *señorita* who stayed at home. In the young women’s ongoing processes of meaning-making and working with and through norms, values and expectations, their organizational engagement was a strategy. The production of alternative, “rebellious” femininity was nurtured by the organizational framework of questioning gendered expectations and developing a political subjectivity.

The organizational engagement also countered negative *cholita* representations. When the young people talked about sexual and reproductive rights, for example, they juxtaposed their own awareness about these issues, and in general the knowledge of city-folk with the lack thereof amongst rural residents. Furthermore, women who were connected to rural areas in the urban milieu, like women dressed *de pollera*, were pointed out as unaware of their rights. As the *paceña* Gabriela did, the outgoing and vivacious *paceña* whose four friends had become unwantedly pregnant, when she talked about disseminating information for CYRI. “I visit the fairs to distribute [information sheets] because there are lots of people who are not aware, especially the *señoras de pollera*”, she said. “Most of those people [*señoras de pollera*] cannot read, and their spouses are generally rather possessive.” She continued, “we inform these people and then they get to know that they have rights”, and concluding, “they don’t know that their rights are violated; they think it’s normal.” I asked her what kind of violations she was thinking of.

Like for example sexual harassment [*acoso*]. Let's say her spouse comes home drunk and wants to have sex and the *señora* does not, then it's like he is raping her. And he also hits her.

The organizational engagement provided a counterstrategy to representations enfolded the *cholita* as unaware and uneducated, connected with untimely pregnancies and someone who cannot reason. For young women such as the *alteña* Silvia, who straddled a thin line towards the *cholita* positioning, her organizational engagement located her farther away from the representations.

In this sense the organizational framework coalesced with, or was adaptable to, young people's different desires. Through their organizational engagement, the young women could negotiate norms and values at their local level, interrelated with the projects of nationhood at the national level, to impel their aspirations and belongings. Camila struggled to escape the positioning of *señorita*; Silvia, on the other hand, wanted to become accepted as a *señorita*.

Their aspirations aligned with ideals with a "modern" touch, in other words, urban ideals, civilization and progress – racialized whiteness – instead of how its counterpart has been constructed – indigeneity, rurality and backwardness. Importantly, CYRI's goal of gender equality harmonized with their aspirations. Gender equality was a trope signalling modernity (see Paulson 2002: 140). The organization's work and framework, backed with international financial aid from large donor organizations, was embedded within global health discourses of gender equality. Its associations of "modernity" with its focus on supposedly universal rights of sexual and reproductive health is yet another layer of how young people projected belongings. Their organizational engagement played a part in their projections. Moreover, the interrelationships between these different levels illustrate Yuval-Davis' (1999) argument for the citizen as "multi-layered". These different levels are entangled, from the global health discourses, international financial aid, Bolivia and the country's quest for modernity, and down to the level of the organization with the trope of gender equality.

The organizational work of SRHR is often coupled with feminist mestizo middle-class perspectives in Bolivia, imported from abroad. These have not always easily melded with indigenous perspectives. Feminism has been seen as stemming from an oppressive framework of knowledge that consolidates power structures and suppresses indigenous frameworks (see Paulson 2002; Díaz Carrasco 2014; Rousseau 2011; Burman 2011). In this

sense, it could be argued that the organizational strivings collided with projects symbolized by the *chola* – the “indigenous-derived accounts of Bolivian nationhood” (Albro 2007: 304). The tension between feminism and indigenous perspectives is often described as a clash between different perspectives, between a collectivistic and a more individualistic approach (see Albro 2010 on collective and individual rights in the Bolivian constitution).

Moreover, struggles under the banner of SRHR have often been seen as part of individualizing discourses, constituting the citizen subject into a rights-bearing individual subject (D. Richardson 2017). For Lazar (2010), individualized political agency stands in tension with the characteristics of Bolivian citizenship. Its essence lies in its “collective” and “corporate” character, where people join in together in demonstrations.¹⁴⁴

However, even though it could be argued that the organization’s work neatly fitted in and supported the production of a type of “modern” individualized subject, in this context associated with norms of whiteness and contrasted to indigeneity – the young women’s political subjectivity developed and expressed itself in various ways. Their doing of femininity reflected their different backgrounds, experiences and aspirations (De los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006b; Staunæs 2003; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

For example, Gabriela, the *paceña* who spoke about *señoras de pollera* and their physically abusive spouses, had neither a mother who dressed *de pollera* (nor a present father). When she talked about them, she homogenized the experiences of the indigenously marked women and their men and spoke about them from a distance. When, on the other hand, Teresa, whose mother was one “of those” physically abused *señoras de pollera*, talked about the same subjects, the woman behind the skirt stepped forward in another light. Teresa recalled her mother’s answer when she pleaded with her to separate from Teresa’s physically abusive father. “It is for your sake that I put up with it.” And when Teresa tried to make sense of her mother’s reluctance to go to the police station to file a complaint, she said:

My mum couldn’t go out, my mum was afraid that people would see her beaten up, afraid that, that is, I can imagine myself a woman who

¹⁴⁴ Even though Lazar (2008) argues for this understanding of citizenship, she is careful to point out the heterogeneity of different political strands that are creatively put to use depending on the situation. The political strands comprise “individualized, liberal understandings of political action [that] interact with collectivist traditions, which draw on indigenous communal practices, Trotskyite trade unionism, anarchosyndicalism, and other threads” (Lazar 2008: 3).

has been beaten up, she wouldn't want to go through with it for the sake of her husband, that is, for the love they once had had.

In Teresa's account, it was relationships, public shame, and the memory of love that explained the continuance of violence. It was in fact not a lack of a right's perspective, a sense of normalcy or being unable to read – as Gabriela had pointed out.

Due to their different backgrounds and positions in social hierarchies, Teresa did not embrace as easily as Gabriela the organizational alternative femininity that in certain regards was produced in contrast to the representations of *señoras de pollera*. Amongst the young people, Teresa was one of the most outspoken young women in voicing a critique against the legacy of colonialism and calling out lingering racism. She projected a sense of pride in her Aymara heritage. This showed for example when she talked about how discrimination permeated everyday life. "Because they continue saying, 'you shout like a *chola* [*como chola gritas*],' and your mother is *chola*. It should not be an insult." Teresa thus criticized the fact that people used the saying as an insult despite having themselves mothers who dressed *de pollera*. This saying had recently been thrown in Teresa's face at university when she got into a discussion amongst a group of friends. Another young woman had said to her:

'Ah, you shout like a *chola*.' And I said to her, 'But your mother is *de pollera*', like that and she became quiet. And all of them said, 'Uhhhh [a sound meaning that Teresa had made a sharp comeback]', like that. 'No,' I said to them, 'it's not about saying uhh.'

Teresa vowed, "I didn't want to /.../ make her feel bad. That was not my intention." Still, it was important for her to draw the line. But, at other times it just became too overwhelming. "Sometimes it is a bit complicated to live together [*convivir*]," Teresa said, "because sometimes you allow them to say that", adding, "you allow it and you just get tired."

Teresa's emotional fatigue came from the weariness in constantly negotiating conflictive notions and emotions. It was a complex mix of shame and pride, historical struggles and projects of nationhood – inherited, absorbed and processed at the site and level of the individual body (cf. Tapias 2015). To the best of their ability, the young women navigated these incongruities in everyday life.

These negotiations elucidate citizenship as embodied. The interconnections between social hierarchies and projects of belonging developed at the

national level affect people's sense of inclusion and become embodied and lived on the ground.

The young women negotiated dominant representations, their own positionings and projected aspired belongings. They illustrated citizenship as a relational process, interrelated with developments and belongings at different levels. Their embodied citizenships were continuously in the making.

A new political subject was also in the making. In the adult-centric Bolivian society, young people stepped forward to question their lack of influence and the adult-centrism that permeated political spaces. This process was part of larger societal transformations where different groups and interests joined forces to make claims for social justice. Together they animated the political landscape by asking, who were included in the body politic? And most importantly, who defends young people?

8. Who defends you?!

Youth as political subject

The sun was glaring. Some had brought umbrellas that offered a little shade. The young *paceños/as* and *alteños/as* that I usually met in separate spaces had gathered this day. Crammed in the rather narrow street of *Calle Comercio*, crowds of people were waiting to enter the country's political centre, the *Plaza Murillo*. They represented the large number of organizations that had been invited by the government to participate in the official celebrations of this anniversary day (see figure 17).

The year after the new Constitution was accepted in 2009, the 22 of January was declared a national holiday to commemorate the founding of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Now in 2015, Evo Morales would hold one of two inaugural acts to mark his third successive period as president. At the *Plaza Murillo*, hosting both the Presidential Palace and the National Congress, the president was seated. Framed as the country's first indigenous president ever, he waved to the incoming, parading people. Due to previous violent demonstrations, it was prohibited on other days to visit the square in large groups. Further back in history, indigenous people were not even allowed to visit the square at all (Gotkowitz 2000: 222). Some things had indeed changed.

The crowd thickened with every metre closer to the square. To alleviate the tedious waiting, the young people were poking fun at each other. They were dancing and playing music, in the midst of the crowd. Someone came by and handed out red shawls and t-shirts to the group. "*Ley 342*" was printed on one side of the shawl. That was the number of the Youth Act. The other side read *Juventudes* (Youth in plural). The t-shirts had the image of three silhouettes, a girl in the middle with a boy on each side. They were painted in red, yellow and green – the colours of the Bolivian flag. Large letters spelled out "Plurinational Youth Council" (*Consejo Plurinacional de la Juventud*).

What was all this about? What did these prints signify?

The chapter details young people's positions in relation to political spaces at the local and national level. These were shaped by adult-centrism – but they were undergoing changes. The so-called “process of change” – the government's project of creating the plurinational state, decolonizing society and the quest for social justice – stirred the political landscape and reanimated the charged question of who belonged to the *pueblo* (the people). The government's political project was used by different groups as leverage to support claims for inclusion.

The focus of the discussions lies on youth as a homogeneous group. Young people's locations and their relationships to the body politic change, however, depending on the intersections of race, class and sexuality. A few examples render this clear. The political landscape emerges more fully by also looking at how TLGB groups made use of the new dynamics. Together with them and other organized interests, the young peoples' activism formed a part of the larger processes in motion. They materialized a new part of the body politic – the political position as youth.

Performing and negotiating nationhood

With the young people's participation in the celebrations introduced initially they inscribed themselves into the new narrative of nationhood and carved out a space and position. Still, in the end not all of them participated. This fact elucidates the complexity of the political landscape. Different histories, belongings and projected desires united the *alteños/as* and *paceños/as* of the organization at times – and divided them on other occasions. The latter happened at the celebrations. At first, though, they waited together under the glaring sun.

Claiming space

The young *alteños/as* and *paceños/as* had thus gathered at *Calle comercio*, waiting to enter the *Plaza Murillo* together with other organizational representatives. The red shawls and t-shirts handed out to them merit some consideration. With the prints *Juventudes*, the number of the Youth Act and the “Plurinational Youth Council,” the boys' and girls' participation could be read in different, but not necessarily exclusionary ways. Their presence with these prints that highlighted their successful achievements could be interpreted as a sign of their endorsement of the government. A government

who had “given” so much to young people. It could also be read as a claim on their part. Through their presence, they clearly demarcated a political position as youth and demanded inclusion in the body politic.¹⁴⁵

The young people’s relaxed waiting, with making jokes and listening to music, differed from the somewhat frenzied state of the morning activities. Upon entering the *paceño* youth space the same morning, the boys and girls were hurriedly trying out different techniques to cover up the past. They had been instructed to conceal the USAID¹⁴⁶ badges sewn on their official clothing. CYRI no longer received funding from USAID, but the clothes were still in use. The organization’s former financier was a continuous source of tension between the organization and the political leadership of the MAS party. In 2013, the government expelled USAID from the country, accusing it of interfering in the work of peasants’ unions (Paredes 2013). According to the staff, the previous connection to USAID still negatively influenced their possibilities of establishing contact with some of the political decision-makers from the governing party. It raised suspicion of the organization’s intentions and objectives. When I asked one of the boys why all this worry about the badges, he recalled problems earlier on. He told me that at an official event MAS representatives had been annoyed by the badge, seeing it as a symbol of US imperialism and right-wing politics (*de la derecha*). The embroidered clothes told the history of their different sponsors and another political landscape. The new landscape had to be navigated.

Thus, the organization did not want to provoke the government. The staff sensed the threat of being closed down. It was a topic of concern raised at meetings at the national office. The government had already kicked out some foreign organizations, annoyed by their activities (Corz 2013; Mealla 2015; Layme 2015). A staff member who often critiqued the government talked about the importance of strategic thinking. Because of their former financier, they had been branded as siding with right-wing politics (*de la derecha*). He told me how doors got shut in his face. Therefore, “in the present climate you have to cooperate with the government”, he said. “Otherwise you will be wiped out.”

Probably for the same reason, the day before the celebrations the facilitator Emilio had anxiously asked the boys and the girls in the *alteño* youth

¹⁴⁵ The Youth Act and the Plurinational Youth Council are described in more detail below.

¹⁴⁶ USAID – United States Agency for International Development.

space if they had any *wiphalas*¹⁴⁷ they could bring. I promised to bring mine. In a somewhat admonitory tone, Emilio said that it was surprising that I, the foreigner, was one of the very few who had a *wiphala*. He thus conveyed a message to the gathered youngsters. It was the message of (at least officially pretending to give) support to the government, symbolically illustrated by the *wiphala*. A bit of a tension thus surrounded the young people's participation in the parade.¹⁴⁸

On *Calle Comercio* the boys and girls grew increasingly annoyed by the long wait in the blazing sun. Complaints drowned the jokes and laughter from before. "The arrangement of this event is awful!" Feet ached, thirst and hunger poked for attention. One by one they dropped off. After a while the few remaining *paceño* youth had had enough and decided to take off. They told me that close by one could play table-top games at a low cost. I followed at their heels whilst the *alteño* youngsters stayed put, honouring their commitment to participate.

The day after I was back in the youth space of El Alto. Edgar was there; he was the only one amongst the young people who defined himself as coming from the *campo* (countryside). When his parents made the move to the city, he had only been a small child, the youngest amongst many siblings. Now, he updated me on the events after the *paceño* youth and I had taken off the day before. He said that some of them who had remained had almost fainted from the long wait in the sun. When it was finally time to enter the *Plaza Murillo*, they had worked up a "full anger" about the poor organization. "I felt ok", he said, "but the others walked out with the facial expression of going out to a war [*cara de guerra*]." He added, "they didn't even greet the president as they passed him by."

Greetings or not, the young people's participation is significant to consider in relation to Bolivian political practices, the production of nationhood and their sense of inclusion. Lazar (2010) argues that participating in parades is an important part of Bolivian political life. School children's participation in civic events, such as commemorating historical dates through parades and cultural activities, has been instrumental in implementing Bolivian nationhood. Additionally, the choice of historical dates

¹⁴⁷ *Wiphala* – a flag consisting of seven colours and used as a symbol by Andean indigenous movements. There are different versions of the flag. The *Collasuyo wiphala* is used by Aymara populations, but it is also declared to represent the state in the Constitution (Article 6).

¹⁴⁸ In fact, it was the network of the young people who had been invited, not CYRI *per se*. The young people who were regular visitors to the youth spaces were organized in an independent network, though affiliated to CYRI.

reflects the fortification of a specific version of the past. At the time of Lazar's fieldwork, in 2003–2004, it was a national narrative buttressing mestizo and creole identities. Indigenous people's history was not included.

Thus by introducing new dates and national symbols, as this particular day commemorating the founding of the plurinational state, the national narrative was rewritten (see Nicolas and Quisbert 2014; also Tórrez and Arce 2014). Thus, when the young people took part in the celebrations, they inscribed themselves into the new project of nationhood. They became a part of the government's ongoing "process of change".

However, they challenged it to include and recognize young people as political actors and bearers of rights. Through their participation in this (and other public events), the young people's bodies seen as "mobile spatial fields" (Munn 2003) created space through their movements. They carved out a place in the body politic through their participation in the public, political space of the parade, covered by national media. Through the embodied practices of walking together (cf. Lazar 2010; 2008), they took part in the processes that delineated the political subject of young people. They negotiated their sense of belonging in the nation and the terms of their citizenship. Their embodied citizenship was continuously in the making.

In light of these arguments, it is noteworthy that the *paceño* youth decided to take off from the parade whilst the *alteño* youth stayed on. Their different belongings at the local level and youth and political spaces in general illuminate why they chose to go separate ways.

Rebel youth?

Two main characteristics explain why young people's inclusion and activism in Bolivian politics have been scarce. Very few state institutions have been made accessible for young people's participation; and other political channels are characterized by adult-centrism (Tórrez et al. 2009: 58). However, since the so-called "Water War" (*Guerra del agua*) in 2000, young people have stepped up as political actors in their own right, creating new spaces for political activism and new subjectivities. This image is fed by the fact that many of the injured and killed were young during this period of intense political and societal turmoil (Tórrez et al. 2009: 29; Carrasco Michel 2014). In the ensuing "Gas War" in 2003, the inhabitants of El Alto

have often been given the role as protagonists,¹⁴⁹ and young people's involvement has been highlighted (Albó 2006). Narratives of youth *alteño* rebellion have nurtured the construction of a political subjectivity of young *alteños* as disposed to make claims (*reclamar*).¹⁵⁰

A few of the young *alteños* and *alteñas* that I met also referred to this narrative of young rebellious *alteños* and rebellious *alteño*hood in general. In fact, the narrative lives on. As this chapter is being written, one of the young *alteñas* from the youth space makes a Facebook post. She recognizes the anniversary of the decision that later led to the city's formal separation and independent status from La Paz, in the year 1988.¹⁵¹ She describes the city as "brave" (*valerosa*). A friend of hers comments the post, saluting, "long live the combative city of El Alto."

Studies on youth and political subjectivity in El Alto establish a strong connection between young people's Aymara heritage and their political engagements.¹⁵² However, the *alteños* and *alteñas* that I met in the youth space generally projected aspirations more closely aligned to racialized whiteness, as discussed throughout the chapters. Therefore it is important to remember that despite the narrative of El Alto as a "rebel city" (Lazar 2008), the inhabitants are heterogeneous in terms of race and class. The more well-to-do neighbourhoods in El Alto did not side with the protesters in the "Gas War" in 2003.¹⁵³ The "war" that would be one of the significant events leading up to the election of Evo Morales and the MAS party.¹⁵⁴

Still, on this occasion the *alteños* and *alteñas* did remain at the scene, whereas the *paceño* youth took off. Reading this scene with Yuval-Davis' argument of the multi-layered citizen (1999) and writings on the politics of belonging (2011b; 2006a) illuminates why. The MAS government's production of nationhood, "the politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011b; 2006a), played out differently for *alteños/as* and *paceños/paceñas*. This is due to their different belongings at the local/city level and how these were interrelated with belongings at the national level (Yuval-Davis 1999). Chapter Four showed how the racialized and class-marked cities inflected

¹⁴⁹ See for example Lazar (2008) and Flores Vásquez, Herbas Cuevas, and Huanca Aliaga (2007).

¹⁵⁰ See Mollericona (2007) and Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. (2007).

¹⁵¹ See Arbona and Kohl (2004: 262–63) for the municipal politics behind this decision to decentralize.

¹⁵² See Mollericona (2007) and Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. (2007).

¹⁵³ See Flores Vásquez, Herbas Cuevas, and Huanca Aliaga (2007: 26–27); Sánchez Serrano (2010: 49).

¹⁵⁴ See the background in Chapter Two.

on the embodied lives of the young *alteños* and *alteñas*. The young people's relationship to the project of nationhood at the national level was entwined with the construction of city-spaces and their embodiment of, respectively, *paceño*- and *alteño*hood. Seeing citizenship as multi-layered elucidated these connections and the entanglement between belongings at different levels (Yuval-Davis 1999).

The young *alteños*' and *alteñas*' decision to stay put was undergirded by their identity as El Alto inhabitants, influenced by the politicization of the city and the role it played in the large social mobilizations. In the complex constructions and intersections of positions of belonging, aspirations, and projected identities, the El Alto youngsters still wrote themselves within – admittedly without a smile – a national narrative speaking the “process of change”. They bolstered a sense of belonging leaning more towards indigeneity or “rebel city” than the mestizo or creole narrative of the past. “El Alto stands, never kneels” (*El Alto de Pie, Nunca de Rodillas*), as the popular slogan went. In the heat of the moment(s, past, present, and future) – the *paceños* and *paceñas* chose another alternative.

But when it came to other matters, they remained in the same position. In order to understand young people's position at large in relation to adults, the next example introduces an event organized by several youth organizations in El Alto. At this event, they outlined their positions and aspirations. They were in control of the stage.

Adult-centrism and inferior youth

Intergenerational processes

“Who defends you?!” a young man exclaimed to the youngsters in the audience. He had just stepped on the stage and grabbed hold of the microphone. “No one!” they replied. The young man on stage had precisely the task to look after the interests of young people in El Alto. He represented a network¹⁵⁵ gathering different youth organizations of the city. One of them was CYRI.

So why had a bunch of youngsters gathered? And why did they reply “No one”? The history of youth and political organizing provides some clues.

¹⁵⁵ The network, *La Coordinadora Municipal de Juventudes El Alto*, gathered about 30 different youth organizations.

After the social mobilizations leading to the electoral success of Evo Morales' MAS Party in 2005, the following years were characterized by intense, national political disagreement. The so-called *Media Luna* departments (Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, and Tarija) called for autonomy. The work with the new Constitution was heatedly debated. And the struggle raged regarding how to define the political agenda (Tórrez et al. 2009; see also Ugglá 2009). This charged terrain gave birth to two types of youth organizations, elite versus underprivileged and subaltern young people, originating from the internal national division (Tórrez et al. 2009: 38). Adults on opposed sides of the conflict were successful in activating young people to serve their purpose. In a report Daniela Carrasco Michel (2014: 3) concludes that "it was definitely about the predominance of adult-centric visions, which saw young people as manipulable, immature and useful for achieving their goals" (see also Tórrez et al. 2009).

MAS' first period in office was characterized by regional/geographical conflicts; the second opened up spaces for a more diverse set of actors. Firstly, indigenous people, secondly, women, and thirdly, young people. During this time young people were politically engaged in two main ways. Either in large, influential state-centred organizations and parties, or in more autonomous spaces. In the former, young people established their own spaces. However, due to hierarchical organizations and adult-centrism, the spaces did not give actual influence. They were symbolical. The young people's role was to support and effectuate the decisions taken by adults (Carrasco Michel 2014).

Consequently, a recurrent theme is that Bolivian young people's political engagements have been tightly interlaced with those of adults. This, together with the fact that Bolivian youth are described as an "instrument of change" in public policies and by national authorities (Iñiguez 2007: 9), begs the question of whose change actually has been at stake in the past.

But notions of youth as an "instrument of change" are not circumscribed to public policies and the inspired imaginings of national authorities. Durham (2008) holds that anthropologists embellish these notions too. Anthropologists revel in descriptions of youth agency; an agency understood as creative, rebellious, speaking against and overturning the order. She continues, "these qualities seem to inhere in being young, indeed almost to define it" (Durham 2008: 165). This outlook fails to understand the complexity of agency. For example, in her field, youth in Botswana are often charged with being "apathetic". But her point is that agency does not only mean to oppose. Agency can reside in practices of agreement as well. She

suggests instead that “by examining youth agency more closely, we can free the concept of agency from its narrower association with free will and liberalist autonomy” (Durham 2008: 151). Thus, instead of continuously reiterating that young people do have agency and that it somehow differs from that of adults, Durham (2008: 153) asks us to focus on the circumstances of agency. Under what circumstances does young people’s agency come about?

With this in mind, I return to the questions posed earlier. Why had a bunch of youngsters gathered? And what did their reply “No one!” mean? Furthermore, what does it say about young people as political actors and subjects – and their citizenship status?

Outlining positions

Due to the upcoming general elections, the network of youth organizations had invited candidates for the five running parties to hear them out. What were the parties’ plans for young people? By inviting the political parties, the youth organizations signalled that they had stakes in the upcoming elections.

In descriptions of El Alto, its large population of young people is often referred to and confirmed by official statistics (Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. 2007: vii; Méndez Padilla and Pérez Sánchez 2007: 30).¹⁵⁶ In this sense, youth comprised an important constituency. Even though not all of the participants at the event would be able to vote in the upcoming elections, their time would soon come. At the very least, this was conjured by the event’s catchphrase spelled out in yellow-green letters – “Our proposal counts.”¹⁵⁷

The event took place at a hotel venue, *Salón Majestic*, in El Alto’s city centre. The youngsters took seats around big round tables scattered across the large locale. Some of the organizers were climbing up and down the small stage for some last-minute preparations. However, even after the usual delays characterizing these events, a few of those who had been invited were still missing. In the end, representatives for only three parties showed up. Maybe young people’s proposal did not count after all.

¹⁵⁶ In the statistics for the *Departamento* La Paz, which includes El Alto, the age category of 0–29 years amounted to 56.8 % of the population. The age group 0–14 years = 29 % and 15–29 years = 27.8 % (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2015b).

¹⁵⁷ The event was announced for example through a flyer-like post made on the network’s Facebook page.

After each candidate had presented themselves and their most important concerns, the organizers opened the floor for questions. One by one boys and girls from the audience stood up to raise their question to the candidates. The questions revolved around the lack of safety in public spaces, teenage pregnancies, exploitative working conditions, trafficking, homeless young people living in the streets, high levels of alcohol consumption amongst both adults and young people, educational possibilities, etc. One party representative was asked about his opinion on how to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies. He took the opportunity to admonish young people in general. "Young people have to sharpen up and assume their responsibility", he said. "They are the ones to blame."

After the round of questions, representatives from the different youth organizations took the stage one by one to read aloud from a list of "non-renounceable proposals" (*propuestas irrenunciabiles*), directed at the national authorities. They had prepared the list beforehand. The document stated that according to their analyses of young people's situation and the five parties' electoral proposals, they concluded that the parties' proposals were insufficient. In relation to what public policies and regulations stipulated, pending actions were expected.¹⁵⁸ One clause, for example, demanded 30 % of the seats to be reserved for young people in public political spaces, abiding by gender equality. Another specified the incorporation of adolescents' and young people's needs into the Annual Operating Plan (*Plan Operativo Annual*) of the municipalities and neighbourhood councils.

The local level, here the municipality together with neighbourhood councils, form an important part of citizens' interaction with and understanding of the state and politics in El Alto.¹⁵⁹ Lazar (2008) argues that people ground a sense of collective citizenship through their engagement in local spaces and that these spaces mediate the relationship between the state and its citizens.¹⁶⁰ From a youth perspective, these spaces can be seen in a different light. On their list of "non renounceable proposals" they had indeed recognized the municipal level and the neighbourhood associations

¹⁵⁸ The list specified a number of different demands under the headings of education, health, employment, safety (*seguridad*), youth participation, culture, and environment (*medio ambiente*) and areas for recreation.

¹⁵⁹ Albó (2006: 336) comments that there are neighbourhood organizations in some areas of La Paz as well, especially up the slopes, but that there are very few in the central districts.

¹⁶⁰ See also Albó (2006); Samanamud A., Cárdenas P., and Prieto M. (2007: 47–51); Flores Vásquez, Herbas Cuevas, and Huanca Aliaga (2007).

as important political spaces. Significantly, however, young peoples' needs and concerns were not adequately taken into consideration in these spaces. Therefore, they demanded quotas to ensure young people's participation. The new Constitution from 2009 had actually improved their possibilities of participating in municipal councils. It lowered the minimum age for eligible candidates from previous twenty-one to eighteen years (in Article 287).

Amongst the young people I met at CYRI, a few of them also expressed that the neighbourhood councils did exclude young people. David, the bright young *alteño* who had been working abroad one year to save up some money for studies, told me that he had been a regular visitor at the meetings of his neighbourhood council. When he had tried to take the floor, he had been cut off. "I usually go to the monthly meetings, I try to talk, 'your dad, your mom', they usually say." Nancy, the *alteña* in her mid-teens with a long fringe, also talked about neighbourhood meetings. She referred to them as an example of how young people's opinions lacked value. "Up until now, young people are not allowed at the meetings", she told me, "but they don't understand that maybe we know more than they do." She felt that young people were downgraded, like "we are only based on something, something inferior [*bajo*]", she stated.

The quotes suggest that age is important for understanding participation and influence. Local political spaces like the neighbourhood council and the parents' associations build upon generational relationships of, respectively, the adult speaking for the whole family as a unit, and the parent/caregiver speaking for the child. This structure parallels others that support adult-centrism and work to reinforce the notion that adults are the ones to decide on behalf of younger generations. We may recall the discussion of parental control and authority in Chapter Six. Young people often found it difficult to voice their opinions (cf. Méndez Padilla and Pérez Sánchez 2007: 51). The catchphrases of Nancy's parents can serve as reminders. "You are a baby [Aymara: *wawa*], what do you know?" or, "Don't bother me, I'm not your age", as her mother said. Or that she "neither have a voice nor a vote", as her father would remind her.

Adult-centrism was pertinent beyond intrafamilial relationships. David, the *alteño* who had been cut off when trying to take the floor at neighbourhood meetings, had more to say about young people and political participation. He described issues at stake and political spaces at different levels to exemplify how young people's concerns were disregarded. For example, he had earlier been involved in raising the issue that young people should

have universal health insurance. When visiting relevant authorities, he felt that the reception of both them and their issue fell short.

When we started this project, this process, we as young people at the ministries, first they left us waiting to last in line. ‘They are young people’ /.../ ‘they are strong, they have to stand up’, you know. Or ‘they can wait’ or ‘they are young, they won’t get hurt so there is no need to create a universal insurance for young people.’

Thus, if young people were received at all, it was with arguments and excuses signalling their irrelevance.

It could be inferred that the “banal” example of being made to stand the longest in line reveals little about young people’s sense of inclusion from a citizen perspective. But as anthropologists Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (2006: 11–12) argue: “Mundane bureaucratic procedures thus provide important clues to understanding the micropolitics of state work, how state authority and government operate in people’s daily lives, and how the state comes to be imagined, encountered, and reimagined by the population.” If we follow their argument, the seemingly banal act of making young people wait till last, moreover, trivializing their health concerns, can be very telling indeed. The practices are parts of the relationship between the state and its young subjects. They shape young people’s sense of citizenship and societal inclusion.

To read David’s statement with Butler’s (2011) take on how bodies materialize suggests that young people as political subjects still had a way to go until they were recognized as *matter*ing, that is, being of importance. Russell’s (2011) view would be that the materiality of young bodies was given overdetermining weight. Instead of abject, dematerialized bodies in Butler’s account, young bodies were instead overloaded with significance. Young bodies could just wait and stand up. They would not get hurt. Consequently, health insurance was unnecessary for them. In this particular case, the materiality of a young body was loaded with healthy significance. This had potentially detrimental consequences.

From David’s standpoint, the president downgraded young people. “The president still has this view”, he said, that “young people are not able to do what adult people do /.../, he thinks of us as far below.” And Álvaro, the young *alteño* who talked about his sense of unease in his body, had experiences similar to David’s. Álvaro had also worked towards formal political spaces; the attitudes he had been met with were: “You don’t have any experience, you don’t know how to do this, you don’t know, you are a

kid [*chango*].” Adults’ messages to David and Álvaro were clear. Young people and their concerns lacked priority in relation to adults. Their ability, as young people, must per definition be at the low end.

Adult-centrism and the sociocultural indexes for the production and distribution of emotions (see Chapter Six) contextualize young people’s political inclusion and position in intrafamilial relationships. Age is fundamental for understanding the terms for their societal inclusion and citizenship status. The examples show the frustrated responses of an adult world, retorting in the vein of Nancy’s parents: “You are a baby, what do you know?” and “[you] neither have a voice nor a vote.”

This elucidates the youngsters’ reply, “No one!” when they were asked “Who defends you?!” Their embodied citizenship, their sense of inclusion in society, was configured by age-structured relationships and the reign of adult-centrism.

However, at the national level one could discern a growing recognition of a new bearer of rights. A new political subject was materializing as part of the body politic.

Young people *in position*

Even if the young people in general said that their opinions were not considered by adults in their surroundings, things were on the move at the national level of politics. The young people of the organization had been a part of these changes.

Álvaro described the strategies he and his peers had used in order to effectuate the changes they sought. Álvaro was a person highly committed to effectuating changes. He had big aspirations for life, talked energetically and engagingly, and one thing had led to another. He had received more training and got the opportunity to work towards more institutionalized political spaces. Together with other peers from CYRI and other organizations, he had worked strategically to set up alliances with people at the adequate authorities. They used already-existing articles in laws, which, with a bit of work and elaboration, could be put to use in a more favourable direction. The work with regulations (*normativas*) was important to gain influence. “We started to become political when we started to show that we indeed can make regulations”, he explained and continued “Right now when we are working with the Youth Act, [we will] enrich it with more regulations.”

David also felt that things had changed. “The political sphere is a space which we are just now getting to know with the Plurinational Youth Council that has been our real breakthrough, our leap forward [*salto*]”, he said, “because before, young people were invisible, we didn’t have a Youth Act.” Both Álvaro and David were amongst the older visitors of the youth spaces of CYRI. This could have influenced their shared perspective that young people’s views were increasingly taken into consideration. Nevertheless, David mentioned two major changes, the Plurinational Youth Council and the Youth Act approved in 2013. They signalled the increasing visibility and demarcation of a specific political position of youth. The prints on the t-shirts and shawls in the parade furthermore spread the message. It is no wonder that David mentions the two changes. Behind them lay years of arduous work by young people from different organizations (Rioja Guzmán 2015; La Razón Digital/ABI 2012). Apart from declaring young people’s rights and obligations, the law established a separate political structure/organization for developing, executing and evaluating public policy in relation to young people. One part of this political structure was the creation of a Plurinational Youth Council. According to Article 15 of the Youth Act, it would allow young people’s “participation, deliberation and representation” in pertinent questions.

Inti Tonatihu Rioja Guzmán (2015) observed a national meeting that gathered over 200 young people, debating the proposals for the Youth Act. In his report, he was surprised that the media paid it scant interest. Instead of showing young people engaged in political debate, the media rather cabled out images of young people as dangerous and criminals (Rioja Guzmán 2015: 8).

When David became engaged in the work with the Youth Act, he represented the network of young people vis-à-vis the other parties involved in the process.¹⁶¹ The different parties did not always agree. David had a complex view of the ruling party and the government (see Chapter Four). On the one hand, he strongly identified with some political questions of ideological weight. On the other, he raised serious doubts about other aspects. “When we started the theme of the youth project, they furthermore didn’t give us the necessary support because MAS is a very absorbent party”, he said, “either you are with MAS or you’re against MAS.” When discussions unfolded on the issue of *how to* and *who* would represent young people, he found the party’s position troublesome.

¹⁶¹ As stated earlier, the young people who were regular visitors to the youth spaces were organized in an independent network, though affiliated to CYRI.

So we did not always agree with MAS because they have the conception that a young person can be even 34–40, a person of 34–46 years can represent a young person, a collective of young people. We disagreed, we wanted young people to represent us young people.

The leader of the MAS youth section, also singled out age as the most difficult question to resolve (Rioja Guzmán 2015: 9). During the process, the young people met backlash and difficulties. For example, in the end there was a “radical difference” between the young people’s original draft proposal and the actual law (Rioja Guzmán 2015: 14). Their draft introduced a quota system for political candidates at different levels; young people would have twenty per cent. However, this was dropped after negotiations with members of the national assembly and the juridical revision. They were left instead with non-committal declarations of a general right to participate politically in different spaces (Rioja Guzmán 2015).

Despite the setbacks and revisions of the youth’s draft proposal, Rioja Guzmán (2015) underscores the significance of the developments for young people as political subjects in recent years. Firstly, the new Constitution of 2009 recognized, for the first time, young people as subjects of rights and obligations. Secondly, with the new law, they truly carved out a space within the state for themselves as political subjects.

In the previous Constitution, as in the legislation in general, young people were almost invisible (Iñiguez 2007). In a report, Jimena Avejera (2012–2013) describes how the Constitution of 2009 markedly changed the age-defined criteria for a wide range of different political positions. It lowered the minimum age for candidates to the parliaments’ both houses, for president, vice president, mayor, governor etc.

And then the moment came. Two members of the government summoned the Plurinational Youth Council for the first time to a press conference. It would be a “historical session”, the Minister of the Presidency (*Ministro de la Presidencia*) stated. The space would allow young people to discuss and develop political proposals pertinent to their group. In grand words he said that they would “define their generational perspective”, and that “the plurinational state could never again be imagined without the vigorous participation” of young people (Ministerio de Comunicación n.d.; Cuiza 2014; Pinto 2014).

It is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate whether the law not only formally but also substantively resulted in a larger and meaningful influence for young people at the level of national politics. Nonetheless, I find

it safe to argue that the law – with the political structure and different regulations it established and the processes in motion behind the law – worked to more clearly delineate a political position of youth. A new body materialized in the body politic of the Plurinational State of Bolivia – the body of youth.

Homo(geneous) body politic?

Youth as a homogeneous group has mostly stood in focus up to this point. However, depending on different cuts in the social fabric, a young person's location and relationship to the body politic will differ. But not only young people, a number of different groups made claims and advances towards widening the body politic. These movements made up a dynamic political terrain that lay beneath the emergence of youth as political subject. It was a landscape under negotiation. This landscape had also brought MAS to power. And through the "process of change", the question of who belonged to the *pueblo* was re-centred. As will be shown through the example of TLGB-activism, different movements from the last few decades have redrawn the frameworks for political activism. Moreover, the government's "process of change" was used as leverage to negotiate the boundaries of the body politic.

But we begin at CYRI. TLGB issues were left implicit in the organization's work in the youth spaces. Same-sex desires sometimes "popped up" as an irregular reminder of sexual diversity. The *marica* (effeminized man, homosexual) and the *maricón* (faggot) served as counterparts to "normal" or successful boy- or manhood (see Chapter Five). So what did the boys and girls have to say about people belonging to the TLGB population?

"Gigantic barrier"

Here every father who realizes that his son is gay, he doesn't want to have hardly any contact with him after that. He wants to place him in military school, they want to make him play soccer. – The *paceño* Wilson in his mid-twenties

The young people held that the organizational framework regarding gender roles, gender identities and same-sex attraction differed from how it was

generally understood in their surroundings. Thus, by entering the framework of the organization, a process of the “normalization” of same-sex desires took place in them. In that sense, the regulating effect of the homosexual male, here the *marica* or the *maricón*, lost *some* of its stigma and negative force for the young people. Still though, being openly homosexual was not without its problems.

Reflecting this process of “normalization”, same-sex desires seemed more controversial amongst the newcomers to CYRI’s youth space, than for old-timers. As I was hanging out with Nancy and Silvia one day, Nancy was curious to know more about me. Nancy, with her long fringe that often fell in front of her eyes, and Silvia, whose relationship to the *pollera* was scrutinized, were both newcomers to the *alteño* youth space. The first day I met the group of newcomers, they had already come to know that I was married to a woman. Now Nancy wanted to know more and launched a bunch of questions about my sexual identification. Silvia had at first stood next to us mostly listening, but now she joined in. “It is still a bit strange or unusual for me”, she admitted, “with people who belong to the TLGB community.” She continued that many had the opinion that to be homosexual was a disease, and that there was a ton of prejudice flourishing around such people. She then discreetly nodded her head in the direction of Martín, the only one amongst the young people who openly identified as homosexual. “Now I have gotten to know him a bit in the youth space”, she said in a low voice, “but people question how I could be friends with someone like him.”

Martín was questioned within his own family as well. It had been hard for his mother to accept that he was homosexual. He was thirteen when he first told her. First, she took it as a joke and started laughing. Then the penny dropped, and “The only thing my mom did was to cry, nothing else, you know, she thought that this is a disease”, he said. “Then she took me to psychologists, she took me to doctors.” At fifteen, he ran away from home when his stepdad found out. He decided to leave town and live with his uncles in El Alto instead. After some time, his mother and his stepdad separated, and he could reconcile with his mother. “It hasn’t been easy for her to absorb it, but she has accepted me little by little”, he said. His little brother had never had any problems with him being homosexual, Martín explained. But when he talked about his little sister, he seemed pained. “She is ashamed of having a brother like that you know, a homosexual brother”, he said. “She has used words that have really hurt me.”

The young people generally felt that discrimination of homosexuals and homophobia had lessened the later years. David, for example, talked about changing attitudes. His had also changed. “In Bolivia, the GLBT population or TLGBs, they are taking up a very broad space in decision-making”, he said. “Before, they were severely discriminated against; my own family, even I felt a bit of rejection on my part towards them.” According to him, other young people, staff, and TLGB activists, the churches presented the fiercest opposition.¹⁶² When the Constitution from 2009 declared the State secular, the Catholic Church lost some of its formal power. Still, David explained, it remained strong. “It’s really hard [to see] that in the future our dogmatic Orthodox Church would allow homosexuals to get married, and even more so that they could have children.” David added, “There is a gigantic barrier” (cf. Monje n.d.).

This “gigantic barrier” could loom large. Homophobia was strong, and people belonging to the TLGB community lacked a legal framework. Martín, who also had been engaged in TLGB groups, explained that a lot of work remained. “There is still a lack of awareness amongst our leaders in the government one could say.” He recalled some reactions by parliamentarians during the revision of the law regulating family relationships. “So there were many ... senators, deputies who said, ‘gay’ ... ‘what is gay?’.” He explained, “because others still do not understand what the word gay is or what homosexual is.”

President Morales had also made statements that provoked TLGB groups. During the inauguration ceremony of a climate-change summit, he connected chicken meat exposed to hormones with male (sexual) deviations (see Vaca 2010; La Razón (Madrid) 2010). Young people of CYRI also found statements like this offensive. Wilson for example, the young *paceño* and father of two children, was upset by this particular statement. “The president himself, the head of the people speaks nonsense [*macanas*]”, he said, “on national television he has been discriminatory; he did it in public and it hasn’t had any consequences for him.” The president did offer an apology afterwards. However, for Wilson it still chafed that the head of the people unabashedly could get away with discriminatory statements in a political landscape moved by discourses of ending discrimination. The same political landscape had also moved the president and the MAS Party to power.

¹⁶² See for example D.A. Pérez, Estenssoro Velaochaga, and Céspedes Vargas (2012: 307–10).

Process(es) of change?

That the indigenous, the peasants are embracing their roles as indigenous/peasant, the GLBT people also have this space to say: ‘We are gay, we are lesbians, we are trans, we are bi and we also want to be acknowledged.’ – The young *alteño* David

When MAS came to power, large segments of the population experienced exclusion, discrimination, poverty and the sense of being failed by the political establishment. This generated the large-scale political protests and mobilizations that led to the party’s electoral success.¹⁶³ For anthropologist Stuart Alexander Rockefeller, “Much of MAS’ success prior to the election came as a result of the party’s ability /.../ to articulate the demands and visions of many different popular movements, including multiple indigenous movements, rural peasant movements, the workers movement and urban residents’ groups” (Rockefeller 2007: 165–66).

The political landscape was indeed changing and dynamic. Discussing sexual-political mobilizations in Bolivia before the election of Morales, Paulson (2007: 272) finds a more coalition-based organizing whose goal is a justice embracing the many, rather than “just us”. For her, “emerging movements are forging creative alliances that fuse radical activism for sexual /gender rights with struggles against racism, patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism, seen as interwoven barriers to a more equitable society” (Paulson 2007: 272).¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, MAS’ promise to be another kind of government with a new relationship to its citizens (Rockefeller 2007: 165), together with the historical opportunity of rewriting the Constitution and the constituent assembly – framed and sparked the mobilization of various social movements. With a say in the processes, one could set the terms for generations to come (see Monje n.d.; D. A. Pérez, Estenssoro Velaochaga, and Céspedes Vargas 2012). In an NGO report on how the constitutional article on sexual and reproductive rights was included, Teresa Lanza Monje (n.d.: 7–8) stressed the strategy of building a broad alliance. The heterogeneity was

¹⁶³ See for example Canessa (2007a); Postero (2006); Vazualdo (2011); Albó (2006); Flores Vásquez, Herbas Cuevas, and Huanca Aliaga (2007) and Grisaffi (2013).

¹⁶⁴ This aligns with the growth of “activist citizenship” theorized by Engin F. Isin (2009), professor in International Politics. New actors have introduced new sites, scales, and acts which mould subjects into citizens. They are claimants of rights, and these rights are understood as a call for justice. These changes have profoundly changed the meaning of citizenship, Isin argues, by crosscutting boundaries and broadening the construction of the body politic.

striking.¹⁶⁵ Another example of the coalition-based political organizing was The Strategic Alliance for the Inclusion of Diversities, who managed to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” amongst the grounds for discrimination (D. A. Pérez, Estenssoro Velaochaga, and Céspedes Vargas 2012: 297, 310).¹⁶⁶

The political terrain thus hosted different claims. It could furthermore be used as leverage for different types of claims. The need to form broader alliances was clear in a publicized interview with two prominent TLGB activists. According to them, during the Morales government the work against racism had been more prioritized than other forms of discrimination. One of them stated that “the agenda of discrimination has been indigenized” (Mollinedo, Pérez, and Absi 2016: 423), which has been noted by researchers alike.¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the TLGB activists recalled that with the leverage of calling out something as discriminatory, they had a game-changer in concrete situations (Mollinedo, Pérez, and Absi 2016: see 421, 430).

This leverage was strategically used by other actors as well. A comment made by a MAS parliamentarian was met with outrage. He likened homosexuals to mentally ill people and stated that the country was not prepared for them (Erbol Digital 2014a). An activist from the widely known transvestite community *Familia Galan* would not settle with the excuse delivered afterwards. The government’s discourse was turned against itself. “If the government wants us to believe its speech/discourse [*discurso*] on depatriarchalization and decolonization, it should dismiss that parliamentarian.” The Public Defender of Human rights (*Defensor del Pueblo*) equally pointed out the incongruity between the parliamentarian’s words and the state’s political line (Diario Página Siete 2014).¹⁶⁸ And Tórrez (2014), in an opinion piece in a leading national newspaper, recalled the parliamentarian’s words and “medieval mentality.” He stated that “a State that sees

¹⁶⁵ The alliance included, “feminists; human rights advocates; organizations that fight for the right to food, work or housing; domestic workers’ unions; indigenous organizations for women and men; youth; sexual minorities; the movement of people of African descent; academics; and churches of other denominations [than the Catholic Church]” (Monje n.d.: 7–8).

¹⁶⁶ *La Alianza Estratégica por la Inclusión de las Diversidades*. The alliance gathered Afro-Bolivians, people with disabilities, elderly people, women subjected to violence, and actors for sexual diversities, to strengthen the force of their claims (D. A. Pérez, Estenssoro Velaochaga, and Céspedes Vargas 2012: 297, 310). See Article 14 of the Constitution.

¹⁶⁷ See Canessa (2007b: 205) and Burman (2014: 264).

¹⁶⁸ To read more about the transvestite community, see D. A. Pérez (2016).

itself as being progressive should overcome these homophobic traits” and called for improved legislation. Moreover, during the time of my stay, TLGB activists worked intensively for changes. The agenda included, for example, same-sex unions and laws that would improve the situation for people experiencing gender discordancy.¹⁶⁹

In the professed “process of change”, the president’s and other politicians’ controversial statements about homosexuals did indeed stir up emotions. This generated the energy for public debates, often leading to public denouncement and apologies. When the president said, “I cannot understand how women can get married to women and men to men”, he yet again produced a statement made for the headlines. Nevertheless, he did continue by stating that it was a reality, and that his lesbian friends had explained this to him (Página Siete Digital 2015b).

With the government’s widely projected goal to work for social justice, discriminated groups could use it as leverage. The pattern of politicians’ provocative statements followed by apologies – however small – revealed a sexual-political landscape under negotiation. Even if one could question the sincerity, efficacy and strength of a public apology, it did re-centre the questions of *who* could be discriminated against and what the plurality of the *pueblo* meant in practice. The incessant Bolivian question of inclusion in the body politic, the historical and present political quandary of how to understand and do difference, was deliberated. The political terrain was moving. And the young people were and had been a part of these movements, albeit not always in the same way.

This brings me one last time to the question, “Who defends you?!” The animated call for action is striking. The organizers assured them – in the face of doubt – that indeed, “[Their] proposal counts.” I could revel somewhat more in their oppositional stance. Or I could ask with Durham (2008), what is left out in anthropological revelling in youth agency?

No doubt many things have been left out, but one last point is yet to be made. I therefore return to the scene when the *paceños* and *paceñas*, so to speak, left to play table-top games. The choice to play games instead of

¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, a law regulating family relationships was under parliamentary revision. The work provoked heated debate. TLGB organizations arranged demonstrations; they criticized the lack of inclusion and recognition of families consisting of same-sex couples (see for example Ramos 2014; Hinojosa 2014; Página Siete/EFE 2014; Erbol Digital 2014b; F. Choque 2014). In 2016 a claim on the agenda was successfully met. A new law, *Ley De Identidad De Género*, No 807, made it possible for people experiencing gender discordancy to change their juridical sex through a simple administrative procedure (Absi 2016: 364).

honouring their commitment to participate in the parade could be viewed as “childish” and thereby “unpolitical” behaviour (for a critical discussion of childish equal unpolitical, see Kallio 2008: 286).

Nevertheless, one could infer that they equally negotiated the terrain and chose not to participate in this project of nationhood or political set-up where adults already dictated the rules of the game. Under the blazing sun they were left to wait. Their bodies were made into marionettes in a larger state-spectacle. In choosing to play games instead, their agentic practices are seen at the critical junction of the relativity of their position. Their practices illustrate yet again a facet of the interrelationship between adults and young people, entangled in processes of power and in the making of society.

9. Embodied citizenship

This study is a snapshot of a particular time in Bolivian history. My interest in the “process of change”, promoted by the government at the time, was one of the motivations behind the study and the backdrop during the time of my stay. I was curious to know if the “process of change” had indeed come to life for people. Could centuries of colonial structures be tore down?

After I finished the fieldwork, things changed. Bolivia yet again underwent political upheaval and has been the scene of sharp polarizing conflicts. The president, Evo Morales, who came to embody the “process of change”, was forced to flee the country. He claimed victory in elections his critics wrote off as fraudulent. After a period of turbulence, uncertainty and conflicts about who should govern the country, with a global pandemic on top of that, the MAS Party won the new elections in 2020. Morales returned but not as president. The question remains; how to study the “process of change”? I will return to this question at the end of the chapter.

My initial interest in studying how power relations play out at the site of the body unfolded into a series of more complex, but related questions. The dissertation’s first two research questions reflected the essence of understanding power relations. They asked: in the young people’s everyday lives, how are social hierarchies embodied, manifested, reproduced, questioned and negotiated? And, how can we understand social hierarchies in relation to societal inclusions and exclusions? The third research question had a different focus. It addressed instead political subjectivities and reflected the intention to broaden the scope of political engagement. It asked, amongst the young people, how are political subjectivities and engagement developed and expressed? The fourth and last question intended to capture how people’s senses of belonging are complex constructions related to both how belongings are construed at different societal levels and peoples’ positions in social hierarchies at respective levels. It was phrased: How can we comprehend the entanglements between different positions and belongings at the local and national level? These questions were used to fulfil the

aim of the dissertation to contribute empirically and analytically to an understanding of citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life.

The young people I met thus grew up during a period of intense negotiations of the meaning of Bolivian nationhood – involving historical and present inclusions, exclusions and degrees of belonging. The Bolivians were promised (and some were threatened by) social change. Some of these changes came with the new Constitution. Formal citizenship was rewritten in a process that highlighted past and present constructions of belonging. The Constitution paved the way for new belongings. However, as researchers have shown in Bolivia, as in the dissertation, structures are durable and changes do not occur overnight (for example Postero 2006; 2017; Canessa 2005; 2012). What had been made to matter, produced through the course of time, remained. They were embodied memories, parts of peoples' subjectivities, sense of self, and flesh. Moreover, since structures are materialized in bodies, they appear as given and natural. They are thus more difficult to tear down.

Throughout the time in the field, situations played out that involved social hierarchies based on foremost race, class, gender, age, sexuality and place. The study has captured how the young men and women embraced, contested, negotiated and experienced these hierarchies, as well as the new ideas about societal participation and inclusion. Social hierarchies were embodied. The youngsters felt and viewed their bodies and those of others in specific ways. Bodies were shaped – they *materialized* – in power-laden processes of making difference that took place within the very smallest spaces of life, together with loved ones and in the homes. The ethnographic situations described in the dissertation bring to light when young people lived the conflictive and promising moments when old structures and new futures met. These moments were illustrated in several ways.

We can recall how the *alteño* David felt a slap in the face upon learning about the negative comments made about El Alto inhabitants and women dressed *de pollera*. Women who dressed like his mother (in Chapter Four). The cable car promised a bridge between social worlds construed as opposites; a “uniting [of] our lives” as the state company’s slogan went. For others, it threatened their ways of living. Another moment was demonstrated when the young people were just about to choose the colour of their new organizational clothes. Green or orange? The *alteño* Eric reminded the others – or gave voice to their thoughts – what was at stake. At stake was the comfort of merging with the norm, of embodying racialized whiteness.

Or, as the *alteña* Isaura put it, “you don’t want the society to reject you. You want to be accepted.” And as Álvaro remembered how he had felt amongst his white friends: “I felt like a black sheep.” At stake was also the sense of injustice of living in a society where people constantly had to be reminded “We are all equal before the law.” Literal signs announced this message wherever they went. The dissertation has shown contemporary productions of racialized geographies and how the young *alteños*’ and *alteñas*’ overloaded materiality made them feel out of place. Some bodies embodied particular places and times in the eyes of others; and notions of places/times were made a part of themselves (Sen and Silverman 2014). As the *alteña* Camila expressed when she described her feelings of unease when visiting boutiques in La Paz: “You are not [from] here, you don’t fit in.” Instead of the merging feeling of belonging to the norm – she felt out of place (Ahmed 2014: 148). This illustrated how “the material body becomes a sticky, thick property that attaches itself to those conceived as different” (Russell 2011: 15).

When these embodied sentiments are connected to a question of citizenship, their political weight is rendered clear (Russell 2011; Beasley and Bacchi 2012; Bacchi and Beasley 2002). Because what has the understanding of citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life been about in the dissertation? The young *alteña* Teresa hit the nail on the head. “Sometimes it is a bit complicated to live together”, she said and described her weariness in managing discrimination in everyday life (see Chapter Seven). This is what this understanding of citizenship has been about. The complications of living together. And crucially, the ethnographic examples have shown that many of these complications connect to social hierarchies, produced and reproduced in projects of nationhood.

Because societies construe different tracks for this rollercoaster called life. And how the rollercoaster ride *feels* certainly depends on the turns it takes and the steepness of its slopes. Yuval-Davis (2011b: 157–58) captures this with the image of “the ‘super citizen’ who fully belongs”, then “those who have full formal citizenship status but are subject to economic and/or racial discrimination”, descending to “denizens”, and furthest down “sub-citizens”. Most importantly, the dissertation shows the interconnect-edness between this citizen stratification and excessive materiality in Russell’s (2011) sense. Inclusion for some in the body politic is a “natural” merging into “a seamless space” (Ahmed 2014: 148). Others, who feel their surfaces, have to stake a claim.

This is one of the ways in which the theoretical framework of the dissertation contributes to the understanding of lived and embodied citizenship. The intersectional perspective makes evident the hierarchical relations that structure citizenships and the feelings of belonging. By connecting the intersectional perspective and the study of social hierarchies to citizenship, materializations and embodiment (Russell 2011; Butler 2011), the relationships between individual, society and state in everyday life surface. This furthermore entails that these relationships are ongoing processes.

And indeed, as stated earlier, the conflictive and promising moments when old structures and new futures met were illustrated in many situations. The young men and women lived these in the doing and undoing of different masculinities and femininities. Conflicts and promises played out in the intimate moments of negotiating contraceptives, hanging out with peers and friends, in their homes and in the school, through the choice of girlfriends or boyfriends, often between generations, at other times between young men and women.

The young men vowed “I’m not like that”, whilst politicians at the national level fleshed out men-as-machistas discourses and echoed the popular tunes of “all men are like that” (see Chapter Five). Many of the young men embodied masculine citizenship; some of them had middle-class backgrounds and/or aimed for or pursued higher studies. However, the version of masculinity reproduced by politicians at the national level was not what the young men themselves aspired to. Dominant notions of urban masculinity reflected poorly the complexity of their relationships and emotions in everyday life. These notions, however, encircled the young men. They delimited the young men’s scope to negotiate, question and put forth alternative versions of how young men’s societal relationships could look like instead.

The promise and worry of change materialized through the body of youth (in Chapter Six). Sexuality was a particularly intense field for negotiations between adults and young people. Sex education and the massive interest encircling teenage pregnancies illustrated the stakes involved. Especially young, female bodies were the locus for adults’ anxieties and the sites of struggles between generations. These struggles staked out some of the conditional terms for young women’s inclusion. Their bodies served to (re)produce differences at junctures of race, class, gender, sexuality and age. Adult-defined life trajectories and temporalities undergirded adult

practices perceived as authoritative, coercive and controlling from the perspectives of young men and women. Both young and adult bodies materialized through these intergenerational struggles of defining proper trajectories and temporalities. Moreover, violence marked young and adult bodies differently. The violence the young people were subjected to by their caregivers was considered less of a problem compared to the public acknowledgement of heterosexual partner violence as a problem.

The detailed analysis at the junctions of class, race, gender and age elucidated the different terrains and the stakes involved as the young *alteñas* Camila and Silvia negotiated ascribed femininities (in Chapter Seven). It uncovered the reasons for the young women's diverse projects of belonging and how differently the projects of nationhood played out at the site of their bodies. The analysis supports Yuval-Davis' (1999; 2011b: 70) arguments for seeing citizenship as multi-layered and for doing intersectional analyses of the layered memberships. The ethnographic material gave contemporary examples of how the weight of carrying forth the cultural heritage was laid on young women in the service of projects of nationhood (Yuval-Davis 1997a). The production of hierarchical femininities from earlier projects of nationhood lingered on, based on gendered ideals of race and class. Changes did take place, but structures were durable. The heterosexual market of attraction revealed how the *señorita*, loosely resembling previous urban and national upper-class ideals of feminine propriety, contrasted with the rurally connoted, fierce *cholita* in the young people's imageries. However, the young women forged own alternative femininities that better reflected their projected belongings. The analysis of the young women's potential to manoeuvre tapped into both intersectional thinking on agency which focus on the subject's potential to act (De los Reyes and Mulinari 2005: 16) and into other parts of the theoretical framework that underscored agency as critically context-bounded (Ortner 2006; Durham 2008).

The thinking behind multi-layered citizenship, the need to do intersectional analyses of layered memberships and agency as context-bounded, also brought out the dynamics in the discussions of young people's participation in political spaces (in Chapter Eight). Due to their different local belongings as *alteños/as* and *paceños/as*, the young people positioned themselves differently to the project of nationhood at the national level. At the intersections of race, class and place, combined with earlier productions of *alteños* as rebellious, the perceived unity of the group of youngsters shattered at the city level. The *paceños/as* left the scene. Few alternatives

remained other than to otherwise act as marionettes in an adult-orchestrated game.

The moments of promise and conflict were also demonstrated when the young people questioned the adult-centric structures in local and national political spaces (in Chapter Eight). The government's "process of change" was used as leverage to broaden the body politic and for making political claims. Young people were one of many groups that took advantage of this. The political subject of young people emerged in Bolivia, making a claim to belong to the *pueblo*.

This overview of some of the main ethnographic moments and how they have been theoretically and analytically approached partly outlines the dissertation's take on embodied citizenship. There are moreover two other ways for elucidating embodied citizenship.

The dissertation touched upon two different routes of approaching the gap between "citizenship as sets of rights and lived citizenship" (Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey 2018: 2). The first is the discrepancy between formal rights and the substantial possibilities people have to exercise these rights (see Young 1990; 1997). The second is citizenship seen as something done in practice, instead of a set of rights. During the progression of analyses, the framework of embodied citizenship captured the materiality and emotions of these routes. This furthered the understanding of citizenship as a lived, embodied experience in everyday life.

The dissertation has shown that the discrepancy between formal rights and substantial possibilities people have to actually exercise these rights (cf. Young 1990; Young 1997) often consists of bodies "with an excess of materiality, as those with too much body" (Russell 2011: 15). In the discussion of the racialization of geographies, young *alteños*' and *alteñas*' overloaded materiality generated "negative space" (Munn 2003). This delimited in practice the places they felt they could visit (see Chapter Four). The divergence between formal rights and substantial possibilities pinpointed how social hierarchies were made into a part of the flesh and made them *feel* less entitled (cf. Postero 2006). Other examples included how girls' and women's presence in political spaces rendered them targets for unwanted attention and jokes. It was illustrated by the young female minister whose love life titillated male politicians (Chapter Five), or by being the only girl on the school council (Chapter Seven). The young women I met had to negotiate constructions of femininities entangled with masculine citizenship models that delimited their substantial possibilities of exercising their formal rights (see Chapter Seven). It was also shown that

adult-centric structures and notions hindered young people both from expanding their formal rights as well as from making them substantial in practice (see Chapter Six and Chapter Eight).

The second route to approach the gap was to see citizenship as something one *does*. To think about citizenship as a “relationship between the individual, state and society” (Yuval-Davis 1997b: 4) entails that it is an unceasing and unequal work in process. Through practices in everyday life, the young people questioned, negotiated and reproduced norms, values and social hierarchies that structured their citizen relationship. The conflictive and promising moments were elucidated in small, political actions of everyday life.

In defying one’s teacher and wearing the school uniform pants even if you are a girl, or by cooking food even if you are a young man – these seemingly mundane practices questioned and enlarged the vision of what being a young woman or young man could be about. They did citizenship in practice.

The examples included practices performed during the course of everyday life in their homes, together with peers, friends and kin. They also included more commonly defined political practices such as organizing public meetings with local politicians and participating in public parades. To do citizenship included analyses of bodies as “mobile spatial fields”, producing space as they moved around. Munn’s (2003) concept of bodies as “mobile spatial fields” was analytically productive and fitted neatly with Beasley and Bacchi’s (2012) insistence on seeing practices at the micro level as parts of social change. For example, the young men’s “emergent masculinities” (Inhorn and Wentzell 2011), performed in everyday life with bodies seen as “mobile spatial fields”, were illustrations and parts of a changing sexual-political landscape (in Chapter Five). Moreover, the young people created and claimed space in the body politic as they participated in the parade as youth, a political subject in the making (in Chapter Eight).

Through these small and larger political actions, the young people enacted changes or safeguarded current interlinkages between individual, state and society. They claimed and negotiated belongings. These examples elucidate citizenship as an ongoing, embodied and lived experience in everyday life.

The study of particularly youth furthermore highlights other aspects of citizenship relations. Naturally, the group of youth draw attention to com-

mon age limits for casting electoral votes, the citizenship practice *par excellence*. However, young people are relevant for how they in other ways illuminate citizenship as an age-inflected concept. Since the concept of youth has been difficult to define, the concept's various temporal associations underline its flexibility. This flexibility elucidates that power relations are at work in processes of defining who is considered young, for what reasons, and how. The intergenerational struggles around sex education and political spaces, for example, illustrated this (see Chapter Six and Chapter Eight). This supports Durham's (2004; 2000) and Honwana's (2012) arguments that through the study of youth, power relations, social and political developments, and adults' interests are rendered more clear. Thus, young people constitute a fruitful group to study in order to unravel and understand broader societal changes. These changes shape the interrelationship between individual, state and society, that is, citizenship relations.

Furthermore, the study of youth together with the theoretical framework of embodied citizenship have highlighted the import of considering temporalities and age. Temporalities and age flesh out the body. The fleshy body illustrates citizenship as an ongoing process, and that citizenship once had does not mean forever enjoyed. The fleshy body also favours a critical gaze towards constructions of not only what the body should look like, but also what it should be *able* to do (Russell 2011).

Since change is the basic condition of the fleshy and ageing body, embodied citizenship also acts as a metaphor to analytically remain open to changing intersectional cuts, because "the question of how many social divisions exist in every historical context is not necessarily fixed and is a product of political struggle as well as of an analytical process" (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 160). Thus, embodied citizenship opens up the horizon for previously unthinkable bodies that may come to matter.

With change imminently on the horizon, I find myself full circle back at the beginning of this final chapter. That change is always on the horizon is a fact. If at all, can the present study be of any help in dealing with this fact? I believe so. It does not answer the question of what shape change have. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework developed has proven productive for studying social and political developments as they unfold.

In Latin America, as in other parts of the world, far-right political movements are gaining in strength. Reproductive rights once gained are under siege. In addition, projects of nationhood with exclusionary intentions, de-

fining just who belongs to the people, are back with renewed force. Inclusions and exclusions are in the making. Is there enough analytical and political will to uncover and undo these processes?

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