'In the Guaraní world, our way of being isn't to make something to sell. We're always in family, sharing': gendered frictions of care and commerce in peri-urban Bolivia

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This paper explores frictions of care among lowland indigenous Guaraní and other low-income women, including highland (Aymara and Quechua) migrant women, in peri-urban Santa Cruz in Bolivia's lowlands. Gendered ideals of informal entrepreneurialism circulate, given limited options for marginalised women to support their families and protect themselves from exploitation, while also looking after dependents. However, maintaining informal microenterprise is particularly difficult for Guaraní women given material poverty and differences in lifeworlds and practices of (self-)care. This fosters racialised representations of Guaraní women as 'lazy', when their care labour, including debt-work, does not conform to ideals of the citizen-mother-entrepreneur. Drawing out tensions of care reveals subtle forms of differentiation between marginalised women, as well a more complex picture of shifting inequalities during the Bolivian process of change following the election of the leftist MAS government in 2005.

Key words: Care, social reproduction, microenterprise, debt, indigeneity, Bolivia

Este artículo explora las fricciones generadas por cuidado entre las mujeres indígenas guaraníes de tierras bajas y otras mujeres de bajos recursos, incluyendo mujeres migrantes de tierras altas (aymaras y quechuas), en el Santa Cruz periurbano de las tierras bajas de Bolivia. En esta área periurbana, mujeres marginalizadas enfrentan opciones limitadas de apoyar a sus familias y protegerse a sí mismas de explotación, mientras también se encargan de cuidar a las personas dependientes de ellas. En este contexto, ideales de emprendedurismo basados en relaciones de género son prevalentes. Sin embargo, mantener un microemprendimiento informal es especialmente difícil para las mujeres guaraníes dada la pobreza material y diferencias en mundos de vida y prácticas de (auto-)cuidado. Esto fomenta representaciones racializadas de las mujeres guaraníes como 'flojas', cuando su labor de cuidado, incluyendo el trabajo a deuda, no va de acuerdo con los ideales de ciudadana-madre-emprendedora. Realzar las tensiones generadas por el cuidado, revela formas de diferenciación sutiles entre mujeres marginalizadas, así como un panorama más complejo de desigualdades cambiantes durante el proceso de cambio boliviano tras la elección del gobierno izquierdista del MAS en 2005.

Palabras claves: Cuidado, reproducción social, microemprendimiento, deuda, indigeneidad, Bolivia

1. Introduction

In 2017, in a peri-urban area of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a large city in Bolivia's eastern lowlands, Doña Araceli explained the difficulties that (indigenous) Guaraní women, such as herself, experienced in looking after their families. When her baby daughter got sick, she had to stop selling homemade snacks after spending 'everything' on medicines, even becoming indebted with a pharmacy. To get by, she works as a casual washerwoman for middle-class households, taking her daughter with her. When Doña Araceli recounted her situation, it was over 11 years since the MAS government and Bolivia's first indigenous president, Evo Morales, took power in 2006[i] and initiated a 'process of change' (*proceso de cambio*) with the aim of transforming Bolivia's neoliberal economic model towards a more equitable 'plural' economy, including greater social redistribution, alongside an emphasis on indigenous values of '*vivir bien'* (living well), as well as a drive to tackle entrenched forms of coloniality and patriarchy (Postero 2017; Wanderley 2013a).[ii] However, Doña Araceli's difficult situation, grounded in the responsibilities of care, is in stark contrast with ideals of 'living well', with the literature highlighting limited substantive progress on the redistribution of care, despite important constitutional and policy advances (e.g. Leiva-Gómez 2015; López et al. 2023).

This paper explores the frictions in Guaraní and (Aymara and Quechua) highland migrant women's care practices a decade into the process of change. In peri-urban Santa Cruz, the ideal of female entrepreneurialism circulated, yet unlike other peri-urban women who more commonly developed their own (informal) businesses – notably highland migrants, as well as some non-indigenous lowland women, Guaraní women largely navigated the tensions of income generation and care for dependents – of 'taking care of' and 'care-giving' (Tronto 1993) – by carrying out casual (often domestic) labour, even if sometimes combined with small-scale microenterprise, and by managing debt for household consumption, with (competitive) commercial practices in tension with alternative, albeit limited, care practices for self and others. These differences in practices of care fostered racialised representations of lowland Guaraní women as 'lazy' in contrast with the 'hard-working' highland migrant businesswoman-mother, even as microenterprise was also practised as a form of 'everyday' resistance against gendered colonial power and exploitation (Lugones 2010: 743; Rivera Cusicanqui 2018: 42).

While the socio-political and economic contradictions in the Bolivian 'process of change' (*proceso de cambio*) have been debated widely in the literature (e.g. Canessa 2014; Postero 2017; Wanderley 2013a; Webber 2016), tensions of care have received less attention, particularly in relation to indigeneity in the urban lowlands, notwithstanding an important Spanish language literature on the Bolivian care economy, including policy dimensions (e.g. Jiménez Zamora 2011; Leiva-Gómez 2015; López et al. 2023; Salazar et al. 2012; Wanderley 2011). Yet, just as care is central to everyday life and situated within intersectional power

relations (Lawson 2007; Tronto 1993), so understanding the contradictions of care helps illuminate some of the everyday tensions in Bolivian citizenship during the process of change.

These tensions are particularly important to explore in the lowlands given limited attention in the literature to the (urban) lowland indigenous (Horn 2022: 38), as well as significant migration from the highlands in the context of racism against both highland ('majority' indigenous) migrants and lowland 'minority' indigenous groups.[iii] While ('majority' indigenous Aymara and Quechua) highland migrants have experienced extreme forms of racism in Sant Cruz, particularly in the years immediately following the election of the MAS (Postero 2017: 120–22), with highland migrants called by the (often racist) term '*Colla*', the lowland 'minority' indigenous have also faced historic racism from the white/*mestizo* middle-upper classes in Santa Cruz, even as lowland elites have also 'appropriated' elements of lowland indigenous culture under the 'constructed' identity of '*Camba*' as part of a right-wing movement for lowland autonomy (e.g. Fabricant 2009: 772; Kirshner 2010).[iv]

In the subsequent sections, section 2 discusses the paper's theoretical framework drawing on critical literatures on (self-)care, intersectionality and decoloniality, with section 3 outlining the research methodology, and section 4 situating women's care work within the Bolivian process of change and gendered labour market. Section 5 then proceeds to discuss the findings, drawing out the tensions in and between peri-urban women's practices of 'taking care of', 'care-giving' (Tronto 1993), and 'self-care' (Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022). Section 6 concludes by discussing implications for understanding subtle differentiation between marginalised women and intersectional inequalities in Bolivian citizenship.

2. Care, power and intersectionality

Reflecting on peri-urban women's experiences, Fisher and Tronto's (1990) and Tronto's (1993) theorisation of 'phases' of care provides a useful theoretical framework. As Tronto elaborates, they distinguish four phases of care which may 'conflict', including 'taking care of' as the 'responsibility for the identified need', such as the provision of money to enable care-giving, and 'care-giving involv[ing] the direct meeting of needs for care', such as looking after dependents (1993: 105–9).[v] These different 'phases' of care thus draw attention to the tensions and interconnections between the spheres of public/private and production/reproduction, while also enabling us to challenge the 'care/economy dichotomy' (Huang 2016: 2; Fisher & Tronto 1990; Lister 1997).

As Shah and Lerche highlight (2020: 722), Fisher and Tronto's definition of care as 'everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our "world"' has strong affinities with social reproduction (1990: 40). However, retaining the language of care illuminates the devalued forms of reproductive labour predominantly carried out by women (Huang 2016: 2) and the intersectional power relations embedded within this gendered labour (Lawson 2007; Tronto 1993), with 'taking care of…the duties of the powerful', generally linked with masculinity and the public domain, and 'care-giving' those of the 'less powerful' (Tronto 1993: 107, 114–5). Indeed, women's devalued care labour is central to understanding the gendered and intersectional exclusions of substantive (as well as formal) citizenship (Lister 1997; Tronto 2005). Furthermore, the concept of care allows us to consider its normative significance as 'an

ethical activity involving notions of normative behaviour and…."appropriate" social relationships' (Bowlby et al. 2010: 154–158 in Bowlby 2012: 2112).

In thinking through questions of power disparities, I also draw on the concept of self-care, which has been understood as 'political warfare' (Lorde 1988: 131 cited in Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022: 364), as well as 'a neoliberal form of domination and subjectification' (Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022: 362). In Black feminist literature, self-care also emerges as 'relational' in the connection to communal 'political struggle', and in contrast with neoliberal understandings based on individualised entrepreneurialism (Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022: 363–6; Ford-Smith & Hanson 2022; Ward 2015). Furthermore, attention to 'self-care', opens up 'potentially…transgressive and transformational aspects of care', including 'refusal' of neoliberal forms of self-care (Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022: 363–7), as well as possibilities for re-envisioning self-care as a communal practice (Ford-Smith & Hanson 2022).

In exploring these tensions of care, I draw on theories of intersectionality which emphasise the 'relationality' of imbricated power relations, as well as their contextual socio-spatial and temporal specificity (Collins 2020: 124; 2015; Viveros Vigoya 2016; 2024). Thus, rather than essentialising categories or viewing them as 'additive' (Viveros Vigoya 2016: 12; 2024: 96), a focus is required on the particular 'relational processes that sustain categories', as well as the ways in which 'social positions…acquire meaning and power…in relationship to other[s]' (Collins 2020: 124). Indeed, from her research in Ecuador, Radcliffe has highlighted the importance of understanding indigenous women's experiences through 'the interplay of interlocking hierarchies, not some essential qualities of being an indigenous women' (2015: 73–4). A relational understanding of intersectional power also enables exploration of the ways in which 'women and men can simultaneously occupy different positions' in hierarchical social structures, 'subordinate' as well as 'dominant' (Viveros Vigoya 2024: 97), and thereby a more nuanced analysis of experiences of power and oppression, including among marginalised women.

Alongside these theories, I draw on Lugones' concept of the 'colonial/modern gender system' or 'coloniality of gender' through which, by bringing together Quijano's concept of the 'coloniality of power' alongside insights from intersectionality, she shows how colonised women were inferiorised by both gender *and* race to meet the demands of 'Eurocentered capitalism', with this system continuing to order social and economic life (Lugones 2007; Lugones 2010), such as relations of caring labour, with indigenous women's labour in Bolivia long exploited by white/*mestizo* elites in domestic work (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010: 49). Furthermore, Lugones' work on decoloniality alongside Bolivian scholar Rivera Cusicanqui's work on '*ch'ixi*' – an Aymara concept of contiguous opposites or contrasts, which she uses to theorise Bolivia's heterogeneity – highlight the importance of attention to the complexity of processes of 'everyday' resistance (Lugones 2010; Rivera Cusicanqui 2018; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012), where subjectivities are 'in tension' between the 'colonial/modern gender system' and other relational and communal knowledges and ontologies (Lugones 2010: 748), including non-capitalistic economic logics and indigenous forms of exchange (Rivera Cusicanqui 2018: 42).[vi] Together, these scholars' works are important in understanding the ongoing gendered and racialised inequalities and relations of inferiorisation in women's care labour, as well as the subtle tensions in women's resistance.

3. Methodology

From 2016-2017, I lived in a multi-generational Guaraní household in a peri-urban, low-income, neighbourhood in the south-eastern periphery of Santa Cruz and carried out 12 months' (doctoral) fieldwork in this neighbourhood and the surrounding area, as well as to a lesser extent in a municipality with a Guaraní community to the north (in commuting distance and hence comparably 'peri-urban'). I moved to this neighbourhood given contact with my host family, facilitated by a local NGO. Whilst previously formed of Guaraní agricultural communities, the south-eastern peri-urban area of my research is now a heterogenous area, with migrants from the western highlands and valleys (henceforth 'highlands'), as well as (non-indigenous) residents from Santa Cruz and elsewhere in the lowlands, although with continuing Guaraní communal leadership in some neighbourhoods (henceforth 'communities') (on the peri-urban Guaraní in Santa Cruz, see APCOB 2014; Postero 2007; Postero 2017; Ros Izquierdo & Combès 2003). In total, I carried out research in four Guaraní communities (including the comparative municipality), as well as to a lesser extent in six neighbourhoods adjoining the Guaraní communities in the south-eastern peri-urban area. According to an NGO survey with an acknowledged likely significant undercount, there are over 2,500 Guaraní residents across five (diagnostic) Guaraní communities in the south-eastern periphery of Santa Cruz (Formasol 2011: 3–4).[vii] I gained permission from the Guaraní leadership in the four communities before starting fieldwork.

Alongside participant observation, I carried out household surveys with semi-structured interview components (n=116) and semi-structured interviews (n=14) focused on questions of work and employment with 130 peri-urban women between the ages of 18 and 65+. This included 78 Guaraní women (with the majority either born in the peri-urban area or migrating from the Cordillera province) and 52 other women, including (Quechua and to a lesser extent Aymara) (often rural) highland migrants, as well as non-indigenous women from Santa Cruz and elsewhere in the lowlands. Some four-fifths of women were married/cohabiting, with 90% having between 1 and 10 (living) children. Women were categorised as Guaraní predominantly through self-identification, but also language, with 62 women speaking Guaraní in addition to Spanish, with a further 12 able to understand Guaraní. In addition to surveys and interviews, I also carried out 7 focus groups with predominantly Guaraní women. While I also carried out a smaller number of other interviews, including with male peri-urban residents, national and local NGO workers, and (Guaraní) leaders and public officials, in this paper, I focus on the voices of peri-urban women, particularly Guaraní and highland migrant women, as well as a female Guaraní leader and public official in the departmental government (also living or having grown up as peri-urban women). Participants were recruited via a combination of random, snowball (via social networks) and purposive sampling.

An information sheet with a short consent form with my (then) institutional details was provided in Spanish (and offered in the Guaraní language to Guaraní women). Where women were (functionally) illiterate, the research was explained verbally, with participants able to give either verbal or written informed consent. Most household surveys and interviews (and three focus groups) were audio recorded; where women chose not to record, the analysis relies on written notes, although all quotes are from taped interviews, with all participant names being

pseudonyms. My own privileged positionality as a white, British, middle-class woman and (then) PhD student highlights the unequal power relations in the research, and affected the different ways I was perceived (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 178; Undurraga 2012) – including as a '*karai*' (white, non-Guaraní) foreign stranger not to be trusted, as well as a student who had come to 'learn'.

Household surveys, interviews and focus groups were conducted in Spanish, which is not my first language, nor of many participants, with their first language being Guaraní, Quechua or Aymara. In a small number of interviews with (older) Guaraní women, other (younger) women provided some informal translation from Guaraní. All data were analysed in Spanish, with selected quotes translated into English. Data were analysed through excel spreadsheets to facilitate intersectional analysis, as well as NVivo to facilitate thematic coding. These codes emerged from the data, yet were also informed deductively by my wider literature review and research questions for doctoral study, which aimed to explore questions of (shifting) intersectional economic inequality and citizenship (through a focus on peri-urban and indigenous women's work in Santa Cruz) during the Bolivian process of change.

4. Care, 'living well' and gendered labour during the Bolivian 'process of change'

In 2015, Leiva-Gómez argued that Bolivia had made some, albeit insufficient, advances towards a 'carezenship' ('*cuidadanía*') as a relational citizenship with 'co-responsibility' for care (2015: 61). She notes, for example, the 2009 constitutional text which, in article 64, recognises the equal duties of partners for 'the maintenance and responsibility of the household',[viii] national policies for the redistribution of care, the provision of social subsides (*bonos*), including a yearly conditional cash transfer (CCT) for school children (*bono Juancito Pinto*) of around US$30 a year (see also Nagels 2016), as well as the provision of (some) municipal nurseries (Leiva-Gómez 2015: 70–5).

The recognition of *vivir bien* (living well) in the new constitution (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009: articles 8 and 306) also indicates synergies with feminist visions of economy grounded in social reproduction (Lind 2018: 203–4 drawing on Leon, 2009; Quiroga Diaz 2011; Vega Ugalde 2017). While *vivir bien* has largely been associated with indigenous communal ways of being (albeit as a plural and contested concept, see Gudynas 2011; Ranta 2018), Wanderley has explored its links with feminist writings on care, arguing that the redistribution of care labour, 'with corresponsibility between state, society and family', is central for the promotion of values central to *vivir bien*, namely 'solidarity, justice, cooperation and equity' (2013b: 158–9). *Vivir bien* therefore has the potential to align with a 'feminist of economy of rupture' (Vega Ugalde 2017: 45–6 drawing on and citing Pérez 2005: 45), which, rather than focusing on 'minimal adjustments' to allow (female) workers to divide their time more flexibly between paid and unpaid (care) labour, often resulting in a double burden, prioritises the 'work of reproduction and care' or the 'sustainability of life' (Vega Ugalde 2017: 45–7; Quiroga Diaz 2011).

However, Leiva-Gómez has also highlighted the insufficient development of constitutional commitments around care into the legal framework (2015: 77; see also Wanderley 2011), while Bolivian academics have drawn attention to the still limited policy agenda for care, including

inadequate state provision of childcare, and have argued for the need for an 'integral public system of care services' (citation from Salazar et al. 2012: 13; Farah in Jiménez Zamora 2011: 8; Wanderley 2011). Furthermore, a recent report from Oxfam has highlighted a lack of state budget and 'institutionality' to develop care policies (2019 as discussed and cited by López et al. 2023: 50). Moreover, the labour market continues to be highly segregated by gender, with women largely in poorly paid and insecure (informal) 'low productivity sectors' with 'limited social security cover', such as commerce and services, including domestic labour, with only 32.9% of urban female labour employed in the formal sector in 2019 as compared with 35.3% in 2014 (Sánchez García 2021: 48–52). While the minimum wage has risen since 2006, it has been estimated that increases are insufficient to ensure a basic standard of living (Escóbar de Pabón, Rojas Callejas & Vargas Arze 2014: 39–40); moreover, urban female unemployment reached 5.5% in 2017, an increase from 4.9% in 2014 (Sánchez García 2021: 45). In addition, despite a reduction in poverty from 59.9% in 2006 to 36.4% in 2017 (World Bank),[ix] poverty rates remain relatively high, while extreme poverty rose from 14.9% in 2014 to 16.4% in 2017 (Sánchez García 2021: 23).

In this context, while the *bonos* are 'enormously popular' (Postero 2017: 100), they are insufficient to shift the gendered burden of social reproduction from families (Hillenkamp 2015), with 'women's unpaid domestic and care work…remain[ing] central' (Nagels 2016: 482). Urban women in Bolivia subsequently deploy different 'strategies' (Wanderley 2009 cited in Salazar et al. 2012: 28) to navigate the tensions between 'care-giving' and 'taking care of'. While middle and high-income women are better able to afford childcare and help with domestic work, low-income women take on the double burden of combining income generation with the care of dependents, including microenterprise (Jiménez Zamora 2011: 39, 43; Marco Navarro 2014: 98–101; Marco Navarro 2015: 22–3; 38–40; Salazar et al. 2012; Wanderley 2009 cited in Salazar et al. 2012: 28). This may involve (informal) flexible or part-time work, taking children to the workplace, or carrying out income generation activities from or near the home, alongside help from family members (Wanderley 2009 cited in Salazar et al. 2012: 28; Wanderley 2011: 35–7). As research in highland Bolivia has shown, this results in 'growing tensions' in 'poor urban neighbourhoods' between women's reproductive work and income generation (Hillenkamp 2015: 1143).

5. Tensions of care in peri-urban Santa Cruz

5.1 Between 'taking care of' and 'care-giving': commerce and gendered normative representations

In peri-urban Santa Cruz, women's informal commercial activities were an important strategy to negotiate the conflicting demands of 'taking care of' and 'care-giving', with participants also often initiating income generation activities from or near to the home, such as setting up neighbourhood stores or selling homemade foodstuffs. However, such strategies were unevenly available, with Guaraní women generally not considered to be traders or businesswomen, particularly in markets: 'until now I don't know a Guaraní woman who has her business (…) There aren't Guaraní women like that' (Doña Elisa, Guaraní woman). And while some Guaraní participants *did* engage in commercial activities, they more commonly looked for paid work – often some form of (casual) cleaning or domestic work (including washing clothes) or as

(market) kitchen assistants,[x] which they could combine with care-giving, even as this was sometimes interweaved with other (often intermittent or part-time) income generation activities, notably making homemade bread, often sold from the home. As one Guaraní woman explained, 'mostly Guaraní women are just in their home, looking after the kids (…) Or washing clothes and they go out to do that [but only] for a short while' (Doña Danna).

In contrast, peri-urban women commonly perceived commercial activities to be carried out by (Quechua or Aymara) highland migrant women – and to a lesser extent by non-indigenous women from Santa Cruz. Indeed, informal trade has long been an important livelihood strategy in Bolivia and the wider Andean region, with Aymara and Quechua women commonly working, and represented in popular imagination, as (market) traders (Ikemura Amaral 2023; Maclean 2014; Müller & Dürr 2019), aligning with longstanding findings linking Andean women's market work to greater flexibility with childcare (e.g. Ødegaard 2018: 192; Seligmann 1989: 704) – and, indeed, during an interview with a highland migrant peri-urban market (vegetable) vendor, she was simultaneously looking after her stall and her baby son, while also cutting vegetables to take home for lunch. The literature also documents the predominance of highland migrants in (informal) trade in the Bolivian lowlands (Canessa 2014: 163; Kirshner 2011). As one woman perceived it:

> 'Here the people that aren't Guaraní (…) are the ones in charge of their own business, (…) the stores, *pensión* (informal eatery), internet, pharmacy (…) [they] have come from the interior [the highlands] (…) they work for themselves.'
> Doña Bernarda, Guarani woman[xi]

And, while some highland migrant participants worked in paid employment, they more commonly developed informal commercial activities, which more often involved stable businesses, including informal street-vending (often food and snacks), eateries and neighbourhood stores. Some grounded this difference in the perceived attributes of highland migrant women, characterising them as hardworking and entrepreneurial:

> 'The women from the interior [the highlands] are more hardworking. But they are nobody, of course (…) They are more entrepreneurial (*emprendedoras*) (…) The *Colla* people come to work (…) to look for a business (…) They employ themselves for a few days (…) and then (…) they're already selling their tripe or their potato fries, whatever it might be (…) you won't see a Guaraní with those things or *Camba* people.'
> Doña Betina, second-generation highland migrant

In contrast with highland El Alto, where women's market work may be 'devalued' by race *and* gender (Ikemura Amaral 2023: 100), Doña Betina's words indicate the normative significance given to the highland businesswoman in peri-urban Santa Cruz as '*bien busca vida'* (one who 'really looks for life'), despite being 'nobody' in reference to the poverty and marginalisation that has characterised much (rural) highland migration to urban centres.

Such perceptions went alongside circulating representations of Guaraní, and sometimes also non-indigenous women from Santa Cruz, as '*flojas*' (lazy) or without thought – surprisingly, on occasion, even by Guaraní women themselves. In Bolivia, such discourse draws on

longstanding discriminatory ethnic tropes of '*Cambas*' (people from the lowlands) as 'lazy' (Loayza Bueno 2014: 139) as well as, in the context of widespread migration from the highlands to the lowlands since the 1980s, as not 'know[ing] how to work' (Canessa 2014: 160–3).[xii] However, this discourse also reflects racist representations of lowland *indigenous* people as 'lazy and dirty' by the (white/*mestizo*) middle-classes in Santa Cruz (Postero 2007: 149), with Guaraní women stigmatised by both (lowland) ethnic identity and indigeneity. As two highland migrant women perceived it:

> 'Guaraní women are lazy (…) they don't think about progressing (…) they don't aspire to anything more (…) They're there in their house and if they don't have [any money], [they are] seated under the tree drinking mate [a tea] (*porreando*) (…) instead of doing something, selling (…) The only thing that they [do] is to work as a domestic (*empleada*) (…) when they can better themselves.'
> Doña Raquel, highland migrant

> 'You have Guaraní women, let's say, there are few that work (…) They don't think about having a nice house, they don't think about having their child become a professional (…) They don't know how to think and as well they are lazy […Highland migrant women] know how to work (…) mostly they are *comerciantes* [business women/traders], they have their own business (…) The first thing that we wish for […is] that you have a nice room, you have your bathroom okay (…) [that] your children (…) don't suffer now like us.'
> Doña Teofila, highland migrant

In such representations, Guaraní women are portrayed as idle mothers, lacking the personal effort or aspiration to improve their family's material situation, with their difficulties in combining (regular) paid work – often involving long, exhausting journeys into the city in hot, packed buses – and childcare hidden in the process.

5.2 Practices of 'taking care of': between microenterprise and debt

In addition to providing flexibility with childcare, microenterprise also represented the possibility of improved resources for 'taking care of'. Medium-sized neighbourhood stores could make 150-200Bs profit daily (more at weekends), while successful small eateries could make 300Bs on good days, comparing favourably with other casual feminised paid work, commonly at minimum wage level (2,000Bs a month in 2017 – around US$300) or even significantly below. Furthermore, women with neighbourhood stores explained how these defrayed everyday expenses, in particular food and school materials, which they could take from the store, rather than having to pay high mark-up costs at other neighbourhood stores (see also Hummel 2014: 255 on the proliferation of indigenous women's stores in rural Mexico, which "do not exist for profit").

Recent literature has drawn attention to trade as a key aspect of increasing class differentiation in Bolivia, with wealthy (highland) traders considered to be forming a new indigenous bourgeoisie (Webber 2016: e.g. 1866-7). Yet, peri-urban women's experiences highlight not

only the ongoing significance of informal trade in the Andean region, but also its place in women's caring roles (Ødegaard 2018), as well as its contribution to (more) subtle forms of differentiation among otherwise marginalised women. While some women – notably highland migrants, as well as non-indigenous lowland women – were better able to use microenterprise to help them take care of their families, it was more common for Guaraní women to carry out casual paid labour, including for some highland migrants, as well as the white/*mestizo* middle-upper classes. As one Guaraní woman explained: 'The *paisanos* [those from the highlands] have their store, everything (…) [they] look for people to help them, and we go there (…) those of us that are Guaraní are poorer than those who have their stores.' (Doña Belén).

However, while highland migrant women's entrepreneurial subjectivities draw on neoliberal ideals of 'self-help' (Ford-Smith & Hanson 2022: 49), reflecting also 'a longstanding individualist model of upward mobility' in Bolivia (Shakow 2022: 423), as well as racialised representations of the lowland indigenous as 'lazy', they are also situated within their labour of care, and in tension with a complex and gendered resistance to colonial power (Lugones 2010; Rivera Cusicanqui 2018). Thus, as showed by Doña Teofila's words, and aligning with work on (market women) in highland El Alto and La Paz (Ikemura Amaral 2023: 111; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996: 237), microenterprise offered uneven possibilities for some highland migrant women in peri-urban Santa Cruz to provide a better future for their children, and in contrast to the material deprivation and racialised discrimination that they themselves 'suffered' as recent migrants to Santa Cruz, often as domestic workers.[xiii]

On the other hand, Guaraní women's smaller, more intermittent businesses often faltered given the need to pay for family expenses, such as health costs or school supplies, for which the yearly *Juancito Pinto* was inadequate (see also Postero 2017: 100). While Guaraní men were generally the main household breadwinner, often working in the relatively higher-paid fields of construction (including laying pavement) and transport, such labour was sometimes precarious, and male salaries were usually insufficient. Thus, Guaraní women had to respond to shortfalls in the household budget, showing the power relations involved in caring with women 'expected to compensate for deficiencies in the caring process', yet often with very few resources (Fisher & Tronto 1990: 43). As one Guaraní woman explained, such financial pressures made it impossible for her to maintain microenterprise, thereby further depleting her ability to 'take care of' her family:

> 'I would like to have a *pensión* […but] I don't have enough money (…) I can't save (…) In the school, they ask for yet another thing: the supplies, the uniform (…) I was making little *empanadas* (pasties), *refrescos* (homemade soft drinks) to sell (…) Two weeks ago I stopped (…) Because I didn't have [money] then, I spent everything that I had.'
> Doña Ángela, Guaraní woman

Furthermore, whereas highland migrant (and non-indigenous, lowland) women were more likely to take on (varied) loans for business purposes, Guaraní women more commonly took on the labour of obtaining and managing debt *only* for household consumption (and construction), including from microfinance institutions, money lenders, advances from employers in paid work, and through pawning goods, aligning with Hummel's findings that

indigenous women in rural Mexico only invest a small percentage of their loans in microenterprise (2014: 257; see also Kar on microcredit for consumption and women's "credit-work" in India 2018: 123). As highlighted by the wider literature, a large microcredit industry promoting visions of 'market-based empowerment' has flourished in Bolivia since structural adjustment in the 80s (Bee 2011: 27–30), with microcredit granted for developing entrepreneurial activities according to neoliberal logics of individual responsibility (Lazar 2004: 302). Women are consequently constructed as 'rational economic woman' according to a 'self-help approach', in which women's citizenship 'manifests not through entitlement but through…individual choice' (Rankin 2001: 24, 29).

In highland Bolivia, the literature highlights the complexity of access to credit for women's empowerment; while neoliberal ideologies underpinning the microfinance industry may further marginalise racialised women, access to credit may also provide a partial and unequal form of resistance to colonial and gendered inequalities (Bee 2011; Maclean 2013). In peri-urban Santa Cruz, while Guaraní women's use of micro-credit may not challenge the unequal intersectional structures within which they are embedded, their use of credit for household consumption can be seen as subverting dominant market values (see also Lazar 2004: 315 on "incorrect" use of credit by Aymara women in El Alto; Hummel 2014). In this context, to obtain the credit for household consumption, Guaraní women must pretend it is for a productive activity, commonly paying back the loan with their husband's wages:

> 'I've taken out monthly [credit…] For the expenses, for the school, to pay bills (…) […To take out credit] they ask: What is it for, to set up a business? (…) And one has to lie! (…) Where there are large families, I think it's just to eat and it's not possible to set up a business.'
> Doña Guillermina, Guaraní woman

Han has argued that consumer debt among poor families in Chile represents 'gestures of care…affectively enacting relations in the hope of rendering something new' (2011: 9). However, within peri-urban Santa Cruz, the temporality engendered by Guaraní women's debt-work must largely be understood as 'maintenance', the slow time of social reproduction and the 'durational practices that keep "things" going' (Baraitser 2017: 49). In highlighting the 'financialization of reproduction', Federici has drawn on Bolivian anarcho-feminist group Mujeres Creando's argument that microcredit institutions are 'stealing women's work, women's time' (Federici 2014: 241; see also Keating, Rasmussen & Rishi 2010; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996). However, despite, as Doña Guillermina explained, the microcredit leaving her poorer, her debt-work is also part of her arduous knowledge of maintaining life. Karaagac has drawn attention to the 'care labor invested in managing debts' which may be 'at the expense of social reproduction' (2020: 2). In peri-urban Santa Cruz, Guaraní women invest in this precarious debt-labour precisely to manage their unequal responsibility for 'taking care of' their families, even as this labour also depletes their ability to care (Karaagac 2020: 5 drawing on Fraser 2016):

> 'One has to know how to care for them. My little granddaughter almost died on me that day. I had to look for the way to make her better. I had to pawn everything (…) I've pawned my gas cylinder, I've pawned my speakers because the injection costs (…) 55

> [Bs, around $8 USD], each injection that they're going to give the baby (…) and the syrups 80, 70.'
> Doña Guillermina, Guaraní woman.

Doña Guillermina's caring debt-work contrasts with entrepreneurial conceptions of motherhood as held by the microfinance industry (Keating, Rasmussen & Rishi 2010: 166). Thus, through claiming her knowledge of debt-work, she draws attention to alternative, albeit precarious practices of 'taking care of', thereby also challenging derogatory representations of Guaraní women as 'thoughtless' or 'lazy'.

5.3 The tensions of self-care: between exploitation, discrimination and *machismo*

Although Guaraní women were less likely to maintain stable businesses, they – as with other peri-urban women – often aspired to open their own business. In addition to navigating the double burden of 'care-giving' and 'taking care of', women perceived self-employment as a way to be free from exploitation in paid labour, such as in domestic work (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010: 49). Microenterprise and informal commerce was therefore also practiced as a form of 'self-care' in avoiding exploitation by abusive employers and so as a form of 'self-preservation' (Lorde, 1988: 131 cited in Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022: 364) or 'refusal' to gendered coloniality (Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022). As one Guaraní woman who sold homemade bread explained:

> 'It's better just to work for me […working] for another person (…) they make you work for free, they make you work more than 8 hours, and they don't pay you correctly (…) they exploit you a lot, the people who have money.'
> Doña Alicia, Guaraní woman

Indeed, a highland migrant, now in her early 60s, explained that she started her neighbourhood store so she could 'rest a little' given the impact years of heavy manual labour, agricultural as well as domestic work, had taken on her body (see also De Casanova 2013 on domestic work in Ecuador): 'I didn't have the strength to work anymore', she explained, 'nor to wash clothes, nothing (…) There's no strength: the back, the lungs, the feet aching, I didn't want to stand up then.' (Doña Adelina)

However, various Guaraní women also highlighted the 'embarrassment', 'fear' or 'timidity' that they felt engaging in commercial practices – particularly street commerce. This fear could be intensified in the peri-urban area given increased competition, with women generally aspiring to sell similar goods, notably cooked foodstuffs or household provisions and school supplies in neighbourhood stores. Such competition is a long recognised aspect of informal commerce (e.g. Lazar 2004: 303), which may also give rise to conflicts among vendors (Agadjanian 2002). In one focus group, Guaraní women explained that they practiced self-care by staying at home and avoiding such conflict. One participant questioned whether she was being 'lazy', before expanding on the fear street commerce caused her:

> Doña Imelda: Sometimes to sell over there, but we don't want to go (…) is it because of being lazy? I don't know.
> Doña Carmela: We aren't accustomed to going out with something to sell (…) I'm embarrassed to go out with my basket (…)
> Doña Imelda: Sometimes we do well (…) then the other people say (…) 'don't come again' (…) they get annoyed. 'Now you're taking away our clients from us' they say, you see? Now we are embarrassed to go back again there the next day. So as not to be fighting, arguing, I prefer just to be here [i.e. at home…]. And some people will put a curse on you (…) you have to look after yourself (*hay que cuidarse*) as well.
> Focus Group 7

While her words highlight the difficulties of competition among informal street vendors, Guaraní women's unease may also reflect histories of racism towards lowland indigenous groups within Santa Cruz, as well as a certain limited urban mobility among some, particularly older, Guaraní women. As one woman explained (in reference to looking for paid work):

> 'Before (…) one didn't go out into the city (…) the very *Karai* looked at you from head to toe, just with their eyes they told you everything. They didn't treat you well, because of your language, you see? They said to your face that we were all slaves.'
> Doña Isidora, Guaraní woman

Other Guaraní women recounted experiences of being racially abused (particularly in paid work) as a '(shitty) *Guaraya*' (the name of another lowland indigenous group), '*India*' or even a 'shitty *Camba*'. As Doña Rosmery, explained: 'Sometimes they discriminate against us for speaking Guaraní (…) "look at that Guaraní, how she walks, how she speaks", people say'. While she felt that discrimination had significantly decreased in Santa Cruz in the last three or four years, with various women pointing to the promulgation of the 2010 Law No. 045 Against Racism and all Forms of Discrimination in effecting this change – aligning with Ravindran's findings in highland El Alto (2019: 985), the historical memory of discrimination still lingered, particularly she felt, among rural migrant Guarani women:

> 'Guaraní women are often shy (…) we are embarrassed (*nos da vergüenza*) to sell on the street (…) before people used to discriminate (…): 'look at that woman who is selling, look at that woman' (…) and then one gets embarrassed.'
> Doña Rosmery, Guaraní woman

This is not to say that highland migrant participants had not experienced racism on the streets of Santa Cruz, as well as in domestic work, with various highland migrant women recounting abuse as a '(shitty) *colla*', with (highland) 'indigeneity [in Santa Cruz]…marked as a racialized, dirty, migrant subject' (Kirshner 2011: 115). However, alongside the new law, it may also be that the large presence of highland migrant women in informal commerce in Santa Cruz may now provide some protection as a form of collective self-care in public space, particularly in markets and among street vendors, contrastingly not available to Guaraní women. As Doña Hilaria, a highland migrant recounted, she decided to switch from domestic work to vending some years back as she got tired of the work; in contrast, as a vendor, she was 'relaxed (*tranquila*)', 'speaking with [her] friends' and 'laughing' with them.

Furthermore, while various women – lowland *and* highland – discussed issues of '*machismo*' (sexism/misogyny), some Guaraní women felt that Guaraní men were particularly jealous and controlling, which alongside, for some women, limited knowledge of urban space outside the community, also constrained Guaraní women's work outside the home. While some women felt that *machismo* had decreased following new legislation and support for women's rights by the government, notably the 2013 (No. 348) Integral Law to Guarantee Women a Life Free from Violence, these issues were still prevalent. As shown by the words of a Guaraní woman below (in her late 30s), some Guaraní women's self-protective strategies of staying at home also extended to avoiding conflict with their husbands, further catching them between the pressures of 'taking care of' and 'self-care'.

> 'The majority of Guaraníes, well mostly they stay at home (…) The older generation we are just like that, for that reason sometimes they criticise us, then, those that speak *castellano* (Spanish): 'Ay! The Guaraníes are lazy, they don't do anything' (…) but it's the man that doesn't let us work (…) because the [Guaraní] men aren't the same as the others (…) The man thinks badly then, you see, when one goes to work, they think that you are going to get involved with the other.'
> Doña Belinda, Guaraní woman

5.4 Lifeworlds and the frictions of relational care

Bowlby has argued that 'cultures of care' or 'moral economies of care…are embodied in particular behaviours of people in spaces of care at particular times' (2012: 2106). While Guaraní women's uneasiness with commercial practices may partially reflect histories of racism towards lowland indigenous peoples within Santa Cruz – as well as for some women, limited histories of urban mobility outside their community (see also APCOB 2014: 122), commerce as a practice of 'taking care of' was also not considered by some women to be part of their lifeworlds. For example, Doña Koemi, a Guaraní woman who worked in the local (departmental) government felt that 'culturally, we are not *comerciantes*' highlighting practices of reciprocity: 'In the communities (…) the Guaraní woman or the Guaraní man isn't stingy, isn't selfish, nor individualist. What [they have…] in their house, they share it with the family, the community.' She felt this was 'the great problem of the Guaraní woman (…) that everything she has, she doesn't know that it is for sale (…) In her blood, in her bones it's for offering (*invitar*)'. As another woman perceived it:

> 'In the Guaraní world, our *ñande reko* (way of being) isn't to make something to sell (…) Commercialising, let's say (…) We're (…) homely (*de la casa*) (…) always in family, sharing (…) that is our culture, our way of being (…) not to be there in the market generating economic resources.'
> Doña Alejandra, Guaraní woman

Furthermore, she felt that Guaraní women's way of being contrasted with highland commercial practices, with the importance of social networks in the transmission of informal commercial knowledge long recognised by the wider literature (e.g. Müller & Dürr 2019; Ødegaard 2018; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996; Scarborough 2010). As Doña Telma, a highland migrant woman

expressed it, 'they [highland migrant women] sell everything in the streets, then in the markets…since [we were] little it seems that our parents have taught us'. Indeed, the literature on women's market work in Bolivia highlights Aymara and Quechua women's work and representation as 'savvy' (market) traders (Maclean 2013: 464; Scarborough 2010),[xiv] with the flip side of highland migrant women's positive depiction as 'hard workers' in peri-urban Santa Cruz being the (albeit lesser) circulation of pejorative representations as 'selfish' or motivated by profit. Relatedly, within rural Guaraní communities, Lowrey has noted the 'virulence' of 'attitudes towards itinerant Andean traders', considered 'hard-working' but also 'sharp dealers…avaricious, and not to be trusted' (2006: 81), while Nostas Ardaya and Sanabria have highlighted how rural (lowland) Guaraya women consider rural (highland) migrant women's 'mercantile' 'economic logic' as alien to their cultural values of 'solidarity and reciprocity' (2010: 64).

In this way, Guaraní women's unease with commercial practices can be situated within alternative 'cultures of care' which challenge market values as the normative framework of caring for others as well as the self. Yet, such cultures learnt through 'memory and habituation' are also temporally situated and shifting (Bowlby 2012: 2106). For peri-urban Guaraní women, the rapid urbanisation of their communities has resulted in increasing necessity for women to seek paid work. While Guaraní women used to carry out some work together, such as weaving or grinding maize, changes in work patterns has meant that they are now more likely to be incorporated individually into the labour market. As Doña Isidora perceived it: 'we don't have the reciprocity (…) that we had before. (…) [Guaraní women] look for economic resources, now they go out into the city, they wash [clothes], in that way they earn a *pesito*'.

In her research in (rural) Guaraní territories, Anthias, drawing on Rivera Cusicanqui's concept of '*ch'ixi*', argues that forms of 'ontological difference' are not 'entirely subsumed by' but rather 'co-exist and articulate with capitalist development processes' (2017: 274).[xv] However, in diverse peri-urban neighbourhoods without access to agricultural land, alternative 'cultures of care' seem limited, as well as uneasily situated in a hierarchical relationship with market values, which seem to have almost, but not quite, 'subsumed' other lifeworlds of care. Thus Doña Koemi, while reclaiming the value of reciprocity and challenging commerce normatively, also presents it as a difficulty for Guaraní women in 'advancing' their businesses as 'we are still not in that *stage* of selling everything (…) we're not the same as the *Collas*'.

The difficulties Guaraní women experienced can be illustrated through the widespread practice of selling on credit. While these practices negatively affected various women's businesses when customers didn't pay – including highland migrant women, Guaraní women's activities seemed particularly vulnerable. As Doña Belinda explained, she had lost her neighbourhood store (also because of increased competition) 'because we the Guaraníes sometimes we don't buy in cash (…) One is embarrassed not [to sell on credit] also (…) Up until now they still owe me'. Furthermore, as Doña Koemi explained, 'we are embarrassed to ask for payment, so as not to have a fight', only asking when badly in need, such as 'when we don't have more than one *peso*'.

Ward, has argued that through a relational 'ethics of care framework', 'self-care may be better understood as part of "collective care" and/or "networked care"' rather than its neoliberal

individualised variant (2015: 47 drawing on and citing Barnes 2015; see also Ford-Smith & Hanson 2022; Rosenbaum & Talmor 2022). In this way, Guaraní women's practices of selling on credit can be understood as part of a collective 'taking-care of' as produced through the embarrassment to deny giving on credit to, and collect payment from, neighbours and extended relatives without the means to pay, as well as a form of relational (rather than personal) self-care to avoid conflict with other community members, even extended family. As another Guaraní woman explained about her bread making business: 'They [the people who don't pay] are acquaintances (*conocidos*). Sometimes they are sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law, sometimes even the neighbour *(la vecina)* also' (Doña Renata). In referring to the female buyers of this most basic of household consumables, her words also indicate the gendered responsibility for social reproduction which forms the basis for such fraught networks of credit and care.

6. Conclusion: Care, class differentiation and the intersectional exclusions of citizenship in peri-urban Santa Cruz

Povinelli has argued that 'neoliberalism works by colonizing the field of value – reducing all social values to one market value' (2011: 134). While Bolivia's citizenship regime post-2006 (discursively) presents alternative and communal conceptions of social value such as *vivir bien* (Ranta 2018), gendered citizenship ideals continue to circulate in peri-urban Santa Cruz based around market value, individual entrepreneurship and personal effort, eliding differences in women's ability to 'take care of' themselves and others. However, microenterprise can also support care for the self (and family) in contrast to exploitation in paid work, providing a precarious form of resistance to colonial power (Lugones 2010; Rivera Cusicanqui 2018). Furthermore, Guaraní women also subvert capitalist market values through other practices of self and collective care, including staying at home to avoid conflictive street commerce, selling goods on credit, and practising debt-work to guarantee the social reproduction of their families (alongside casual paid work). These precarious alternative practices may also result in further impoverishment and difficulties in sustaining life, for example, when the pawned gas cylinder or stove requires the need to cook over fire and the long walk to find firewood in the remaining peri-urban *monte* (bush). Such practices also intertwine with longstanding racialised tropes of lowland people (nationally) and of lowland *indigenous* people by the white/*mestizo* elites in Santa Cruz as 'lazy', resulting in exclusionary representations of Guaraní women.

Moreover, while trade is certainly central to the reconfiguration of inequalities in Bolivia post-2006, including among indigenous groups (Webber 2016), these processes must also be situated within the unequal burdens of social reproduction and care (Ikemura Amaral 2023; Maclean 2014; Wanderley 2011: 66–7). In the urban lowlands, a focus on tensions of care illuminates subtle forms of differentiation between (indigenous) peri-urban women; whereas some (highland migrant) women are (more or less) able to sustain their families through informal commerce and microenterprise, Guaraní women largely carry out (casual) paid (often domestic) work, including for highland migrant traders as well as the white/*mestizo* middle-upper classes, alongside some intermittent entrepreneurial activities – largely the sales of homemade bread and other foodstuffs from the home – as well as debt-work when the family budget fall short.

Drawing on Gibson-Graham and in relation to debt, Karaagac has argued that 'our geographical responsibility should be…bringing forward care-based resistive practices' (2020: 10). In peri-urban Santa Cruz, germinations of such practices are hard to discern under the weight of financial necessity and individualised labour markets, with the possibility to develop alternative practices of 'taking care of' – such as reciprocal lending among women, as advocated by Mujeres Creando (Galindo 2012 as discussed by Federici 2014: 241), also unevenly available according to social networks. Yet, Guaraní women's practice of selling on credit suggests an alternative, albeit precarious, form of caring exchange based on need. Indeed, Doña Isidora, reflecting on the high mark-up at peri-urban neighbourhood stores, explained that she and her daughter were thinking of setting up a store selling products at lower cost, although the collapse of a prior Guaraní community store and bread business (in a different community), indicates that such stores may not be easily maintained, precisely given the issues discussed (Doña Emilina, Guaraní leader). Further research is therefore needed to understand how the state could support alternative caring economies (Hillenkamp 2015) 'informed by' indigenous values (Brannelly & Boulton 2015: 81) within marginalised peri-urban communities in lowland Bolivia, alongside the redistribution of care-giving, to tackle the ongoing intersectional exclusions of citizenship. For, as Jiménez Zamora highlights, a society with unequal distribution of caring responsibility is a society 'very far from achieving "vivir bien"'(2011: 12).

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[i] With Morales governing until 2019, and with the MAS re-elected in 2020 with Luis Arce as president. In August 2025, elections saw a shift to the right, with the MAS receiving only 3.17% of the vote, and with two centre/right-wing candidates advancing to a second-round vote in October 2025. See: https://computo.oep.org.bo/ (last accessed 23.09.25)

[ii] In the literature, the concept of 'post-neoliberalism' has sometimes been used with reference to the Bolivian process of change, with Yates and Bakker defining 'post-neoliberalism' as referring to 'redirecting a market economy towards social concerns' as well as a participatory politics; however, 'traces of neoliberalism may be defining characteristics of post-neoliberalism' (2014: 64–9; see also Webber 2016).

[iii] 41% of the population identified as indigenous in the 2012 census, with 36 indigenous groups recognised (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2015: 12; Postero 2017: 182), and with 48% of indigenous peoples living in urban areas (APCOB 2014: 13).

[iv] '*Camba*', a Guaraní term, historically refers to 'a dark-skinned indigenous peasant' in debt-bound labour (Fabricant 2009: 769).

[v] The other two phases are 'caring about' and 'care-receiving' (Tronto 1993: 105–8).

[vi] See also Gago who, drawing on Rivera Cusicanqui, and from her research on the Salada market in Argentina, has developed the concept of 'neoliberalism from below', which refers to the heterogenous appropriation and modification of neoliberal rationalities in the popular economy, both resisting and reinforcing exploitation, and as interweaved with other communal practices (2017: 5–22).

[vii] In the 2012 census, around 150,000 identified as indigenous in the Santa Cruz municipality (out of 1.4 million) with 'approximately 43,000' from minority lowland groups (Horn 2022: 42-3), including 14,687 Guaraní: http://datos.ine.gob.bo/binbol/RpWebEngine.exe/Portal?BASE=CPV2012COM&lang=esp (last accessed 11.03.22)

[viii] Article 64 II also states that the state will assist those with family responsibilities (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2009). The need for such services is particularly salient given Bolivia's high fertility rate – 2.8 in 2017: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?contextual=region&end=2021&locations=BO&name_desc=false&start=1960&view=chart (last accessed 17.04.24).

[ix] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=BO (last accessed 26.05.25)

[x] Other employment carried out by Guaraní women included working as (market) sales assistants, in green areas/street cleaning, and in textile workshops. A few women had also obtained professional roles, including as (Guaraní) teachers. See also APCOB (2014: 122)

[xi] Interestingly, a family member of Doña Bernarda's had a small store, showing also the contradictory circulation of discourse around commerce.

[xii] See also Nostas Ardaya & Sanabria who found perceptions of rural (lowland indigenous) Guaraya women as 'lazy' by rural (highland) migrant women (2010: 64).

[xiii] See also Shakow (2022) on the gendered and racialised tensions in the differing professional and entrepreneurial aspirations of (migrant) women from Cochabamba, with the 'upward mobility' associated with professional careers long viewed as a path to avoid 'suffering'.

[xiv] Although in highland Aymara communities, the 'relationship with money, commerce, and profit is often to be handled *with care*' (Maclean 2012: 75, my emphasis)

[xv] See also Ikemura Amaral on '*ch'ixi*' subjectivities among market women in highland El Alto, where women navigate between tensions of reciprocal 'kinship relations' and 'individualistic entrepreneurial logics' (2023: 103–4).