Abstract

This thesis examines how livelihood diversification is also a site in which gender relations are unsettled, maintained and (re)configured. With the aim of strengthening the links between feminist and agrarian change scholarship, I present ethnographic material from Naga, a medium-size city in Bicol, Philippines, to explore how daily discourses, practices and performances of livelihood change are instrumental in mapping ways of life that are gendered.

In the first part of the thesis, attention is devoted to the inadequate, or at least outdated, attention to gender relations in previous models of livelihood change, and to spell out some of the implications its integration may bring. In the remaining part of the thesis my aim is to indicate how this integration should be achieved. Specifically, I highlight some of the problems stemming from ‘structural’ analyses of gender, and emphasize the fresh perspectives opened up by a post-structural, performative approach.

I then proceed to the Naga context, where I present two case studies to ‘flesh out’ these theoretical claims in more depth. Part One traces the involvement of state institutions in these changing political economies. Specifically, I consider how local state policies and practices associated with agrarian change are not simply implicated in people’s tendency to diversify, but also in the (re)production of gender identities. Notions of male responsibility and women’s rightful position in the home emerge as particularly important in this respect. In Part Two, I move to Pacol, a small farming community located on Naga’s peri-urban fringe. By drawing on interview and focus group material provided by ten ‘diversifying’ households, I consider how these discourses come into being; how they are worked through and (re)produced in intra-household activities, decision-making and other quotidian performances.
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INTRODUCTION

Conversations with Clarita

My parents suffered so greatly from poverty. When I was just 10 years old I started farming and helping my parents sell rice. That’s when I realised that you cannot rise from poverty unless you have drive and determination. The fruits of my parents’ harvests were wasted on their debts. I saw how they struggled. “Let me remind you of that sack of rice you owe me”.

I would be there in the rice fields from Monday to Tuesday. On Wednesdays at 4:00 a.m. I would sell vegetables in Naga City market. When I had savings, I enrolled in cosmetology and dressmaking classes, curling people’s hair by day, making their pants by night. I became renowned as a local seamstress. I could make all types of clothing, 7 pairs of pants in one sitting.

I was a young lady, but I had a mature mind. By 16, I had a palay\(^1\)-trading business. I also sold fishes. I’d purchase 20kg from Carolina\(^2\) and carry them back to Pacol. I would become teary-eyed when the residents would trade just one sack of coconuts for the fishes. But what could I do?

At 18, I started attending street parties, bowed down with soda, bread and cigarettes. I had to turn down men who asked me to dance because my priority was to sell goods.

\(^1\) A local term for rice.
\(^2\) A neighbouring village approximately 10km from Pacol.
Then I met my husband, Elio. We were both 19 and from Pacol. We met through a friend, who said that I should be married to him because he is very industrious. Our marriage started from nothing. We planted rice on somebody else’s land, and I worked as a laundry woman. A year later I gave birth to our first child. We were so poor that we could only afford *tuyo*³. We would share one piece per meal. It’s better now because I can have bread for snacks. Before, tears would flow down my cheeks whenever I would just drink warm water, but I took it as an indication of being a strong person.

I inherited nothing from my parents. My mother was lazy, I’m industrious. When my husband didn’t have a job, I would let him help me, because I didn’t want him to be that way. We were not rich, but we were contented. Even when I was poor, I didn’t really have problems. I was always tired, but never got thin. When my husband had little money for fertilizer, for medicines, I would make a way to have money, so that he never got irritated with me.

He drinks liquor now, but I am always patient. Just like what the Lord says, if you love somebody, you should accept everything in him, the good and the bad. As long as he doesn’t neglect his duties, that’s alright with me. When I tell him what to do, he follows.

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³ A dried fish, typically eaten as a snack.
The above account was spliced together from one of the many conversations I had with Clarita over my three-month stay in Pacol, a small farming community located on the outskirts of Naga City, Philippines. I start with her story for an important reason.

As a farmer, vendor, hairdresser, rice mill owner, and long-term resident of Pacol, Clarita’s life story is testament to the dramatic transformations that have shaped the region’s agrarian landscape over the course of several decades. Burgeoning urban centres and increasing educational and (local and extra-local) non-farm employment opportunities have run parallel with political instability, crippling foreign debt repayments, ineffective agrarian reform policies, and a shrinking of the Philippine state’s reproductive function. As a wife, mother, and daughter, Clarita has clearly had to deal with these developments in multiple, overlapping and often contradictory ways.

In Pacol, as in much of rural Southeast Asia, an important strategy employed to negotiate these changing political economies has been to diversify away from farming as the main source of income. Many households in the village now meet their basic needs, minimise risk and/or generate surplus through multiple income sources and occupations; engaging in vegetable gardening, animal husbandry or vending, for instance, alongside farming. This process of diversification raises a number of important questions: Why do people pursue the strategies they do? Where do their ideas come from? Who pursues them? And, what do they mean to the interests and identities of those concerned?
In this ensuing story of displacement, diversity, opportunity and anxiety, I draw upon ethnographic insights such as those provided by Clarita, to explore these geographical questions. Specifically, I seek to understand how gendered subjectivities are (re)produced in livelihood trajectories that are forged through changing political economies, ultimately interrogating how gender comes to matter, in dual senses of the word.

Getting down to it

There’s another reason for drawing on my conversations with Clarita, this one more painful and politically-charged than the former. It relates to the vexed question of women’s voices and how they are understood and represented. To the dangers inherent in ventriloquizing what ‘poor women’ say if we as researchers are not vigilant in our reflexivity and authorial practices.

This thesis is threaded through with a commitment to feminist epistemology, a commitment that applies as much to processes of project conceptualisation and research engagement, as it does modes of data collection. Donna Haraway encourages us to ‘situate’ knowledge, to recognise and “take into account our own position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice”. Richa Nagar underscores the importance of ‘talking across worlds’; worlds that are separated not just

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socially, geopolitically and materially, but also in their understanding of what constitutes relevant theory and politics. She writes,

transnational feminist conversations cannot be productive unless feminist academics based in Western/Northern institutions produce research agendas and knowledges that do not merely address what it theoretically exciting or trendy here, but also what is considered politically imperative by the communities we work with or are committed to over there 8. The institutions involved in my own research warrant careful attention here. This study addresses decision-making and gender performativity in the context of livelihood diversification. The proposal written to fund the research was another matter, exacting a more rigid, ‘tangible’ and quantifiable conceptualisation of gender roles and relations. The culture of the department encouraged a more theoretically-informed performance, influenced by its post-modern tradition. The thesis was therefore proposed and developed with funders’ organizational exigencies, faculty and fellow students’ intellectual probings, university protocol demands, community members’ political engagements, and personal objectives in mind. It would be foolish to refute that collation of these goals came without its compromise, and my admittedly limited strategy as a member of this system has been to resist at the junctures I am able, even as I knowingly (if not always willingly) perpetuate it.

My research approach is thus simultaneously ascending (anti-foundational) and descending (tentatively foundational) in its analysis of power. It is an attempt to locate myself in a field of power (the West) and in the production of a particular knowledge (the East). Aware that interrogation of identity and representation politics is fraught with

8 Ibid., p. 184. Emphasis in original.
partiality\textsuperscript{9}, I combine open-ended and collaborative methods (life histories, serial interviews, involved observation) with a theoretically-grounded approach\textsuperscript{10} in a bid to offer a better-theorized account of grounded political engagement rather than just ‘another good theory’. In doing so I denounce calls to ‘write-off’ fieldwork as an inevitably masculinist and/or colonialist venture\textsuperscript{11}, choosing instead to see it as a site in which to critique and reconstruct a more responsible, albeit partial, account of what is happening in the world\textsuperscript{12}.

**To the Field (?)!**

In her seminal piece ‘Playing the field: Questions of Fieldwork in Geography’\textsuperscript{13}, geographer Cindi Katz eloquently explores the artificiality of boundaries separating fieldworker and participants, researcher and researched. But her border interrogation does not stop there. Drawing on empirical studies from New York City and Sudan, Katz challenges the demarcation of the ‘field’ as naturalised in terms of time or place, conveniently cordoned off from the life of the researcher. She employs a ‘politics of engagement’ to meet her objective;

\textsuperscript{9} In twin senses of the word: both incomplete and selective.
\textsuperscript{10} As opposed to a theory-testing approach, which imposes a set of theoretical issues and priorities in advance of the research.
\textsuperscript{11} Realisation of the partiality of reflexivity, together with fears about the masculinist and colonialist bias of fieldwork, led to a methodological impasse among feminists in the mid-1990s, reflected, among other things, in its abandonment by some researchers in favour of textual analyses, and in accusations by critics that self-reflexive exercises were merely ‘naval gazing’, sounded like apologies, or served as badges worn by researchers to prove their legitimacy. See Diane Wolf (1997), Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork. Boulder: Westview Press.
Not to bound a site of common culture and turn it into a museum/mausoleum, but to locate and pry apart some of the differences, not just between one site and elsewhere but within it as well.\footnote{14}{Ibid., p. 72.}

To borrow her oft-quoted phrase, “I am always, everywhere, in the ‘field’”\footnote{15}{Ibid., p. 72.}, I acknowledge the diffuse and contested nature of the ‘field’, yet employ the term inescapably. My fields are therefore: Naga City Hall, where I undertook interviews with local state officials; Pacol, home to my research participants and ethnographic practices; Naga’s two principal universities, sites of library searches, interviews and pivotal planning meetings; and Vancouver, my home and office, where the questions were formulated and the stories interpreted.

The preceding paragraphs overflow with the arrogance of research, and my calling attention to it here does not obviate it. I speak of choosing, deciding, wanting, travelling, finding compelling, enjoying. My academic career somewhat in the balance, the object of my study was people’s lives, lived in real time and space. But these lives were not lived like ‘my’ own, in circumstances of their subject’s choosing. My research was born out of a commitment to social change, wrapped up in issues of justice and rights, and though I still agree with this stance, I, myself, would be committing an injustice to deny at least a small flicker of the exoticizing impulse.

The choice of my field site was an amalgamation of historical circumstance, intellectual criteria, practical specifications, and default. I was interested in studying gender and
development, and a studio course in the Philippines\textsuperscript{16} provided an ideal opportunity to do just that. I had been interested in the context of Southeast Asia since visiting the region prior to graduate school, and was enticed by the sense of security embodied in twenty other Canadian students. Assisted by a research grant\textsuperscript{17}, I found myself in Naga in May 2007.

Throughout the month of May I was assigned to the urban agriculture team, tasked with creating a city-wide development plan informed by international ‘best practices’. By day I interviewed farmers and state officials, attended lectures in the municipal hall, grabbed \textit{merienda}\textsuperscript{18} with City acquaintances, and browsed the web. By night I perused Naga’s entertainment offerings, gravitating towards the more comfortable (\textit{read}: lavish) Western-style restaurants and bars that had taken root in the city just a few years previous.

The asymmetries of power and cultural politics of dishing out consultancy advice, while sojourning \textit{en masse} in the city troubled me, both personally and professionally. As Katz\textsuperscript{19} quips, “only in the “Wizard of Oz” do women descend on other lands without obvious cultural baggage”, and I often found myself facing the conundrum of whether I was imposing my own (Western feminist) values on Filipino people. These concerns

\textsuperscript{16} The three-week studio course was offered by Dr. Leonora Angeles from the School of Community and Regional Planning, UBC. The course aimed to expose graduate students to a variety of local governance issues, including transportation management, youth development and urban agriculture.
\textsuperscript{17} This research was aided by a generous grant from the Challenges of the Agrarian Transition in South East Asia (ChATSEA) international funding agency.
\textsuperscript{18} The Philippine name for ‘snack’: typically eaten late morning and afternoon.
\textsuperscript{19} Cindi Katz (1994), Ibid., p. 68.
began to rear their ugly head during a visit to an electoral polling station on only the second day of fieldwork.

My initiation to Naga was considerably colored by its coincidence with the 2007 legislative and local elections. Philippine politics is a dramatic and dirty game, and this round of elections was no exception. Reports of vote-buying, extra-judicial killings, treason and corruption reverberated around the media, calling for political mobilization and the impeachment of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Several of our own group members were caught in the (proverbial) cross-fire when the assassination of a party leader led to major communication links being cut off between Manila and Mindoro, a neighbouring province. In Naga, Mayor Jesse Robredo’s steadfast commitment to participatory governance, to dynamism over decadence and fruitful civic engagement over fractious politics, ensured more serene electoral conditions. But even he couldn’t evade his own fair share of controversy. A petition from opposition leader Roco Villafuerte (a member of the region’s most prolific political dynasty) on the grounds of Robredo’s ‘faulty’ citizenship put his candidacy into serious jeopardy and culminated

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20 Under Mayor Robredo’s 16-year leadership, Naga City has received numerous national, regional and international awards. Among the most prestigious are the 2002 U.N. Conference on Human Settlements Award, and the World Bank’s 2002 award for the ‘model city with good practices and innovations in government procurement’. For an appraisal of Naga’s participatory governance mechanisms see Leonora Angeles (2007) “Renegotiating Decentralization and State-Civil Society Relations: A Reinterpretation of Naga City’s experiment in Participatory Governance”. In Penny Gurstein and Leonora Angeles (eds.), Learning Civil Societies: Shifting Contexts and Perspectives in Democratic Planning and Governance. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

21 The disqualification campaign centered upon Robredo’s Chinese background. Since the Spanish first colonized the Philippines in 1521, institutional and military measures have continuously hindered the incorporation of Chinese immigrants into Filipino society. While Chinese mestizos have always been granted full citizenship rights, second- and third-generation Chinese born, despite being quite Filipinized, are still struggling to be accepted as full Filipinos because their parents were not citizens. This is institutionalized in the 1973 and 1986 constitutions, which state that electoral candidates must have full Philippine citizenship. Robredo has always been able to ward off calls for disqualification by proving that his Chinese grandfather had full Filipino citizenship. For further insight into these debates see Cristina
in 500 Nagueños, and three truckloads of anti-riot police carrying long firearms, amassing in front of City Hall in the final days before electoral announcement. Further reactions to the disqualification campaign came in electronic format, as hundreds of Naga residents divulged their frustration in personal internet blogs.

It was with this in mind that I entered Tabuco Central School on that decisive second day. The visit was part of a small tour being led by Mr. Willy Prilles, Coordinator of Naga City’s Planning and Development Office. Willy was keen to embed us in Naga’s socio-economic and political landscape, and an overview of the local electoral system was included on his list. Within minutes of entering the school yard we were approached by ‘Papa Joey’, a jovial DJ from a local FM radio station. Misidentifying the group as ‘foreign observers’ he invited us to contribute to the station’s news broadcast, and before having time to resist, we found ourselves live on air. In the intervening minutes, Papa Joey worked his way through the group, eliciting our conclusions on the local electoral process. Pertinent interview questions included: “how does the local electoral system in the Philippines differ from that in your own country?” and “what guidance can you give to listeners to better inform their voting decisions?” Our (amateur, fragmentary) responses were subsequently juxtaposed with personal biographic detail (including our age, marital status and nationality), working to quash any lasting ambiguity about speaker/listener ‘differences’. It was, on the whole, a spectacularly anxious few minutes, invested with unequal power relations and questions of representation, power and historicity. I took it as some indication of the dangers inherent when foreign

development ‘experts’ offer their opinions and interventions, as well as the meagreness of my own knowledge about such culturally-specific forms of politics.

Moments such as these encouraged my extrication from the initial planning project. I made a concerted effort to break ties with the City government. I employed a translator (and accompanying driver) from a local university, located a host family through the Catholic Church, made visits to City Hall as infrequent as possible, and even severed relationships with City staff. I wanted to market myself as an autonomous researcher, unaffiliated with any group or project.

As the weeks wore on, the desire for dislocation played out on my body through adjustments in eating habits, presentation of self and even intoxication levels. I ceased wearing ‘inappropriate’ (Western) clothing and make-up; opted for rice and tuya over fast food; and limited my alcohol consumption to once per week, aware of its considerable social stigma. This second, corporeal transition was partly facilitated by my choice of field site. As one of Naga’s upper barangays, Pacol still stands in relative isolation to Naga city centre, or ‘Centro’ as known locally. Recent infrastructural investments have promoted increasing rural-urban fluidity, but few can afford their own means of transportation, and irregular jeepney services mean that village life has remained quite localised. The corporeal changes were also influenced by the high stress-levels incurred.

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23 The electoral village unit.
24 Filipino version of a ‘tuktuk’. These motorised vans are the predominant mode of transportation between Pacol and Centro.
in the first weeks of fieldwork. After being forced to ditch my initial research idea\textsuperscript{25}, I spent several weeks scrambling around, enduring ceaseless conversations with local residents, village officials, religious leaders, and teachers. In the long term it paid off, in that I found a project that was both feasible and politically valuable to the community involved, but in the short term it led to appetite loss and even insomnia.

When I did leave the village, I divided my time between City Hall and Naga’s two colleges; the University of Nueves Carceres and Ateneo de Naga University. Many days were spent pouring through their databases and library collections. Ateneo’s coffee shop was also the site of interviews with two faculty members, a feminist NGO advocate, and various planning meetings with my translator and transcribers. We sipped mango and apple shakes while planning our next research ‘moves’, happy to escape the voracious mosquitoes and incessant heat.

The period of research was sufficiently long in duration to cover hot and rainy spells. Both posed their fair share of methodological difficulties. Soaring temperatures during the initial month induced dehydration, appetite suppression and fatigue, and called for routine breaks as well as early nights. The latter monsoonal rain brought with it more disease (and associated vectors) and infrastructural constraints. Conjunctivitis, gastroenteritis and influenza ran rampant within the village, straining already limited familial budgets.

\textsuperscript{25} My preliminary research proposal on urban community gardens was rendered unfeasible due to the lack of urban agriculture in Naga.
Many long, candle-lit nights were spent swashing back coffee at home as frenzied weather activities caused frequent “brown-outs”. Mobility was further restrained when motorcycles and pushbikes proved inadequate against the driving rains. The rainy season also had economic impacts. Harvests were threatened when irrigation ditches overflowed and fields flooded, and the frequent risk of typhoons weighed heavily in people’s minds. Many of the locals, including the men and women that participated in this project, found the combination of a regular work day, persistent rain, and high risk of disease difficult.

Translations, Trials and Tribulations

Translation and interpretation are laden with theoretical and political questions and complexities, intricate interrogation of which is well beyond the scope of this project. Derrida and Clifford have alerted us to the creative, transformative and often disobedient powers of language; Alarcón, Spivak and Visweswaran to its violent and suppressive streak. Aware that language is messily enmeshed within social and cultural codes, and that translation is neither value nor problem free, my thesis nevertheless attempts to incorporate some two dozen interviews and three focus groups with ten

26 In November 2006, hundreds of irrigation channels, electricity cables, roads, houses and lives were destroyed when Typhoon Reming struck Bicol. The relief effort is still ongoing. The enduring sociological and psychological ramifications of the typhoon were brought into sharp relief during a visit to a Red Cross rehabilitation site in neighbouring region Albay. There I met little Ivan, a four year-old left so traumatised by the death of his mother and siblings in a landslide that he was unable to leave the temporary plywood living container that he’d called home for the previous seven months.


female residents of Pacol (and a further set of interviews with their partners), all of which were contingent upon the availability and skills of one translator.

Interviews, as feminist methodology, often serve to authenticate research findings by appropriating subjugated knowledges from essentialized ‘native informants’\(^\text{29}\). Focus groups differ as sites in which the authority of the researcher can be more readily challenged and negotiated\(^\text{30}\), but still they hold the ability to create new meanings, displace local knowledges, and naturalise/totalise respondents as static and bounded entities, enacting the same kind of imperial performances they often aim to contest.

Caren Kaplan\(^\text{31}\) warns us of the perils of cross-cultural ‘story-telling’. She encourages (feminist, poststructuralist) researchers to interrogate the temporal and spatial constructions of subjectivity (and their interlocking tensions); to enact a kind of accountable positioning in the context of capitalism and white supremacy, in which they endeavour to be answerable for what they have learned to see and do.

In an effort to avoid cultural disjuncture, if not epistemic violence, I ‘piloted’ my interview questions on my translator beforehand, examining for hidden misunderstandings and attempting to gauge their linguistic- and cultural-‘translatability’.

But neither the cultural and professional positions of the people, nor the languages involved, were neutral. As Norma Alarcón’s writes,

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated – over populated with the intentions of others. Expropriating, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process.\(^{32}\)

The ‘genuine’ field research soon became littered with translational tensions. One early source of slippage related to individual’s experiences of livelihood activities. The women were asked to elucidate the personal advantages and disadvantages of each of their activities. Slippage occurred around the position of the “I” within the question, as it demanded the women speak independently of their maternal roles, an act often viewed in Philippine society as tantamount to betrayal. On each occasion the translator had to deviate from and within these cultural norms by invoking the potentiality of other subject positionalities. For example, she would contrast her own experiences of office and home life to incite discussion. How else she did this remains unclear.

Another source of slippage concerned the issue of time. A basic question was posed to each female respondent: “what do you do during an ‘average’ day, starting from when you first wake, and how long does each activity take?” It was the latter part of the query that proved problematic, requiring the participants to possess a relatively precise awareness of ‘clock time’. On each occasion the translator was forced to elaborate further on what was meant. Again, her exact methods of doing so largely evaded me.

\(^{32}\) Norma Alarcón (1997), Ibid., p. 91.
As a feminist ethnographer, I am expected to recognise these ideological contradictions though. I should be capable of exploring the multiple identities and experiences of my research participants, lending as much weight to their (fleeting) acts of omission as their acts of confession. I am responsible not for revealing ‘the truth’, but the multiple truths apparent in these women’s lives.

Such high expectations, and yet I didn’t enter the field entirely naïve. I knew that my inability to speak the local language would suppress spontaneity, informality and creativity; that body language and meta-communication would be lost along the methodological way. I was aware of the fact that knowledge is relational, refracted through chains of unequal relationships of power: between individual participants, the participants and myself, myself and the translator, the translator and the participants. But often preparation is not quite enough.

Three weeks after the planning students’ departure, and countless conversations later, I commenced a set of preliminary interviews with the ten female participants. I’d chosen ten for logistical reasons. I wanted to make the research more ‘manageable’, given the tight, seven-week time frame and intimacy involved. But negotiating manageability and intimacy is, I increasingly realised, no easy task. Faced with the time constraints, inclusivity and openness were thrown somewhat by the ‘wayside’ (read: masculinist truth claims began to permeate the research practices and epistemologies), and my intentionally flexible ‘criteria’ was replaced by specificity (long-term residence in Pacol, diverse livelihood strategies, willingness to participate, impalpable ‘special something’).
I worked essentially with ten women, but over twenty others were consulted along the way.

The initial meetings had been designed to serve several purposes: to introduce the various parties, as well as their aims, desires, and values; to run through fieldwork logistics and synchronise research schedules; and to recapitulate the university’s ethics protocol. They took place in the women’s homes (as did subsequent interviews), both for practical and strategic reasons. It was more convenient for many of the participants to remain at home due to their domestic responsibilities. By interviewing them there, I also hoped to learn more about their daily lives, while enabling more reciprocal forms of communication. An open-ended, informal format would, I had hoped, induce reflexivity and inclusivity. And a small number of interviews did follow this course, becoming spaces in which stories, desires and even dreams were exchanged. Hand gestures and facial expressions were often enough to convince me of this fact. Many others remained frustratingly formalised however, punctuated by long silences, nervous laughter, and ‘one-word’ answers.

Frustrating, because I (shamefully, naïvely) had figured that being a (feminist) woman from a working class background would be enough to compensate for the difference between the women and I. But faced with these latter scenarios, I learnt that knowing about ‘otherness’ and marginalization from afar is very different to experiencing it daily. The more I experienced difference, the clearer the distinctions became. Recognising the various sets of power relations that constituted the women’s lives, and those of my own,
became something of a (guilty) obsession. I was saddened by the research process because it forced me to realize that I was (geographically, culturally, socio-economically, academically) different. And I was also ashamed, because as I wrote in my field journal, even just my presence makes the participants uncomfortable. They look at the floor when speaking to me, avoid eye contact and struggle for words… What gives me the right to make somebody feel like that?33

But let’s refrain from falling into the essentialist trap once more. For to interpret these ‘silences’ as proof of fieldwork’s inevitable imperialist bias is to infer that subjugation always comes without its resistance. It is to overlook the fact that sometimes (unequal) power relations operate beyond the researcher’s control; that participants may choose not to cooperate in their exercises of power, as modest and carefully executed as they may be. Feminist geographer Jennifer Hyndman34 experienced resistance in Somali refugee camps when her research participants likened her to a ‘theoretical tourist’. I was (partially) resisted through translation prohibition.

Of the ten women interviewed, three asked for my translator’s discretion with this matter, and she seemed happy to comply. Sensing her obvious unease, I broached the subject in a debriefing session afterwards. Her reply;

I feel uncomfortable translating when I see their reactions, their awkwardness…like they are being interrogated, in a hot seat. Unlike when we talk to each other in the local dialect, they can understand what I am saying and at the same time trust me, because I am a fellow Bicolano. It’s also the same with you, when me and Jun [a friend] are talking in the local dialect, you say that you feel uncomfortable. Aside from that, translation makes the interview more formal35.

33 Field notes, July 1, 2007.  
35 Field notes, 5 July 2007
She continued,

Maybe [the women] think that we are analyzing what they are saying, and oftentimes they will think that what they are saying is wrong… And also there is a feeling of self-humiliation because they cannot speak English. And then there is the feeling of frustration… Some of the women do not want to reveal to you their dreams, their ambitions, because they do not wish to share their failure\(^{36}\).

Her salient observations speak to a plethora of concerns produced when researchers enter the ‘contact zone’, a term I’ve stolen from Mary Louise Pratt\(^ {37}\). In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Pratt defines ‘contact zone’ as “the space of colonial encounters, where peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations. This process usually involves conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict”. A ‘contact’ perspective emphasises how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. Here, its applicability is in excess, accounting for everything from the ‘corruption’ and ‘disruption’ that takes place through linguistic mediation, and the fluidity and partiality of fieldwork performances, to the tapestry of complex power relations within which they are woven. The field became a disorientating, anxiety-inducing and exhausting place, for me as much as my participants and translator. An interpreter-dependent ‘expert’, I felt like a walking paradox, under surveillance and out of place.

So politically-charged did the ‘contact zone’ become that by the end of the second week I had been forced to take a methodological ‘backseat’. From then on, interviews and focus groups were to be conducted in the local dialect, Bicol; English being wielded in emergency situations only. In an effort to retain/regain some sense of control, I set up

\(^{36}\) Ibid.
extensive preparatory meetings with my translator before each interview, and insisted on thorough de-briefing sessions afterwards. I trained her in feminist research methods, encouraging her to listen and follow-up on the priorities of the participants, rather than ‘ferret around’ for The Facts. And I devoted time to developing our own relationship, keen to address its own problems and power differentials.

What was initially closed off was, admittedly, opened up in the course of fieldwork. That is, as my translator and I became sensitised to the participants’ conditions and perceptions, and them to ours, more meaningful, productive and collaborative research spaces were created. Initially keen to avoid situations in which the prestige of their husbands might be compromised, by the end of the research period the women were chatting freely about their marital experiences and disputes, frustrations and even sex lives. And they inundated me with questions about my own experiences in these areas of my life. But it would be unwise to deny that doors haven’t been left unopened. What would have happened if I could have more readily participated, or been able to extend my stay? What other ravelings, contradictions, congruencies, and simultaneities would have opened up by posing questions differently, and/or adopting alternative research methods? What costs have been incurred through my reliance on transcripts for complex events, idioms, and events? The subject deserves a full study, which it seems I was unable to offer.

I write this last sentence in my final field, Vancouver. Here I face a mass of words on a page, itching to be arranged for mass consumption. My task? To present these
fragmentary findings in a suitably finished state, without suppressing any potential for reincarnation. To construct testimonial subjectivity in a way that serves the practical demands of my participants, Clarita included, without compromising the theoretical ones of my institution. Katz\(^{38}\) notes that dislocation from the field invokes a shift from an ontologically-grounded understanding of the world to the Cartesian ‘world-as-exhibition’. Judith Butler’s\(^{39}\) notion of performativity rests upon the ways in which identity is assigned meaning through discourse. Writing up the findings without exoticizing/appropriating the ‘other’ is, I realize, going to be a slippery course to take.

**Stuck in a Muddy Rut**

The findings of my research appear just a year after the publication of ‘Land, Farming, Livelihoods, and Poverty: Rethinking the Links in the Rural South’ in *World Development*, in which Jonathan Rigg\(^{40}\) lamented the lack of attention to livelihood change in the rural development literature. Though Rigg’s observations were certainly not new, his effort to marry previously dislocated bodies of work and sketch out a story of rural transformation represents an important turning point in Agrarian Studies, breathing a new lease of life into its stagnant and fragmented bones.

Since its inception in the 1960s, scholars in the field of Agrarian Studies have rather struggled to keep up with the dramatic global changes characteristic of the post-colonial era – economic, social, political and ideological – and the major shifts in intellectual

\(^{38}\) Cindi Katz (1995), Ibid.  
concerns accompanying them. Granted, initial studies impregnated with classic Marxist ideals did give way in the 1970s to less essentialized accounts of agrarian structure and change; and these alternative Marxist political-economy approaches likewise shed some light on the evolving array of linkages between ‘peasant’ production and wage labour. But the abiding sense during and after this time has been that non-farming activities are also temporary and contingent ones; ‘add-ons’ to the main business of farming, or cards dealt in times of severe economic strife.

While this air of reluctance has covered the breadth of the Agrarian Studies literature, one area that remains particularly unexamined is the role of social, and hence gender relations, in livelihood diversification. Since the publication of Miriam Sharma’s ‘Caste, Class and Gender: Production and Reproduction in North India’ in 1985, feminist researchers have made considerable headway in underscoring the importance of gender to agrarian change debates. Gender had featured in several articles before the mid-1980s, but it wasn’t until Sharma’s intervention that it registered a belated impact on a core concern of ‘peasant studies’: “the constitution, composition and functioning of the actually existing households invoked by models of household (or ‘family’) production and reproduction”. Since then, feminists have exposed fundamental limits in the classic Marxist approach to agrarian change, problematizing prevailing notions of the ‘household’, and its relation to land, labour markets, and politics.

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When it comes to livelihood change, however, the intersections and conversations between feminist scholarship and Agrarian Studies have been surprisingly few. Typically, research responsibility has fallen into economists’ hands, who have interpreted income- and livelihood-diversification synonymously, and conjured up static notions of the household as unitary and apolitical spheres. On the few occasions that gender has been acknowledged as a dimension of difference, livelihood diversification has been analyzed as a site of struggle over contested resources, and scholars have sought to determine the impacts on women and men. Though important, this approach has tended to naturalize gender identities by interpreting livelihoods as simply roles that men and women take on, rather than activities actually constitutive of gender identities. In other words, it has precluded from analysis the myriad ways in which gender identities are also at stake during livelihood struggles, both within and beyond the household.

Two decades have passed since Joan Scott made the point in her brilliant introduction to *Gender and the Politics of History* that gender – in the sense of knowledge about the

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multiple and contested meanings of sexual difference – is neither given, fixed, nor confined to the household, but invoked and contested in a variety of institutional arenas as parts of other struggles for power. This extended, post-structural definition of politics is now one of the central insights of feminism, and arguably contains the key to moving beyond the essentialism and inertia implicit in the previous ‘structural’ approach to diversification.

Gillian Hart’s gender analysis of production politics in Malaysia illustrates just what can be gained when this post-structural theoretical framework is applied to processes of agrarian change. In a paper prescient for its time, Hart drew on ethnographic material to emphasize the need to understand gender as transitional and uncentered, rather than ‘singular, homogenous, and fixed’, or as Hart herself stated in a passage worth quoting in its entirety;

> gender refers not simply to the social roles of men and women and the sexual division of labour, but also the ways that abstract qualities (strong/weak, rational/expressive) are defined as masculine/feminine… And since meanings – such as those associated with intrahousehold exchanges or claims on resources, or, indeed, the boundaries of ‘the household’ – are multiple, contested, and change over time, outcomes cannot be predicted from ‘rules’ or norms.

And by re-focusing the research question to how gendered rights and obligations are constructed and maintained, rather than what rules govern intra-household resource allocation, she was able to illustrate that men and women’s differential involvement in labour struggles could only be understood in relation to state-fed gender discourses and other, wider political-economic forces.

50 Ibid. (1991), p. 17
Over a decade since it was first published however, neither Hart’s article, nor Joan Scott’s extended notion of politics on which it was based, have received anywhere near the level of scholarly attention they so clearly deserve. Geographical approaches are still relatively underrepresented in the interdisciplinary pursuit of Agrarian Studies, and the bulk of feminist interventions are still flavoured with historical-Marxist sentiments that tie gender to biological sex. Moreover, the solitary, apolitical notion of the household favoured by most previous analysts of livelihood change has meant that the importance of gendered power struggles within other institutions has largely been overlooked.

In an attempt to traverse this research gap, I draw on the work of Judith Butler and other post-structural and feminist scholars dedicated to understanding how identities are constituted ‘in the action of knowledge production, not before the action starts’, to bring a fresh set of questions to the study of livelihood change. Without overlooking the differences generated by other axes of social identity (class, age, sexuality), I follow Hart’s lead by exploring how local state discourses and practices are implicated in (re)configuring gender identities around issues of agrarian change. I then proceed to Pacol, where I invoke the experiences and reactions of local residents to understand how these gender discourses are enacted in daily lives.

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**Framing the Findings**

The discussion that follows spans a number of scales and literatures, and so rather than present a separate literature review, relevant material will be drawn on where appropriate.

To organise the tremendous volume of field notes, information, interviews, and focus group discussions, this work is presented in two parts. Part One draws on academic literature, policy documents and interviews with civil servants, city officials, local scholars and an NGO leader, to examine how local state practices and policies are both implicated in people’s tendency to diversify, and imbued with discourses that are inherently gendered. As I will illustrate, constructions of male responsibility and women’s rightful position in the home are especially important in this respect.

In Part Two the location and scale of analysis shift. I move to one location expressive of these discourses and developments, to explore the ways in which they are embodied in intra-household activities, decision-making processes and other performances. By drawing on individual accounts of livelihood change, I show how men and women aren’t simply affected by normative discourses, but actively galvanise and shape them in their daily lives.
PART ONE

‘Male Providers’/‘Responsible’ Mothers: (Re)producing Gender in Naga’s Bureaucracies

What narratives produce the signifiers of the subject for other traditions? Gayatri Spivak

It would make no sense…to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning as a pregiven sex...[but as] the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. Judith Butler

This chapter focuses broadly upon Naga’s political economic context, and specifically the role of local state apparatus in producing gendered discourses. The chapter starts out by outlining a framework for studying how gender identities are constructed and performed in time and space. Specifically, I draw upon existing gender and development literature to note the problems inherent in structural approaches to gender, and underscore the fresh perspectives provided by Butler and other post-structural scholars. The analysis then turns to the Naga context. After providing a cursory overview of the city’s recent growth, I examine the ways in which state bureaucracies and technologies are producing gendered citizens to legitimize and consolidate power. By drawing specifically on key strands of the local state’s ‘work-welfare’ policy agenda, I show how the choices the City is making for its constituents are imbued with normative gender discourses, in that a multiplicity of programs and policies are embedding men and women’s lives in a very particular set of subjectivities.

In order to explore how redefinitions of gender have emerged in Naga’s institutional context, I engage with a theorisation of power as diffuse, pervasive, and socio-spatially uneven in its implications, drawing from a rich body of post-structural thought, only the surface of which I have been able to scratch. The significance of Michael Foucault’s\textsuperscript{57} explication of power as fluid, relational and embedded in struggles over meanings/discourses cannot go unmentioned. Nor can Raymond Williams’s\textsuperscript{58} understanding of ‘domination’ as the “saturation of the whole process of living”, rather than merely controlling ideas and practices.

Among feminist scholars, Judith Butler has been at the forefront of attempts to further these alternative theorisations of power. Butler’s work has been instructive in illustrating how the performance of masculinities and femininities construct and reconstruct the gendered subject, as performativity is the “vehicle through which ontological effects are established”\textsuperscript{59}. Understanding discourses, practices, and performances as \textit{productive} of gender identities, rather than simply \textit{reflective} of them, puts a significant new spin on earlier treatments of gender and development which took gender to be defined as fixed social relations governing men and women’s differentiated access to resources, knowledges and socio-political processes\textsuperscript{60}.

\textsuperscript{57} Michel Foucault (1975), \textit{Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison}. New York: Random House. p. 194
\textsuperscript{58} Raymond Williams (1977), \textit{Marxism and Literature}. London: Oxford University Press. p. 110.
Taking an anti-essentialist approach to subject formation and representation does not entail a “facile view of identity as easily taken on or wilfully discarded”\(^{61}\). Instead, as Juanita Sundberg\(^{62}\) acknowledges in a passage again worth citing in its entirety,

the subject is understood as “constituted through language and disciplinary practices that are dynamic, constantly changing, yet time- and place-specific. Indeed, it is the repetitive performances of particular normative discourses that, Judith Butler argues, produces gendered bodies, thereby (re)producing gender as social norms”\(^{63}\).

Before delineating how gender discourses are materialized and reworked in individual’s daily lives, it is hence necessary to explore how they are produced in other institutional sites as parts of other struggles for power. The role of the local development state is noted as particularly important in the Naga context.

**Engendering Development**

Since the publication in 1970 of Ester Boserup’s landmark study, *The Role of Women in Economic Development*\(^ {64}\), feminist scholars have challenged the assumptions made with respect to the ‘neutral’ role of the state in development. Accepting the state not as a technical or material entity, but as a ‘plurality of discursive forms’\(^ {65}\), they have underscored its very implication in marginalization, be it through its institutional organization, policies and/or implementation practices, and albeit through very different theoretical lenses.


\(^{62}\) Juanita Sundberg (2004), Ibid. p. 46.

\(^{63}\) Ibid. p. 46.


Indeed, feminist scholarship on gender and development has come some way over the last three decades. Steeped in the liberal tradition, the initial Women in Development (WID) approach focused exclusively on the marginalisation of women in development projects, but overlooked other aspects of identity, and categorised women’s ‘interests’ according to a narrow range of Western stereotypes (maternal mortality, poverty, education). The subsequent Women and Development (WAD) framework did attend to class relations and divisions among women, but also rested upon essentially static conceptualisations of identity. In fact, both WID and WAD interpreted women’s ‘development’ as a logistical problem to be solved by integrating women into existing (read: masculinist) development structures and establishing women-only programs, rather than addressing the gender inequalities and relations implicit in those structures.

In the 1980s, the need to shift focus from women to gender was increasingly being aired in political and academic circles alike. The resulting dialogue, commonly known as Gender and Development (GAD), pertained directly to gender rather than women, and particularly the social construction of gender roles and relations. Infused by a more radical agenda, GAD advocates sought to address the bases of inequalities between women and men. They drew attention, for instance, to the ways in which capitalist development had brought adverse impacts on the productive and reproductive lives of women, and to the dangers inherent in state development programs that essentialize women as reproducers. They also sought to redistribute the power inherent in gender

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66 Caroline Moser (1993), Ibid.
relations by encouraging discourse analysis, empowerment and consultative dialogue between practitioners and their ‘patients’.

Generally speaking, GAD was better received within policy circles. But it was not without its own share of controversy. In the late 1980s, a critical debate at the heart of contemporary feminism centred on the need to differentiate women and challenge the ethnocentric, middle-class status quo. Articulated in policy circles as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), this view elided with several theoretical interventions within both development and feminism, the most significant coming from Chandra Mohanty in 1988\(^{67}\). In her seminal essay, *Under Western Eyes*, Mohanty demanded greater attention not only to difference, but also to the ‘othering’ of so-called ‘Third World’ women within Western feminist scholarship. By casting ‘Third World’ women as uniformly victimised, poor, and uneducated, she argued that Western feminists were reifying unequal power relations and reproducing colonial thought.

Since its publication, *Under Western Eyes* has precipitated an active research agenda aimed at conceptualising gender as a more pluralized and discursive development project. Through targeted initially at academic ears, scholars have extended Mohanty’s critique to the political realm, showing how development projects are predicated upon Western pretensions of modernity, wherein neoclassical economics and evolutionism are invoked to provide ‘failsafe’ prescriptions for Third World development\(^{68}\). Demonstrating that


these mainstream constructions subsume, segregate, and essentialize the locations of different peoples in the global South, they have called for a new approach to development, explicitly employing post-structural theory to meet their objective:

[to acknowledge that these] victims of arrogant perceptions are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of vision even though in the mainstream construction they are… pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable.\(^{69}\)

Applied most directly to femininities, these interventions have focused upon fracturing the ‘women-as-victim’ assumption that still permeates many development policies and programs, by recognising the multiple axes and identities that shape women’s lives. Recent scrutiny has also been applied to masculinist ‘man-as-provider/oppressor’ representations, building on a growing body of literature dedicated to men’s vulnerabilities or the so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’.\(^{70}\) This literature considers how neo-liberalism and the concomitant feminisation of labour, coupled with development projects that essentialize women as providers, all serve to disrupt the historical connection between provider identities and adult masculinities.

In Southeast Asia, these debates have been taken up by a number of feminist scholars interested in processes of ‘development’ and ‘modernisation’. By engaging explicitly with performativity theory, several have looked at how definitions of ‘womanhood’ and the family are still actively promoted by the state, and how global restructuring and flexible labour are impacting on women as they are seen to negotiate negative

stereotypes, or on families as mobility and female labour force participation challenge so-called ‘Asian family values’. More recently, attention has turned to the conceptual and empirical dimensions of men as gendered subjects, revealing the precarious and provisional masculinities emerging in the region in relation to industrial growth and the global labour market.

As noted in the introductory chapter, however, these debates have largely fallen on deaf ears where agrarian issues are concerned. A post-structural theoretical framework has scarcely been applied to the rural sector, and certainly not the process of livelihood diversification before. This omission I aim to address here. By drawing on a performative theorization of subject formation and representation, I explore the production of normative gender discourses through state agrarian practices and policies. Specifically, I point to the particular importance of viewing the local Philippine state as a site of contemporary struggles over gender relations of power. Since the passage of the Local Government Code in 1991, Naga City has gained an international reputation in

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74 For example, Donna Haraway (1991), Ibid., Juanita Sundberg (2004), Ibid., Geraldine Pratt (2004), Ibid.
political circles as a champion of participatory governance and gender equality. But this benign view of state power sits awkwardly with what is actually taking place on the ground. A quick glimpse at the City’s policies suggests that it is playing a key causal role in perpetuating spaces of life in which gender, and also class, divisions of power are sustaining oppressive social relations and practices. Later on in this section I attend to this argument, digging deep into the institution’s material and ideological assumptions. But first I provide a brief overview of the City’s recent approach to development, and to the larger liberal discourse in which it is located.

The ‘Growth’ of Naga

Situated in the agricultural region of Bicol, Naga was geographically ‘advantaged’ during the colonial eras of regional specialization. Under Spanish, and later American rule, it became an important hub of abaca and coconut production, the city and its surrounding region producing nearly half of Philippine exports in abaca by the end of the nineteenth century. Following post-WWII independence, and especially the Martial Law era (1972-1986), however, the city’s reliance upon agriculture was also to become key to its political-economic decline.

Though the Philippine economy showed steady signs of growth for almost two decades after World War II, due largely to its vast agricultural exports, economic expansion was not long-lived. Under the guise of ‘independence’ the US recipe for political democracy

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(elite competition within a constitutional framework) was well followed in the post-war period, and dependence on international markets fostered by the frequent injection of foreign funds\textsuperscript{77}. During the Martial Law era, state intervention in the economy intensified as President Marcos sought to extend his political-economic power base via patron-clientism, local ‘bossism’ and oligarchic elitism. Marcos cronies benefited from access to controlled patronage bureaucracy and economic privileges, as well as control of foreign loans, aid, and direct investment. Many of their borrowings went into unproductive state investments and ostentatious spending, and by the early 1980s burgeoning foreign debt, a weak domestic market and inequitable agrarian structure had combined to take their toll\textsuperscript{78}. The Philippine economy was showing serious signs of faltering and the crisis that followed finally marked the fall of the regime.

While the pernicious effects of political cronyism fostered under the Marcos regime were felt throughout the agrarian sector (high incidence of landlessness, unfavorable tenancy relations, decline in subsistence agriculture, and until the 1990s, the growth in rural insurgency linked to guerrilla left movements), the agricultural base of Bicol’s economy made the region particularly susceptible to exploitation and corruption. Because coconut- and abaca-growing areas were not covered by national land reform, Marcos (and post-Marcos) cronies were able to closely control the surplus extraction and poverty of Bicol, which was to have long-lasting effects. Even to this day it remains one of the most economically depressed regions in the country, with poverty and hunger incidences

placed at 55% and 68.3%, significantly higher than their 39.9% and 34.5% national counterparts 79.

These historical trends in political-economic relations have significantly shaped the development trajectory the local government of Naga has recently opted to pursue. In order to rejuvenate a flagging economy 80, the Robredo administration has, over the last two decades, increasingly directed resources away from the rural productive sector to the international financial system and service sector.

This development agenda has been greatly facilitated by the political-economic autonomy opened up through the 1991 Local Government Code, the final ‘product’ of a long drive for political-economic devolution inspired by government officials, multilateral development agencies, international monetary institutions, and civil society organizations alike 81. Drawing on the tenets of political democratization and market-led economic liberalisation, the Code emphasizes economic growth, empowerment, and equality to meet the following aims: 1) to promote the empowerment of civil society organisations; 2) to ensure the collation of accurate information about constituents’ needs and priorities; and 3) to guarantee accountability, political transparency, efficiency, and equity in the deployment of scarce resources. A perhaps less conspicuous component of the Code also

80 In 1982, the City government had a 1 million peso (CDN $25,000) budget deficit, deteriorating healthcare systems and sluggish labor market. Naga City Government (2000a), Jesse Robredo. Ramon Magsaysay 2000 Awardee. Naga City.
makes Local Government Units (LGUs) accountable for many of the reproductive functions that were previously handled by national line agencies (in the areas of health care, social services, infrastructure, and natural resources management); and while government documents commonly cite more efficient management practices as the reason behind this devolution, cutbacks in state spending are also inevitably to ‘blame’. To assist in raising the revenue required for their new functions, however, the Code does provide for major tax innovations and allows LGUs to source external funding without central state consent.82

The principles of decentralisation and autonomy enshrined in the Local Government Code have presented Philippine LGUs with tremendous opportunities for local action. Nowhere is this more evident than in Naga. Over the last two decades, the local state has galvanised its ‘new found’ fiscal autonomy to embroider a legal and constitutional framework in which individual initiative, private enterprise, foreign assistance, trade and investment have been able to flourish. As mentioned previously, the centrepiece of Naga’s development project has been service sector expansion, in alignment with national trends.83 Through generous tax breaks, infrastructural amenities, an active employment office offering streamlined recruitment, and other ‘business-friendly’ incentives, the City has encouraged numerous service industries to invest. Situated

82 Ibid.
83 Under the Aquino (1986-1992) and Arroyo (1992-) administrations, the dependence of the Philippine economy on foreign capital and aid has guided its integration into the world capitalist economy, and its honouring of the IMF-WB prescriptions and conditions attached to foreign credit extension. In 2006 alone, almost 60% of GDP growth was contributed by the service industry, while 7-10% of the Philippine population is now estimated to be residing overseas, providing 10-15% of the country’s GDP, or US$8-12 billion. Saturino Borras Jr. (2007), Ibid., p. 146.
predominantly in the urban ‘core’, these industries now employ 71% of Naga’s labour force and are also the driver behind the its staggering 6.5% annual economic growth\(^{84}\).

On the other side of the political-economic coin, local state reductions in expenditure outlays on agricultural extension services and other infrastructures, together with inadequate agrarian reform, have left the rural agricultural sector struggling to cope. Although no official statistics exist, poverty is now known to affect a disproportionate number of rural residents, who are becoming increasingly reliant upon livelihood diversification and migration to meet their subsistence needs. By the late 1990s, statistically recorded migrants made up 40% of the city’s population, and migration was estimated to account for nearly 80% of its population increment\(^{85}\). In addition, although 65.78% of the city’s land area is dedicated to agriculture, nearly 88% of Naga’s farmers are now classed as landless\(^{86}\).

Concerned with escalating levels of urban congestion, and other social dislocations that have accompanied urbanisation and industrialisation, rural poverty and inequality have become a palpable part of the local state’s policy agenda of late. In response, the government has adopted the policy rhetoric of ‘alternative livelihood sources’\(^{87}\), underscoring the need for non-farm employment and the move away from farming as a primary means of support. Gender has constituted a key form of organisation in this process. On the basis that poverty alleviation and the promotion of balanced economic


\(^{85}\) Ibid., p. 216.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., p. 219.

\(^{87}\) Naga City Government (1999), Naga City Integrated Livelihood Masterplan. Naga City.
growth require the enhanced productivity of women in low-income households, local
government strategies have increasingly encouraged expansion of women’s home-based
income-generating options through better access to resources. Meanwhile, men are still
regarded as ‘farmer-breadwinners’ in state discourse, and so remain the recipients of
agricultural support.

In the paragraphs that follow I expand on these arguments. Drawing on a multitude of
policies and practices, I show how local state discourse continues to construct notions of
male responsibility, and women’s rightful position in the home (as ‘alternative’ income-
generators, as well as mothers and wives), even if the material resources haven’t always
been made available to back these ideologies up.

**State Constructions of Gender**

In March 1999, a small group of City Councillors met with 13 NGOs and community-
based organisations at Naga City Hall, to identify what needed to be done to ensure local
women’s “current and emerging needs”\(^{88}\) were being achieved. They proposed a
comprehensive state response to GAD, which became the 2002 Women’s Development
Agenda. The Agenda outlined the following objectives: 1) increased financial support to
government offices/agencies whose programs and services cater to women; 2) the
coordination and efficient resource complementation of various stakeholders on women’s
issues; 3) the institutionalization of the Naga City Council for Women (NCCW) for direct

\(^{88}\) Mila Raquid-Arroyo (2004), *Women Empowerment and Development: The Experience of Naga City*,
women participation in governance; and 4) increased awareness of women’s issues among city council staff, as well as civil society organisations and the general public.

Since its inception in 2002, the Agenda has earned the local government of Naga global recognition as a model of gender-sensitive governance. Most recently, UN – Habitat selected the city as one of the three most Gender Responsive Local Governments in Asia-Pacific\(^\text{89}\). On paper, its gender and development policies certainly amount to an impressive collection. They include liberal and other feminist sensibilities that address issues of gender mainstreaming, capacity building, advocacy, awareness, and empowerment. But closer inspection raises cause for concern. Despite claims of a neutral, pluralized approach to gender, City policies continue to be coloured by normative discourses which, to use Butler’s phraseology, cite gender difference in specific ways. And while these policy prescriptions shape the lives and livelihoods of residents throughout the city, in agrarian communities, where conditions are rapidly changing, they hold perhaps particular weight.

Conspiring to what Robert Connell\(^\text{90}\) terms ‘hegemonic masculinity’ - a form of masculinity occupying an elite position in a pattern of gender relations - development policies in Naga are still firmly founded on the notion of male responsibility. In terms of livelihood activities, the most insidious expression of this perspective lies in the creation of agricultural programs geared almost solely towards the needs of men, and in the masculinist attitudes of City Agriculturalist’s Office (CAgO) staff. When I asked about

\(^{89}\) Ibid.

the male bias in agricultural support, a senior CAgO employee made the following comments:

Men are the heads of the family. They own the land.

The male is the one that traditionally cultivates the land. Women help, but men do the heavy work... because men are stronger than women [laughs]... But there are upsets too. Because farmers want their children to get “white collar” jobs. To get education, earn more money and not be farmers.91

In follow-up discussions with other City staff, further references were made to Connell’s conception, to the deep-rooted assumption that providing for a family is part of what it is ‘to be a man’, and to the cultural amplification of male strength in both the allocation of tasks and the capacity for hard work. During these discussions, these staff members were employing centuries old discourses that connect adult masculinities to provider identities. Under Spanish and American rule, the establishment of the wage labour system involved the delineation of family responsibilities through the designation of upper-class educated males as household heads, primary breadwinners, and property owners with private authority over women.92

Principles of male responsibility also emerged in City political structures and, as noted above, in agricultural programs that rest on nuclear, male-headed households. According to state law, households can register with the village administrative office as having a male or female head. But on agricultural assistance forms there are spaces to list household head, wife, and children, a system predetermining the relative positions of the married couple. Moreover, while in principle women are not excluded from formal party

91 Interview, June 22, 2007.
politics, in practice they play a peripheral role in political affairs. At the village level, their involvement is largely limited to participating in welfare and livelihood programs, including those concerning health, education and nutrition issues (Rural Improvement Clubs), and religious activities; while women leaders in these organizations are also rare. At the level of municipal politics, these gender stereotypes are also prevalent. Of the eight female-headed offices, five are in health (Hospital, and Population and Nutrition), education (Public Library and Education) and human resource management, of which the ‘traditional’ connection to gender is most obvious.  

In interviews with local academics and an NGO leader, the gendered culture of the local government, coupled with its reluctant efforts to prohibit beauty pageants and the commodification of women in the media, were frequently cited as symptomatic of its ‘patchy’ and arguably unsatisfactory approach to gender and development. They too were raised in interviews with public officials, but it seemed a lack of political popularity was also getting in the way. In one of these interviews, a female member of staff admitted, with obvious hesitation, that although sexual discrimination in the office troubled her, she was unwilling to push for reform, largely for fear she be branded a ‘feminist’. Given the relative security of public sector employment, and the social costs

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On a more positive note, the commitment of Naga City to ‘gender mainstreaming’ and equal representation among City staff had reduced the prevalence of gendered hierarchies at the municipal level. Women now occupy 41% of first-tier positions in the local government, a relatively high proportion according to international standards. Ibid. 

94 Interview, July 13, 2007. 

95 Interview, July 15, 2007.
involved in breaching the ‘placid female’ boundary, this woman’s tone of voice suggested just what may be at stake in personally challenging the status quo.\footnote{As a feminist scholar, the pervasiveness of negative feminist stereotypes made for some rather awkward exchanges.}

‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is not the only notion of male identity being (re)produced within Naga’s bureaucracies however. Indeed, as the comments cited above suggest, class is another field of power through which local masculinities are being officially produced and understood. “Men are stronger than women…. But there are upsets too…. Because farmers want their children to get ‘white collar’ jobs”. The line drawn here is fine: the physical strength of (poorer) male farmers is to be valued, but their economic position certainly not aspired to.

Cecile Jackson\footnote{Cecile Jackson (1999), Ibid.} has written extensively about class-specific forms of masculinity. Deriving the term ‘subaltern masculinities’, she has destabilized the assumed centrality of ‘hegemonic masculinities’, allowing a critique of the unambiguous gender advantage held by economically marginalised men. In rural farming communities, for example, Jackson has elaborated how poorer men may experience well-being threats as a consequence of high work intensity and the inability to fulfil their cultural role as family providers. Though Jackson’s work focuses upon the spaces separating male ideals and their lived realities in Indian agricultural communities, her salient words bring much to bear on Naga City’s own approach to masculinities.
For reasons touched upon above, local state policies in Naga have invariably failed to provide the material resources required for poorer men residing in rural areas to achieve the idealised masculine provider identity. Over the last two decades, its development model has been heavily biased against their needs, ignorant of the persistence of landlordism, the growing mass of landless agricultural workers, and other natural and anthropogenic trends that continue to dampen agricultural productivity.

By assuming that all men are beneficiaries of modernization, local state policies have ensured that money, and hence ‘alternative’ livelihood opportunities, remain elusive for many men too. Most of the programs offered by the CAgO involve the “lending of material inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and infant livestock. No cash involved”98. Those requiring credit are referred on to the city’s Metro PESO employment and recruitment office and it’s ‘gender-sensitive’ agenda. I asked the same CAgO employee what this entailed:

Well, I have spoken to colleagues at Metro PESO. Women can apply for assistance, technology, marketing assistance, financial assistance. The city government really tries to help women… They take care of the money.

She candidly continued her gender analysis:

They tell me that women receive more loans because they do not have vices. For men, there are lots of vices, they can gamble, they can drink… gambling with whatever loans they have99.

This official’s pertinent comments point to the conflation of ‘gender’ and ‘women’ in Naga’s development discourse, and to the institutionalisation of culturally-elaborated and historical perceptions that women are more practical and financially astute than men.

While government documents state that at least 50% of the beneficiaries of ‘socio-economic’ programs are women\(^{100}\), numerous conversations with City staff about women’s ‘exemplary’ budgeting skills led to inevitable suspicions about its underestimation. These official discourses are based on the assumption that benefits are more likely to accrue to a wider range of family members than if men were ‘targeted’, but as Nancy Fraser\(^{101}\) writes, they

> construe persons simultaneously as rational maximisers and as causally conditioned, predictable, and manipulable objects, screening out those dimensions of human agency that involve the construction and deconstruction of social meanings.

By translating ‘client’s’ life experiences into neat programs of service delivery, Naga’s gender and development policies veer dangerously close toward replicating the depoliticizing essentialisms characteristic of earlier WID and WAD approaches. By uncritically glorifying women’s budgeting skills and ensconcing livelihood projects as women’s ‘turf’, they also risk undermining men’s activities and hence ‘provider’ responsibilities, while placing added responsibility for survival and educational/occupational mobility on women.

A closer reading of state policies and projects reveals other ways in which the City’s livelihood discourse replicates the problematic assumptions of WID and WAD approaches:

> The Agenda will tackle such problems as poverty, prostitution, and violence against women, and will identify concomitant activities to support income-generating activities\(^{102}\).

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\(^{100}\) Mila Raquid-Arroyo (2003), Ibid., p. 6.


\(^{102}\) Mila Raquid-Arroyo (2003), Ibid., p. 4.
The Agenda will focus on women who’s income falls below the poverty line, with the disadvantaged (physically handicapped women and commercial sex workers) and abused women as primary targets.\(^3\)

Despite claims of a holistic and integrated approach, the above excerpts once again reveal the frequent conflation of ‘women’ and ‘gender’ in local state discourse in Naga, while indicating how a selective formulation of gender ‘issues’ has often been at stake. While government documents are typically couched in quintessential ‘empowerment’ and ‘equity’ terminology, these excerpts also hint at the casting of women as poor, victimised, uneducated mothers by the City, a representation most rigorously promoted by its domestic violence strategies of late.

Concerned with escalating levels of crime generally, the government has invested increasing sums into curbing domestic violence, into:

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safe housing, healing, counselling, training, and financial assistance until the victim [is] ready to reintegrate back to the family and community where she came from.\(^4\)
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The problematic deployment of the feminine pronoun in this mission statement is a minor issue next to the inscription of anxiety and shame on the bodies of those confident enough to ‘speak out’. Nonetheless, naming practices matter, and the designation of women as archetypal victims in the City’s domestic violence strategies introduces an important layer of problematic power relations,

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freezing women into “objects-who-defend-themselves”, men into “subject-who-perpetuate-violence”, and society into the powerless (read: women) and powerful (read: men).\(^5\)
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\(^3\) Ibid., p. 4.
\(^4\) Mila Raquid-Arroyo (2003), Ibid., p. 3.
If a victim is willing to face the stigma attached to assault and rape, to ‘go’ public about relations of power that are still sequestered in the realm of the private, they are typically referred to the Naga City Home Care Center, a “half-way house/shelter for women and children victims of violence”\textsuperscript{106}. The reference to “women and children victims of violence” in this promotional material blends the categories of women and children together, reproducing the assumption that childcare is women’s work. It also plays on and proceeds from the paternalist notion that women and children are relatively helpless, or, as a former City Councillor confided to me, “that there is no equality”\textsuperscript{107}.

While there may be elements of truth in this representation, in that the potential of male violence against women does circumscribe and elucidate their position to a certain extent, it is historically reductive and ineffectual in addressing the gender inequality embodied in domestic violence. Premised on an assumed implicit linkage between masculinity, money and power, this representation naturalizes male violence, disassociating men from the solution, and from their lived realities as well. Put differently, it erases from view the class-differentiated costs of masculinity hinted at above, while placing responsibility for their remediation on women’s backs.

In Naga, women’s subsidiary status is also reinforced through a multiplicity of state practices that draw on the symbolic significance of the public-private ‘divide’ to invoke women’s rightful position in the home, either as mothers, wives, or ‘alternative’ income generators. According to the Women’s Development Agenda, a woman has five major

\textsuperscript{106} Mila Raquid-Arroyo (2003), Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{107} Interview, August 7, 2007.
duties: to be a loyal supporter to her husband; to be caretaker of the household; to produce future generations; to raise her children properly; and to foster peace and harmony in the home and community. And according to the opinions of one recently departed City Councillor:

A harmonious household is a great contribution to development efforts… Women ensure that when their husbands come home from work they find peace and happiness at home. The children are also healthier and happier.

Stated during a private interview, this official’s comments symbolically separate domestic and public spheres, suggesting that women have primary responsibility at home. They insinuate that women are under the shelter and authority of their ‘provider’ husbands, a relationship reified by the top-down ‘hand-out’ nature in which welfare services are distributed by the local state. And they again infer that women are accountable for peace and harmony in the home.

City government policies designed to encourage women’s ‘informal’ income generation are also implicated in the problematic representation of women’s rightful position in the home. The Women Empowerment through Enterprise Development (WEED) project provides a pertinent case in point. Operated under the auspices of the City’s Metro PESO office, WEED is a euphemistic title referring to gender analysis integrated with economic development and poverty eradication. It aims to economically empower ‘low-income’ women through better access to micro-credit and skills training, on the basis that they were ignored in previous development campaigns, suffer more severely from poverty, and are crucial to alleviating poverty and promoting balanced growth in rural regions.

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108 Mila Raquid-Arroyo (2003), Ibid.
109 Interview, August 8, 2007.
Based on these objectives, WEED is a *special* initiative. It focuses on low-income women based largely in rural areas, rather than all residents affected by poverty and inadequate employment opportunities, and it aims to assist those affected via micro-credit provision instead of integration into the ‘formal’ labour market. Under WEED, livelihood assistance is channelled into individual projects which aim to enhance women’s homestead-based, income-generating efforts. Typical ‘entrepreneurial’ activities encouraged through WEED include dressmaking, vending, hairdressing, livestock raising, and cooking; activities which, according to one Metro PESO senior manager

[come] easy to women because they are an extension of the home… They are a way to fight boredom, to gain physical and mental exercise… Women can support their husbands and provide for the family.\footnote{Interview, August 2, 2007.}

Designed to assist women in ‘juggling’ multiple responsibilities, City projects such as WEED assume, but do not challenge, existing gender divisions of labour. Instead, women’s presence and affectivity in the development process is associated with domesticity, and hence invisibility. Imbued with a white, bourgeois notion of the nuclear family, local state programs also advocate women’s role in livelihood diversification, while simultaneously devaluing and ‘ahistoricizing’ their livelihood efforts. Even during Spanish colonial times, ‘peasant’ and working-class women in Bicol worked outside of the home, and contributed significantly to the household budget through vending, farming, handicraft production and weaving\footnote{Elizabeth Eviota (1992), Ibid.}. But in official invocations these histories are negated, and women’s involvement in income generation likened to hobbies, time-
fillers, or ‘alternative’ livelihood activities, rendering women, and their activities, economically and politically obsolete.

The ‘invisibility’ with which women’s livelihoods are constructed by the local state is a feature of local census definitions as well. Gender-disaggregated labour statistics underestimate the income-generating work done by women, and do not assign value to work done in the household. Meanwhile, the guidelines attached to micro-credit act as a disciplinary mechanism, constraining women’s livelihood options in various ways. The magnitude of micro credit\textsuperscript{112} and lack of state investment in credit cooperatives\textsuperscript{113} only enable the domestic production of marketable goods that can be sold in the city and its vicinity; the activities promoted have low productivity and returns, seldom generating enough income to finance technology that might lead to more profitable ventures, particularly when competing with the influx of cheap imports\textsuperscript{114}; and although trainings are offered in bookkeeping, capital build-up, savings mobilization, and a plethora of other issues pertaining to ‘professional development’, the skills and information required for venture into less ‘stereotypical’ livelihood pursuits remain strikingly absent\textsuperscript{115}. A key feature of many of my conversations with female ‘micro-entrepreneurs’ was frustration at not being able to ‘follow through’ with their livelihood ideas.

\textsuperscript{112} The average loan amounts to only P7,500 (CDN $150) per year. Interview, August 2, 2007.

\textsuperscript{113} Policy documents cite a low level of public interest as the reason behind little state support for cooperatives, but interviews with City staff suggested insufficient investment in human and institutional development is also critical. Naga City (1999), Ibid., p. 34.

\textsuperscript{114} Focus group with WEED members, August 8, 2007.

\textsuperscript{115} A survey undertaken by the Ateneo Social Science Research Center in 1999 revealed that clients of state livelihood programs class human/institutional development and fresh business ideas as their most important needs. ASSRC (1999), Preparatory Research Work for the Integrated Livelihood Masterplan of Naga City. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University.
Should women desire ‘occupational mobility’, personally-financed college education is, aside from marriage, the most realistic ‘way out’. However, it is an unattainable option for most micro-credit beneficiaries. The recent shift to a more service-based economy may have facilitated the large-scale entry of women into the formal labour force\textsuperscript{116}, but the extensive academic qualifications and work experience now demanded by recruiters means ‘formal’ employment is beyond the reach of most ‘low-income’ women, and indeed men\textsuperscript{117}. Instead, they must invest their employment hopes in their offspring.

Despite its commitment to a neutral, pluralized approach to gender, then, these excerpts all demonstrate how the local government in Naga is still inscribing citizen’s interests according to a narrow range of subjectivities. By casting women as both reproducers and entrepreneurs \textit{(read: providers)}, the City is slowly carving out a new model of ‘responsible’ motherhood; one in which women are advised to no longer be satisfied with their reproductive work, but to take on increasing income-generating responsibility to offset economic insecurity. In agrarian communities, where cutbacks in state agricultural assistance have coincided with inadequate agrarian reform, a shrinking of the welfare state, and various other anthropogenic and natural problems that threaten agricultural productivity and efficiency, this new model of motherhood carries very real risks of burden. Meanwhile, for men who are still constructed by the local state as ‘farmer-breadwinners’, these constraints introduce an entirely different set of dilemmas.

\textsuperscript{116} Women now constitute the dominant wage earners in all age groups in the city’s economic profile.  
\textsuperscript{117} A glance at Metro PESO’s job postings website suggests that although there is an abundance of service sector vacancies, the majority require ‘qualified’ candidates to have at least secondary-level education and be below the age of 30. Other obstacles hindering access to ‘formal’ employment include lack of transportation, domestic responsibilities, and inadequate job training.
Making Official the Official

In this chapter I have sought to illustrate how competing forces of emancipation and exploitation have converged, and hetero-normative discourses of gender emerged, in Naga’s bureaucratic spaces. Rather than condemn state policies aimed at gender equity as entirely imperfect approaches to solving the problems of unequal power relations, I have analysed them as responses predicated upon certain assumptions. Confronted with extreme resource constraints and yet responsible for an array of new welfare functions, the government’s attempt at a pluralistic and contextual approach to social equity has lately given way to a more efficient, instrumentalist and inherently ‘fundable’ one that cites gender difference in particular ways.

Jennifer Hyndman\footnote{Jennifer Hyndman (1996), Geographies of Displacement. PhD Thesis. University of British Columbia. Hyndman defines ‘neo-humanism’ as a “political theory and sensibility whereby human well-being and development are qualified by the visibility and political popularity of people’s need”. p. 72. See also Sangeeta Kamat (2001), Development Hegemony: NGOs and the State in India. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Kamat introduces the framework of “development hegemony” to examine the differing roles played by actors in elitist development hierarchies (e.g. national-level supervisors, state-level program directors, district-level project coordinators).} has warned of the ‘trade-offs’ incurred when governments and development organizations are answerable to international financial institutions and donor agencies’ demands. Writing in the context of UN refugee assistance, Hyndman deploys the term ‘neo-humanism’ to argue that donor-driven development and ‘empowerment’ can lead to the provision of assistance on an uneven, ad hoc basis that is politically popular but essentialized and divorced from actual needs.

In Naga, Hyndman’s notion of ‘neo-humanism’ may partly explain why efficiency and popularity have taken centre stage over heterogeneity and diversity within gender and
development discourse. By targeting women, the local state is able to attract ‘gender-sensitive’ development assistance while addressing welfare and livelihoods issues at little or no cost; and by continually reinforcing masculine provider ideals, it is able to assuage the shaky gender relations and identities induced by economic insecurity, agricultural decline and women’s increasing importance as ‘entrepreneurs’.

Indeed, by drawing on key strands of the City’s ‘work-welfare’ policy agenda, this account has illustrated how Naga’s state institutions are playing a pivotal role in prescribing and constraining diversification choices along gender, as well as class lines. Female, housewife, mother, income-generator and wage labourer. These constructions of femininity represent, on the surface, a ‘mish-mash’ of qualities that have been coded historically as both the thesis, and the antithesis to dependence. Multiple and apparently contradictory, these representations work to individualize women, rendering people, rather than institutions, responsible for the various insecurities faced. Moreover, by glorifying women’s work in the home, and implicitly devaluing their livelihood activities by drawing on the symbolism of public-private ‘binaries’, gendered normative undercurrents still emerge as clear and strong.

Running parallel to a construction of women’s rightful position in the home are principles of male responsibility and consolidated patriarchy, even though the privileging of ‘women’s issues’ and lack of state investment in local production systems has led to a lack of material resources backing them up. In agrarian communities, where cutbacks in state agricultural provision have been particularly acute, the isolation of gender difference

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119 Desmond King (1995), Ibid.
from class politics risks alienating some men from the development process, or perhaps worse still, pitting them against women.

What have been the consequences of these policy prescriptions and assumptions for those subjects? How do these gender-differentiated structures of opportunities and risks influence the livelihood choices of women and men, and the kinds of agency they can exercise? This is, of course, a complex subject. Policy does not always translate into practice, and unintended consequences abound. But the official invocation of what it means to be male and female does shape how people understand and assign meaning in their everyday lives.

The next chapter serves to answer these questions, adding another dimension to the politics of location by tentatively examining the delicate and inconsistent intra-household orchestrations of gendered subjectivities in Pacol. In contrast to their official counterparts, these representations are not codified in quasi-jurisdictional formalism, but instead grounded in the everyday practical situation in which people find themselves. More explicitly oriented to the practical realities of ‘getting things done’ (managing money and other household resources, taking care of the children, maintaining exchange relationships with neighbouring households), they constitute both subversions and challenges to official representations of gender, supporting Foucault’s\textsuperscript{120} observation that the social regulation of bodies is inseparable from their incitement to subvert of resist social forces.

\textsuperscript{120} Michel Foucault (1975), Ibid.
PART TWO

Open to Negotiation:
Trading Livelihood Activities and Gender Identities in Pacol

Theorizing livelihoods in terms of the institutional construction of gendered opportunities and constraints is only part of the picture. As Cecile Jackson\(^{121}\) writes, “[w]ords and discourses have effects on deeds and bodies, but they seldom directly correspond”. Having outlined in the previous chapter the articulation of hetero-normative discourses in Naga’s bureaucracies, I therefore employ a finer scale of analysis here to examine how they are embodied in persons and everyday relations. How does the construction of gendered identities become significant in shaping access to knowledge, resources, socio-political processes, and hence livelihood opportunities? And through what quotidian struggles and contestations are gendered subjectivities being (re)produced and normative discourses (re)defined?

To answer these questions I take a dialectical approach by juxtaposing opposed or contradictory social and cultural phenomena. My descriptions continually oscillate between the changing material relationships and the interpretation of cultural attitudes and practices both emerging and receding in the wake of Pacol’s ‘development’. In a setting shot through with rapid agrarian change, I consider how land is no longer the basis for life in Pacol and seek to register the changes on intra-household practices and performances.

\(^{121}\) Cecile Jackson (1999), Ibid., p. 93.
While changing political-economic, social and environmental conditions may be nudging into view new subjectivities, I illustrate how these performances are still imbued with power, and acts to resist culturally-prescribed performances are beset with contradictory messages. Women’s involvement in income generation may be growing, for instance, but it is still accompanied by heavy reproductive responsibilities and so increasing the work burdens they face. Meanwhile, it is only by accepting the notion of ‘women’s work’ that women are able to cope with these rising demands.

In the discussion that follows I elaborate on these examples, tentatively teasing out the interpenetration of official and everyday subjectivities, and the multifaceted reactions of residents to agrarian change. Given the changes that have transpired of late, I argue that the idea(1)s of gender aspired to are being recast in relation to the new conditions, but that people are having to actively maintain the appearance of normative gender relations to allay the discomfort involved. The problematic notion of male responsibility emerges as particularly important in this respect.

**P is for Pacol**

The village of Pacol is located approximately 6km from Naga City centre, at the foot of Mount Isarog (Figure 1). With a population of 8849 and area of 11.75km², Pacol is the largest administrative village in Naga and has been an important locus of agriculture since the 17th century. Traditionally the focus of extensive coconut, sugarcane, fruit and vegetable production, the village name itself derives from a variety of banana that once
grew in abundance there\textsuperscript{122}. Over the last two decades, the village landscape has taken on a different dimension however. Once highly productive coconut and sugarcane farms have been converted into gas stations, flower plantations, and newly girded fields of subdivisions; and where farming once dominated production activities, wage labor and non-agricultural livelihoods are gaining increasing ground. Indeed, the biggest village crop it would seem is now school-leavers, identified as a labor reserve for industrialization.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Maps of Philippines, Naga and Pacol\textsuperscript{123}.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{122} Jaime Malanyaon (1997), \textit{An puso kan kabikolan}, Naga City.
\textsuperscript{123} Naga City Government (2000b), \textit{Naga City Land Use Plan}, Naga City.
Whether the general shift away from agriculture is the outcome of necessity or choice is clearly difficult to ascertain. Local labour force surveys and censuses provide little insight into these issues\textsuperscript{124}, and efforts to interpret the data on employment trends rest upon some fairly strong assumptions. Likewise, there are no comprehensive data on historical trends in local landholdings. The only longitudinal evidence of which I am aware consists of panel data on land conversion applications, obtained from the municipal office of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). This data shows an increase in approved applications since 1990, when the City first converted 15 hectares of sugarcane plantation into an Urban Poor Resettlement site. Since then, over 125 hectares have been privately converted into middle-class housing estates, sports complexes, cockpit arenas, and other non-agricultural forms of accumulation.

While insightful, this conversion data in fact masks significant differentiation of what, on the surface, appear as large landowners. Although six families have controlled the bulk of land in Pacol since Spanish colonial times\textsuperscript{125}, landlessness has reached new levels of late as smaller farmers have sold off their property for liquid cash. Two of the families that participated in this study were in the process of selling their plots to meet schooling costs, and interviews with other locals identified it as a popular way to cover the administration fees required for overseas work placements. This trend in landlessness is partly a reflection of villagers profiting from the sharp rise in property prices. According to tax records, the price of land in Pacol has more than quadrupled in the last decade,

\textsuperscript{124} Village-level census data was only available for 2004 onwards.
\textsuperscript{125} Interview, June 24, 2007. Agrarian reform has been largely ineffective in Pacol as sugarcane, the village’s dominant crop, is not covered under national law.
from 200 pesos/m² in 1997, to 950 pesos/m² in 2007. What it also reflects, however, is the fact that local agricultural production is no longer as profitable or efficient as it once was.

As noted previously, several anthropogenic and natural factors have recently converged to hamper agricultural productivity in Naga. Poor irrigation has taken a particular toll on productivity levels in Pacol. Subdivision development has often entailed the re-routing and/or disconnection of irrigation supplies, causing water logging in some areas and desiccation in others. Meanwhile, the damage to irrigation facilities caused by Typhoon Reming in October 2006 was identified as a common source of anxiety during my stay. So too were inadequate tenure arrangements, pest infestation, and costly agricultural inputs. Most local farmers seemed to be caught up in some form of unfavorable tenancy agreement, either responsible for bearing all labor costs and/or obtaining inputs as high interest loans from the landowner. Over time, they also admitted to owing large arrears of rent to landowners, to defaulting on debts for machines, fertilizers and other inputs, and to feeling vulnerable to even slight changes in job prospects and the price of basic goods (Photo 1).

126 Approximately CDN $5/m² to $20/m². Naga City Government (2007), Office of the City Assessor, Real Properties Located at Pacol, Naga City.
Fractious relations between poorer farmers and local elites are a further source of constraint in the village where I resided for two months. As mentioned previously, Pacol is the largest administrative village in Naga, but size alone cannot account for its subdivisions, recreational sites, and other emblems of ‘development’. In spite of widespread claims to the contrary, local political-economic relations are still founded on patronage in that local elites continue to manipulate village funds and receive ‘cuts’ in the projects they attract. These patronage relations ensure that lucrative private investments are typically favored over community development, and that poorer men’s access to non-
agricultural jobs and funds can only be obtained through private agencies in exchange for political support and other ‘personal’ favors.

As a ‘non-native’ without local language skills, it was clearly difficult for me to grasp the particular parameters of these power relations. A rather uneasy interview with a City Councilor yielded some insight, when it was revealed that a previous village leader had co-opted the Urban Poor resettlement scheme. The bureaucrat in question had apparently bypassed the official recruitment process to secure state-subsidized property for family and friends. Other insights were gleaned from daily discussions and observations. Behind many of the anxieties of local farmers lay feelings of frustration, at being dependent on, dominated, and yet denied access by local brokers, and their acts of often ‘state-led’ development.

Unable to meet the high educational standards required for entry into more ‘formal’, urban-based employment, many men in Pacol have turned to limited, sporadic, non-agricultural activities to replace or supplement their earnings from farming. According to local census data, farming now constitutes only 17.1% of male employment in the village, as opposed to unskilled laboring, and jeepney and tricycle driving, which account for nearly 45% when combined (Table 1).

At the same time, the range of activities being accomplished by women is more varied in comparison to men’s, often entailing longer work periods as well. Though village records still categorize 65% of women in Pacol as ‘housewives’ (Table 1), interviews and
daily observations quickly revealed the range of reproductive, income-generating, and even wage-earning activities that this denotation entails. According to village elders, the significance and complexity of women’s activities has been increasing over the course of several decades, and indeed most women in the village now conduct some form of income generation, many combining an artisan activity (i.e. hairdressing or tailoring) with animal husbandry and trade in daily-use goods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled laborer</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private employee</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeepney/tricycle driver</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employee</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store owner</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower planter/vendor</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled laborer</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas contract worker</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy and sell trader</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Gender-disaggregated management of livelihood activities (%)\(^{127}\).

How can we understand these differentiated livelihood patterns? These patterns cannot be explained in terms of material conditions alone. Certainly, access to capital, resources, and modern labor markets plays a crucial role in the realization of new livelihood opportunities. But questions of personality, subjectivity, and agency, I will illustrate, also come into play.

\(^{127}\) Naga City (2007c), Village Census Data for Barangay Pacol, Naga City, Philippines.
In the following paragraphs, I employ selected responses from twenty-five interviews and three focus groups to explore these gender-differentiated patterns. The excerpts presented are based on the verbatim translations of the interpreter and are, I hope, written in a way that makes it clear that I am there participating, asking questions, and instigating their analyses of situations. Would the participants have analyzed their lives in this way if I had not been there to ask the questions? Probably not. Still, I have at least tried to reduce the risk of misappropriation by clarifying the context in which they voiced their ideas and concerns.

Through the translator, I asked about the adequacy of state development programs, the means by which families cover deficits, their experiences of livelihood projects, and connection to codes of masculinity and femininity. The selection of responses serves not to simply describe the ways in which patterns of livelihood diversification are constituted through gender relations defined by social organization, access to resources, and political status, but to highlight their importance in the very construction of different subjectivities. I argue that the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of ‘provider’ is especially significant in this respect.

**Problematizing the ‘Male Provider’**

Livelihood possibilities have been greatly transformed in Pacol in recent years, but local concepts of masculinity and femininity are crucial in shaping the kinds of work that men and women do. Fed undoubtedly by the state discourses outlined in Part One, dominant constructions of masculinity tie into men’s responsibilities as male ‘providers’, as reflected in the political patronage relations that operate primarily between men.
As mentioned in the previous chapter, while in principle women are not excluded from formal party politics, in practice they tend to play a peripheral role in village political affairs, either as auxiliaries of larger male organizations, or on behalf of their absent husbands (Appendix One).

In public discourse, men also reproduce these official versions of gender. When questioned about the notion of male responsibility, men were fond of invoking their capacity to provide for the subsistence needs of their families, typically enhancing their answers by contrasting their apparent ‘capability’ with the ‘vulnerability’ of their wives. As Temes, a mechanic and the proud father of four boys put it during an interview in his shop, “men are more courageous than women. The women are weak… they take care of all the household chores, cook, take care of the children. A supportive wife plays a role in the family”\(^{128}\).

In everyday practice and conjugal relations – or at least those practices that were accessible to me as an outsider engaged in some rather intrusive enquiry into the intimate details of everyday life (questions which, it may be noted, were often turned back on me) – principles of male responsibility were also evident. On my visits to households, it was common for a man to intrude on a conversation in which I was engaged with his wife, and send her to make tea while he ‘took over’.

\(^{128}\) Interview, July 20, 2007.
Conversations with women elicited a tendency to exaggerate men’s responsibilities and capabilities as well. When asked to define the household head, all of the women responded with the name of their husband. Many would insist that their husbands were emotionally ‘stronger’ than them too, and that their livelihood activities were merely supplementary to their husbands, and to their own ‘housewifely’ roles. When I asked Clarita why she wouldn’t take an ‘office job’ in the city, she replied,

First, I can’t attend to my children and help my husband if I am working in that way. So, I just look for other ways I can earn and at the same time take care of my family.129

Clarita’s comments were recorded a month into the fieldwork, at the first female focus group. They followed a speech she had given about her livelihood efforts, the specifics of which were detailed as the departure point to this thesis. By this point in the research process we were aware of Clarita’s commitment, passion, and success with income-generation, and had effectively invited her to talk with this in mind. That she ended her speech in this way, by listing the reasons why she wouldn’t take a job in the city, and framing it in terms of her dedication to her husband and housework, seems important then.

At first glance, this discourse and behavior could be interpreted as evidence of patriarchal relations, but as I will demonstrate, the tendency to evoke principles of male responsibility may have more to do with anxieties and aspirations, or perhaps even providing the expected answer, than with ‘patriarchy’ per se. Indeed, while both men and women’s performances were clearly cited to give the impression of male

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129 Female focus group, August 4, 2007.
responsibility, I certainly took the persistence with which they were asserted as suggestive of more tenuous subjectivities being at stake. And a perusal of Metro PESO data offered some insight in this respect. Since 1994, only 11% of micro-credit beneficiaries in Pacol have been male\textsuperscript{130}; presumably some expression of the ‘gender-sensitive’ state policies outlined in Part One. Moreover, the following statements from Eduardo and Arturo, both rice farmers in Pacol, illustrate men’s access to government assistance may be hindered in other ways as well:

Eduardo: “If you have a friend in the government, you will be fine, if not, they won’t give you any… I think they should provide us with fertilizers, rice seed and other farm inputs, but you know, they just care about you in times of election”\textsuperscript{131}.

Arturo: “I asked the barangay captain\textsuperscript{132} if I could get some assistance and work as a local councilor, but he said no. There are just two of us in my household. He will get a councilor from a bigger family so that he will get more votes. From that time on, I have never depended on the government”\textsuperscript{133}.

Taken from separate individual interviews, these comments point to the personal obligations and intervening political elements entangled in government assistance, and essentially to the acquisition problems that poorer men in Pacol now face. Discussions with their wives brought to light more of the difficulties men may face in putting the principles of male responsibility into practice. The exchange below is taken from the same discussion group referred to above:

Virgie: “You know, men are known to be strong, and if they fail, people will think that they are weak. Unlike the women, who are perceived to be weak, they can face any failure without being ashamed… If they fail it’s ok, because they are women, but men are afraid because of their ego. They will be humiliated if they fail”.

Kat: “Can you think of any specific examples of this? When men are afraid?”

\textsuperscript{130} Naga City Government (2007b), Metro PESO: Pacol Livelihood Beneficiaries spreadsheet. Naga City, Philippines.
\textsuperscript{131} Interview, August 20, 2007.
\textsuperscript{132} Local term for village leader.
\textsuperscript{133} Interview, August 8, 2007.
Paulina: “Yes, just like if we need to borrow money from other people. The men tell the wives to borrow money from other people because they are shy to approach them, but the women can approach anybody to help”.

Virgie: “Yes, because the men are ashamed of borrowing money from other people”\textsuperscript{134}.

Virgie, a 56-year old widow, whose husband died of cancer in 1992, was particularly vocal about her disillusionment with marriage and male responsibility. In a telling, and also rather tense encounter, she challenged Clarita about her ‘ability’ to diversify, almost immediately after giving her speech:

She’s lucky because she has a husband willing to follow her, but there are men who don’t want to be insulted in front of friends… her husband doesn’t come home drunk, he is very supportive\textsuperscript{135}.

Virgie’s reference to the connection between masculinities and alcohol consumption is important and something I will return to later. For the time being, I want to focus on her insinuation of men’s fear of failure, a point raised time and time again. Indeed, many women admitted to borrowing informally on behalf of their husbands, and to their spouses only venturing into new (\textit{read}: tried-and-tested) income arenas once they were assured of the financial rewards. A more casual conversation with a local moneylender suggested that the need to appear financially afloat sometimes forces men into concealing their borrowings from their wives. The money lender also reiterated the findings obtained from interviews with local officials and the focus group above, that the gravity of poor men’s inaccessibility to financial support is exacerbated by the cultural caricature of their irresponsibility with money. Her comments when I enquired as to why she only leant money to women:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{134} Female focus group, July 28, 2007.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
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Because women know how to deal with people. Women are easier to deal with. If a man has money, he will just use it to buy liquor.\footnote{Interview, July 5, 2007.}

Through encounters such as these, ‘hegemonic masculinity’, the term derived by Robert Connell\footnote{Robert Connell (1995), Ibid.} to describe the type of masculinity marked by a claim to authority, was exposed as in some ways constraining to poorer men in Pacol. But it wasn’t the only form of masculinity shaping their livelihood experiences. Another key notion of masculinity culturally exalted locally is expressed through ideals of heavy, arduous work. When pressed for their perceptions of the ‘differences’ between men and women, men’s responses would often come down to questions of physical strength, wherein manual labor was typically associated with the social superiority of masculinity, and reproduction the inferiority of femininity. On a further occasion in the mechanic shop, Temes noted, “in small and light jobs, the women will excel. But with the heavy works… they will never be compared to men”. Physical size and strength were frequently mentioned qualities expressed by women in their husbands as well.

These narratives undoubtedly stem from historic discourses that posited those ‘native’ men unwilling or unable to undertake colonial forms of labour and agriculture as lazy and ‘backwards’. Yet, as Machlachlan notes, “[d]oing heavy manual labor is not doing what comes naturally for anyone; it is doing what comes hard”\footnote{Morgan Maclachlan (1983), Why Did They Not Starve: Biocultural Adaptation in a South India Village, Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Human Issues. p. 101. My emphasis.}, and indeed men’s tendency to couch the descriptions of their daily activities in terms of sweating, perspiring and other bodily functions designed to ‘prove’ to me their ‘manliness’, did, in many cases,
subside to admissions of exhaustion and anxiety. Several described days in which they had ploughed the fields on water and buko\textsuperscript{140} juice alone. Others’ postures hinted at the physical demands inherent in their work. Farm machinery is still relatively uncommon in Pacol, and workers’ postures often reflected the hauling, pushing, lifting, carrying, bending, and squatting consequently incurred.

The masculine logic that labor must be tough not only carries risks of bodily self-exploitation either. The sense of superiority derived from this code of masculinity may also restrict livelihood opportunities on the grounds that they are not ‘manly’ enough. A common response from husbands as to why they weren’t working in sari-sari stores or beauty parlors was that it was too ‘easy’. When I probed deeper, the threat of being cast as ‘a Gay’ seemed to be more significantly at play, or as Eduardo put it during the male focus group, “ay, in our culture that is not acceptable... that is a woman’s job. No men will surely do that unless they are gay. Beauty parlors are for gays and women”\textsuperscript{141}. And while the potential for creative slippages in this particular construction of heterosexual masculinity may have been apparent in the case of male flower growers, an activity associated with femininity since its inception in the 1970s, the relative stability of this version of gender was notable in the depreciatory remarks their involvement in the activity still attracts.

\textsuperscript{140} Unripe coconut.
\textsuperscript{141} Male focus group, August 15, 2007.
Whether through inadequate access to loans or concerns about breaching what Butler\textsuperscript{142} terms ‘compulsory heterosexuality’, these local constructions of masculinity seem to be coming at a price to men when worked through in their everyday lives. Over time, the personal frustrations of failure to provide for dependent family members crept into many of the men’s voices, as they intermittently expressed concerns about their obligations, and the expectations of this element of manliness.

For women, on the other hand, local femininities came across as more enabling, at least initially and where livelihoods were concerned. Given that women’s mobility was until recently limited to the confines of the village, and their engagement in agriculture not taboo but certainly chastised, livelihood activities have long been important to women in Pacol, and hence traditionally associated with femininity. That many women have been able to benefit from the various income-generating ‘offshoots’ generated by Pacol’s recent growth is not really surprising then. Whereas land conversion and ‘development’ has displaced agricultural (\textit{read}: male) labor, save for short-term construction work, the various residential, educational, and tourist alterations have necessitated an expansion in boarding houses, restaurants, and other such services. As ‘mothers of development’, women are perceived as ‘naturally’ placed to fill these roles, hence comments such as Josefine’s, that “there are so many people now, my sari-sari store business blew up”\textsuperscript{143}.

Women’s involvement in livelihoods is not restricted to the more ‘conventional’ activities either. As the sari-sari store market has become saturated, women have started

\textsuperscript{142} Judith Butler (1990), Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Interview, July 10, 2007.
to look elsewhere for sources of income generation, even venturing into brush making, landscape gardening, and interior designing. Clarita demonstrated a particular ingenuity when it came to new livelihood ideas. During interviews crouched on her porch step, her eyes would dart between the local fields and yard, as if she were searching for new projects there and then. Are there reasons for this apparent occupational flexibility? Perhaps, as the focus group extract quoted above suggests, women’s cultural positioning as ‘supporters’ equips them with a greater degree of mobility than men’s ‘provider’ identities allow. “[W]omen can face failure without being ashamed”, or as Regina, a flower grower and vendor, put it, “[i]f I fail, what’s the big deal? At least I’ve tried”\(^{144}\).

Given the ‘women-centric’ imperatives of government micro-credit projects, and their peripheral relationship to formal power structures, women can be more confident when it comes to financing their livelihood ideas too. All ten of the female participants were beneficiaries of Metro PESO, and most supplemented their loans by borrowing informally from neighbors and relatives, or joining CARD or G7, two private lending groups active within the area. These share groups seemed to provide women not only with financial and emotional support, but political ‘leverage’ as well. Nancy, a young, outgoing lady who owned and managed a large junk shop, noted at the first focus group,

If the women mingle with other people, they will surely learn new things. Just like in our credit organizations, you get capital to improve your daily life… so it is really good that we are now doing this because we learned so many things… [it is as if] women are not imprisoned anymore\(^{145}\).

\(^{144}\) Interview, August 2, 2007.  
\(^{145}\) Interview, August 2, 2007.
Nancy’s comments are typical of many of the women interviewed. While women’s identities obviously haven’t ever been tied solely to the home, her remarks suggest a shift in how women have begun to understand themselves and their work of late. They also conspire more generally to the personal advantages regularly associated by women with income generation. Indeed, many would underscore the pride and self-esteem generated, and refer to their greater role in familial budget control. Aida, the oldest participant at 72, who was also one of the pioneer flower growers in Pacol, liked to ruminate on the changes she’d observed in women’s autonomy and esteem over the years. As I sat interviewing her in the small hut besides her flower farm, she emphasized, “I really need to make decisions because my self-esteem increases if my opinions are being heard”\textsuperscript{146}.

Self-employment was also equated with a sense of flexibility and autonomy over working conditions and levels of income, that was deemed greater than wage labor would allow:

Clarita: “I can do sewing while waiting for the hair treatment that I would apply to effect. I can do two jobs in one day. No time is wasted”\textsuperscript{147}.

Virgie: “[My daughter] was working in Chowking and Jollibee\textsuperscript{148} before she resigned and started her piggery, because she doesn’t want to have a boss”\textsuperscript{149}.

The sense of autonomy and empowerment derived from income generation was financial in nature too. The most common ‘benefit’ defined by women was the economic self-sufficiency gained to their lives. Generally, this was equated with the ability to indulge in personal ‘luxuries’ such as cosmetics, make-up, and cologne\textsuperscript{150}.

\textsuperscript{146} Interview, July 11, 2007.
\textsuperscript{147} Interview, July 4, 2007.
\textsuperscript{148} Two fast-food establishments.
\textsuperscript{149} Interview, July 11, 2007.
\textsuperscript{150} Jeanne Illo and Jaime Polo (1990), Fishers, traders, farmers, wives: The life stories of ten women in a fishing village. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
Gradually, I began to take these insights as evidence of some of the problems inherent in viewing women as the passive victims of capitalism and livelihood diversification. But it is equally misleading to frame these comments exclusively or primarily in terms of opportunity or empowerment. Livelihood activities may be affording women status and control in the household, but it is important not to lose sight of other struggles through which identities and interests are forged, as reflected in Regina’s remarks:

Women can’t just wait for husbands to provide the family’s needs, like me, my husband cannot give everything we need. The children can’t go to school if I’m not determined to earn.  

Women’s involvement in livelihood diversification cannot be interpreted in terms of personal advantage alone. Or choice. Nor can men’s lesser involvement be reduced to forces of subjugation. Doing so over-simplifies the politics of production. It forecloses a more useful analysis of how gender identities are established, unsettled and re-established (or not) in conjugal relations, day-to-day, since “identity is the outcome of interaction”.

In the following section I look more closely at the relational nature of subjectivities, at how they are contested and reproduced within the household, and brought into being through work activities, decision-making practices, and other conjugal relations. While aware that local notions of femininity offer women some room for occupational maneuver, and state livelihood and development programs the financial means to back it up, I illustrate how women must still negotiate their emerging responsibilities with their

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152 Cecile Jackson (1999), Ibid., p. 94.
husbands, and mediate the instabilities that agrarian change has provoked. To what ‘instabilities’ do I refer? Perhaps most significant is the dynamic and dark ambivalence towards women that the slippage in male ability to conform to cultural norms appears to have introduced. This ambivalence seems to pivot on men’s expectations of their wives.

**Remaking the ‘Model’ Mother**

In her study of masculinities in Indonesia, Rebecca Elmhirst\(^\text{153}\) describes several ways in which men have responded to the emasculating effects of women’s out-migration to export processing zones. Among them is the propensity to devalue women’s work and express aggressive sexual behavior, which she interprets as attempts to re-assert masculinity and challenge women’s economic autonomy. In Pacol, however, men’s responses (and the ways that these feed into the forging of new masculinities) are more complex and subtle than those Elmhirst observed.

In men’s descriptions of their spouse’s livelihoods, the inclination to discredit women’s interest in income generation, and what it represented, certainly came across as clear and strong. Particularly in public, men would conclude that it was acceptable to seek financial support from their wives if it was financially necessary, a last resort. During an especially engaging conversation, Arturo, a farmer and wagon driver, observed,

> The women help their husbands by providing for education… if the income of the husband is not enough, and if they also want something for their own body. The husband cannot provide everything\(^\text{154}\).

\(^{153}\) Rebecca Elmhirst (2007a), Ibid.

\(^{154}\) Male focus group, August 12, 2007.
Arturo’s comments were met with enthusiastic nods of agreement at the all-male forum in which they were made. The men had been drinking heavily during this session and so it is important not to place too much weight on their words. Nevertheless, the reference to poverty was made continually by men during the discussion, and indeed the rest of the research, as a means to ‘justify’ women’s participation in income-generation. They also uttered assurances of temporality and insistence that their wives would withdraw from this work as soon as social mobility occurred. And they also suggested their spouse’s earnings were low and negligible to the household ‘pot’, as illustrated in Eduardo’s comments to follow. Asked in an interview whether he would like to run a sari-sari store, he replied, “Ay, that’s not my cup of tea. There is no big profit there, maybe if the store is very big, but if it’s small I will just be bored… I want to have a good job”\textsuperscript{155}.

At other times, men likened their wives’ livelihood activities to hobbies, playing into state stereotypes that posit them as unskilled and in doing so placing themselves and their work (where this exists) as superior. “Women want to sell because it is easy. They don’t have to go too far. They can still take care of the kids… it’s a form of leisure, and not hard work unlike working in the farm\textsuperscript{156}”, explained Rogelio. Note the constraining sense of space imbued in this also rather ‘deflationary’ analysis.

At the same time as undermining women’s livelihood activities, however, the husbands weren’t hesitant in revealing that they now expect their wives to work. Indeed, ‘laziness’ and irresponsibility were often associated with those ‘other’ women not as committed to

\textsuperscript{155} Interview, August 17, 2007.
\textsuperscript{156} Interview, August 21, 2007.
livelihood activities. Sometimes, this was tempered by an awareness of identity firmly rooted in place, whereby high moral regard for their spouse’s practices was contrasted with negative stereotypes of urban migrant women as economically inactive. More often, it was tempered by temporality, or as Temes noted, “[b]efore, the women were very relaxed, but now they are thinking about the welfare of the family, and how they can support their family.”157 Hardly ever did the men associate those ‘other’ women’s lack of involvement in income-generation with their spouse’s behavior, or with ‘structural’ constraints, with the exception of comments detailed below. Again, these were made several bottles of brandy and whisky into the discussion group:

   Eduardo: “Our main problem is unemployment. If women have no jobs, they just sit and think of gambling. Sometimes they bring along with them the small children”.

   Temes: “Yes, yes, they play cards while breastfeeding the child”158.

Interestingly, the female respondents also referred to the ‘irresponsibility’ of those ‘other’ women; perhaps to emphasize their own industriousness? As Paulina, a dressmaker and active member of the local church, stated “[those women not engaged in livelihood activities] are lazy. They are not interested in seeing their children go to school… They are not helping their husbands. They don’t have plans for their children”159.

In a heady conversation over lunch the day after the male group encounter, my research assistant and I sat exchanging our thoughts on the night’s events. Leafing through our notes, we were as consumed with the ethics adopted, as with the insidiousness tone in which women’s livelihoods were described. As a married, working mother, my research

157 August 8, 2008.
158 Male focus group, August 12, 2007.
159 Interview, July 4, 2007.
assistant confided that she had found the discussion exceedingly difficult to deal with, and had struggled not to intervene. ‘Degraded’ and deflated were the terms she used to get this point across; sensibilities bypassed for the sake of ‘objectivity’. Why ‘degraded’? Because, in her own words, of the severity of the critique. Deflated? Because the distaste towards women’s livelihood activities had, she argued, been mutually constituted in men’s testimonies all along, and was not only unjustified, but also dangerous.

So affected was my research assistant by this particular encounter, that she followed up her thoughts in a written reflection. With her permission, I present a short abstract from this piece below. It provides important food for thought on the ambiguity surrounding women’s responsibilities:

I cannot deny the fact that I am really affected by their reactions and their opinions that night, although I don’t have the right to be open with them because we want to get their own points of view… I find it hard to reflect on what they said, maybe because of my experience with my husband… Being a wife is not very simple, even if it is hard as a husband. I sacrifice a lot. If I don’t eat it’s ok, but I cannot just look at my children if they are hungry. But for the men it’s ok, they are not easily troubled and can still carry on.

Though it would be unwise to ascribe these difficulties to all the female participants, my research assistant’s experiences resonated widely with many of the women concerned. The notion of domestic work as ‘women’s work’ is still heavily pronounced and produced in Pacol, and was identified as particularly burdensome to the female participants. Methodologically, this meant that meetings with women were scheduled around meal times, and that rice would be stirred and onions chopped as questions were fielded. In terms of lifestyles, it meant they worked longer hours than men, and had less

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160 Field notes, August 20, 2007.
leisure time. According to livelihood journals, some women clocked up 90-hour weeks, rising at 4am to prepare the morning meal and not resting until well after their partners were in bed.

Given the number of hours worked, childcare and domestic duties were unsurprisingly revealed as a source of considerable stress for the women involved. The abrupt switch from one job to another and the lack of time to complete all jobs properly was mentioned as especially difficult. Respondents explained that their husband’s work (again, where it existed), although physically demanding, was easier that theirs in the sense that it entailed thinking and doing only one main type of work each day. They noted that their schedules caused them anxiety and fatigue, ailments often ‘lost’ on men; and that their lifestyles made them feel more spatially ‘bound’ too, or as Temes’ wife Dolores confessed in an interview conducted in her kitchen, “I can’t leave home because if he’s not here I attend to the shop and all the household chores”.

Besides undertaking reproductive responsibilities, making ends meet was highlighted as a source of anxiety that many women now face firsthand. Granted, women do enjoy greater access to state assistance, but the meagerness of loans severely restricts profitability. Moreover, men do tend to hand their wages over to their wives, and women are keepers of the family purse. But the amount of money held by women is often insufficient to cover food, let alone clothing, health care, education, and other basic needs, and as budgeters and household managers there is little alternative left for women but to make up for this loss. As one woman put it, “I love my children. I will do

anything to send them to school, I plant, anything as long as I can earn income.” Given the displacement of male agricultural labor, these women are confronted with a sharp disjuncture between generalized notions of responsibility and the imperatives of having the wherewithal to prepare the next meal.

Given the heavy work burdens that women now face then, why were women equating income-generation with being able to buy personal treats, when detailed ‘breakdowns’ of their households’ income and expenses revealed their revenue covered food, housing, and other basic needs? Why were they continuing to refer to themselves as subsidiary providers, when most are now the main, if not the sole, breadwinners for their families?

Answers to these questions undoubtedly relate to how the ‘responsible’ mother has been institutionalised in state discourse as both a household caretaker and ‘alternative’ income generator. Whether it was expressed through improved school grades, or being able to throw parties for family and friends, women’s self-esteem did seem to be tied to their ability to be at the centre of the family and fulfil all domestic duties, while still working for income and/or running a business. But this representation of ‘responsible’ motherhood is only part of the picture. Another piece of the puzzle relates to the ways in which men have been coping with industrialization, urbanisation, and the concomitant labour displacement. Because, confronted with a notion that defines them as superior and responsible for women, with an incapacity to put it into practice, my research suggested men have been coping in many ways that make it difficult for women to directly challenge the work burdens they confront.

162 Interview, 5 August, 2007.
Chiming with Rebecca Elmhirst’s\textsuperscript{163} study of masculinities in Malaysia, my research uncovered a number of ways in which poorer men have been attempting to re-assert their masculinity and challenge women’s autonomy in the wake of unemployment and agricultural decline. Aside from devaluing their wives’ income-generation as unprofitable and/or inconsequential, they have taken to renewing normative discourses of women’s reproductive work. Indeed, while men showed signs of doing domestic work, even boasting of their culinary skills on occasion, their involvement tended to be limited to doing the dishes, and helping out when the children were young. More time-consuming or ‘sustainable’ projects (laundry, bathing the children, or cleaning the ‘comfort room’\textsuperscript{164}) were seen as beyond the regular call of duty. Although they valued their wives’ domestic work, they expressly pointed out that it didn’t ‘belong’ to them either. As Eduardo noted when asked whether he would be prepared to do the laundry, “ay, that won’t ever happen to me. I’d feel disgusted if I had to wash clothes\textsuperscript{165}”.

In interviews, men were also not wary of clarifying what an assumed imbalance to these perceived roles would bring. Many insisted they would simply leave their wives if they failed to fulfill their reproductive responsibilities, or if their activities encroached upon their own ‘provider’ roles; suggesting their interests weren’t particularly bound up in the collective interests of the household. Whether they were aware of the extent to which ‘encroachment’ had often already occurred is unclear. Women often went to great lengths to conceal their earnings from their husbands, hiding money in kitchen jars where they knew it was unlikely to be found.

\textsuperscript{163} Rebecca Elmhirst (2007a), Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Local term for bathroom.
\textsuperscript{165} Interview, August 17, 2007.
Controlling the patterns of, and values attached to, women’s work is not the only method by which men are attempting to bolster their sense of manliness. As Virgie’s comments hinted at previously, dominating conjugal decision-making may also be important, as may engaging in ‘anti-social’ behavior, such as drinking and smoking. “She’s lucky because she has a husband willing to follow her, but there are men who don’t want to be insulted in front of friends… her husband doesn’t come home drunk, he is very supportive”\textsuperscript{166}. Again, these expressions of masculinity were ones women tended to accept, contesting them only when they felt they were excessive:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Edita: “I don’t want to decide on anything, because men just don’t want to be empowered. If they see that we don’t consider their decisions, they will look for other women who will depend on them… Yes, they will separate if the woman doesn’t know how to submit to the husband”\textsuperscript{167}.
  \item Dolores: “If he doesn’t agree with something, I will not pursue it, so that he will not blame me if I commit something wrong... I always save, so from that time on he never believe me if I will say that I don’t have money because he knows that I always save. I never ask him money to pay my debts in the store. I will be the one to pay for it, because I don’t want my husband to worry so much, because he will lose interest in me”\textsuperscript{168}.
\end{itemize}

These comments, taken from two personal interviews, resound with other feminist studies of gender and interpersonal violence conducted in the Philippines and Southeast Asia\textsuperscript{169}, in that women’s need to foster harmony and not directly challenge unequal gender relations is clearly related to threats of conjugal violence and fears about the breakdown of the family unit. Interestingly, in Pacol, women’s need to foster harmony extended beyond the household as well, intersecting in important ways with notions of charity and responsibility for poorer neighbors, family members and friends. Several of the women

\textsuperscript{166} Female focus group, July 28, 2007.
\textsuperscript{167} Interview, July 3, 2007.
\textsuperscript{168} Interview, June 20, 2007.
\textsuperscript{169} Elmhirst (2007b), Ibid.
drew analogies between their capacity to maintain domestic harmony on the one hand, and their role in promoting village harmony through their generosity in providing opportunities (low-interest loans, food, and even parties) for their neighbors. Again, these notions of responsibility are perpetuated by the state policies outlined in Part One that place the onus for domestic and community harmony on women.

How else are women handling the contradictory experiences of economic autonomy, responsibility for their families, and political coercion by men? The problems and anxieties generated through men’s reinforcement as the household head led Virgie to confess she would not remarry again. Regina and Paulina stated that, if they could turn the clock back they would stay single, so that they could come and go as they pleased. Edita described her marriage as “pleasurable, with pain, sacrifices and endurance. Those things intertwine together”170. But again, these responses cannot be generalized to the group as a whole. Nor can they be reduced to gender alone.

Aside from gender, age and class emerged as important to the linkages between employment and identity performances elicited within households. Due to time constraints, I was unable to explore these matters in much depth. However, older couples that relied on their offspring for financial support, and perhaps felt they had nothing left to ‘prove’, did demonstrate a more flexible approach to livelihood ideas and identities. Moreover, class emerged as an axis of differentiation critical to conjugal livelihood debates. Again, I can do little but speculate here, but it seems significant that Virgie, Regina, Paulina, and Edita expressed such negativity towards marriage. All were better

educated and from wealthier families than their husbands, and on occasion spoke to the marital problems and insecurities that these differences had invoked. This was largely expressed in terms of disappointment at being prevented from achieving their career aspirations.

Conversely, Clarita and Evelyn, who had fewer professional qualifications than their husbands, were able to avoid these particular problems. A common response from Clarita as to why her husband was so responsive to her livelihood ideas was that she had always done them, even as a child, so why should he complain now. Clarita’s lower educational attainment and more modest aspirations somehow seemed to offer her a tool for negotiation. But it wasn’t without its own shortfalls. Despite being cited as a sign of progress, of ‘how far they had come’, these women’s lack of professional training was in other ways restrictive, as Clarita’s comments illustrate:

When I stayed here in Pacol, I met [my husband’s] sisters. I taught them how to earn money so that they should not be dependent upon their husbands. All of the sisters go with me to sell in the market except the one who worked in the pharmacy... I can’t do what she does because she had education unlike me. I dreamt of going to school but my parents didn’t have the capacity to send me. That’s why I told my children to study so that they won’t be like me.171

What is revealing about these remarks isn’t so much the hardship Clarita has clearly had to face, but the complex light in which her income-generating contributions are now constructed. As also suggested at the start of this thesis, these comments point to the contradictory values (pride/shame, self-determination/lack of choice) that now shroud some women’s livelihood activities; complexities which are almost certainly fuelled by state policies and practices that operate selectively on individuals and not groups, and tie self-esteem and upward mobility to the ability to acquire Westernized education and

professional training. Of course, these individualized pressures also make doubtful the significance of responses (i.e. resistance) to inequitable market and state policies that have been claimed for rural societies in other parts of Southeast Asia\textsuperscript{172}, and ensure that supporting a family independently is an option few women can afford. Put differently, when contrasted with alternative options, and viewed in the larger context of gender relations where husbands provide some assistance, Virgie, Regina, Paulina and Edita’s desires to not marry seem ambiguous at best.

Nancy Fraser’s\textsuperscript{173} critique of contemporary US social policy as one in which there is no longer any ‘good dependency’ stands as a stark reminder of the potential value of cultural notions of legitimate dependency, and when theorized in the context of Pacol may help explain why most women were unwilling to engage in any activity that could jeopardize their marital ‘harmony’. It may also be tied to women’s eagerness to reinforce the appearance of conventional gender norms: why they gave tacit approval to ideologies of superior male status and strength by deferring to their husbands in interviews and focus groups; and why they were keen to help them avoid situations in which their prestige might be compromised.

In fact, my findings revealed that women go to great lengths to maintain the semblance of normative gender relations, and hence assuage the shaky gender identities and associated ‘crisis in masculinity’ that livelihood change has invoked. Aside from concealing their


earnings in kitchen jars, some confessed to deliberately downplaying their income contributions. Others admitted that their tendency to represent their livelihood activities as *ad hoc* and ‘supplementary’, and to be vague about their incomes, was a tactic by which they could make claims on their husbands’ labor and time, because as Nancy jokingly remarked at the first female focus group, “if your husband knows you have money, he will no longer strive to work, he will depend on you, he will think that you have enough”\(^{174}\). And later interviews hinted that women actively renew official representations of femininity and masculinity as another means of coping with economic insecurity, because to acknowledge a man’s authority, they suggested, was also to demand he fulfill his financial responsibilities.

The need to foster domestic peace and harmony seems to have aided women’s perfection of the use of other indirect power strategies too. These include non-confrontational ways of argumentation and negotiation, and emotional hold and disciplinal influence over their children. During a particularly dynamic discussion, the women lightheartedly divulged and swapped their various strategies. Clarita’s was to only raise new ideas when her husband had eaten and was in a good mood. Evelyn’s was to get the backing of her children before approaching her husband.

While this chapter may seem pessimistic since I have detailed the problems that women face in Pacol, it does therefore indicate some cause for celebration. Namely, that women, like men, are both the victims and perpetrators of hetero-normative gendered discourses.

The meaning of ‘responsible’ motherhood may be changing in the face of agrarian

\(^{174}\) Female focus group, August 10, 2007.
reform, and with it women’s work burdens increasing, but women can and do still prize open patriarchal power structures and discourses when opportunities and subjectivities coincide.

Wrapping up

In this chapter I have explored how men and women are responding to, and coping with, the dramatic transformations that have shaped Pacol’s agrarian landscape in recent decades. Though the stories and personal histories presented are mere snapshots stitched together, I have hopefully elucidated the importance of gender to this process.

By examining household gender relations, I have aimed to understand how state-privileged gender discourses significantly shape the livelihood opportunities open to male and female residents in Pacol, without overlooking their ability to play havoc with them. Raymond Williams has reminded us that hegemony is never complete and is always vulnerable to subversion by counterhegemonic tactics. Here, I have demonstrated how livelihood diversification is offering up new possibilities of resistance and change.

In the context of agricultural decline, official constructions of masculinity that tie self-esteem to the ability to maintain a family, and position men as ‘farmer-breadwinners’, are setting poorer men up for failure. But these men have complex and contradictory relations with these expert representations that offer discursive advantages as well as traps. To help allay the discomfort of shaky gender identities and roles brought on by

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175 Raymond Williams (1977), Ibid.
livelihood change, men can draw on these discourses to re-assert their masculinity. Conjugal violence may be one extreme form of ‘re-assertion’; dominating decision-making, abstaining from reproductive work and expecting (while still devaluing) their partner’s livelihood activities, are others.

Essentialized as mothers and household caretakers, the consequences of this behavior are borne disproportionately by women. Though women now benefit from greater access to livelihood resources and choices, the findings presented here have suggested that women’s lives are becoming increasingly fraught with anxieties, pressures, and work burdens. But women are not without their own discursive devices, and in this vein local formulations of subjectivity may be offering them some grounds for resistance. The notion that reproductive work is women’s work may, for example, be placing temporal and spatial constraints on their income opportunities, but it also provides a source of pride, and a mechanism to encourage men to work. Similarly, principles of male responsibility may be restricting the financial assistance that women can attain from their partners, but it also offers room for occupational maneuver, and another means to make claims on their husband’s labor and time.
Concluding Comments

In this thesis I have sought to emphasise the imperativeness of integrating gender relations more readily into studies of agrarian change, and of doing so in a way that enables understanding of how gender identities are brought into being and enacted in time and place. By drawing on ethnographic insights from the Naga context, and analysing them through a post-structural theoretical lens, I have demonstrated how gender is practiced, unsettled and solidified through livelihood diversification, both within and beyond the household.

Central to this thesis seems to be the role of state institutions in mapping ways of life in agrarian communities that are gendered, as well as classed. Indeed, this analysis has illuminated just how and why official discourses of the ‘responsible’ mother and ‘male provider’ are so problematic when they are hitched (or in the latter case, not hitched) to poverty agendas. In Philippine agrarian communities, where cutbacks in state spending have coincided with agro-climatic disturbances, inadequate land reform, and rising inflation, these sorts of discourses risk increasing women’s work responsibilities, while pitting men against women, or perhaps worst still, alienating men from the development process altogether. By construing persons as rational, predictable, and manipulable objects, they also screen out those dimensions of human agency that involve the construction and deconstruction of social meanings, and hence inhibit individuals from challenging the cultural discourses that determine their position.
While larger configurations of political-economic forces – including gendered discourses – undeniably define the terrain of struggle on which livelihood diversification takes place, however, they do not rule out men and women’s ability to exercise agency. On the contrary, the findings of this study have illuminated how individuals can actively galvanise these discourses to mediate some of the problems produced when livelihood change unsettles gender relations and identities. In the Naga context, where the loss of agricultural production, feminisation of labour, and essentialization of women as ‘entrepreneurs’ (read: providers) in state livelihood projects is undermining men’s ability to provide, men are renewing normative gender discourses to bolster their sense of masculinity and challenge women’s increasing autonomy. Meanwhile, principles of male responsibility may be problematic for women when they are so closely tied up to men’s self-esteem, however they also offer them some room for occupational manoeuvre and a means to make claims on their husbands’ labour and time.

For gender theorists interested in the relationship between wider processes of governmentality and the materialisation of social identity in everyday life, these experiences, provide important food for thought on the translatability and mutability of normative discourses. They suggest that when faced with the need to acquire basic needs, and where relevant, to fulfil what is culturally expected of them as ‘providers’, people in agrarian communities may actively invoke normative discourses, or at least take measures to give the impression of their ‘continuation’. Rather than offering a simplistic reading of rising masculinity vulnerability and female opportunity in the context of economic insecurity and agricultural decline, these embodied accounts indeed
tell a more complex tale, wherein a combination of banal and extreme means are used to maintain the appearance of conventional set of gender relations.

For scholars interested in socio-cultural processes of agrarian change, the empirical substance of this thesis has also elucidated the importance of doing geographically-situated ethnographic research, which considers how “individuals and/or collectives do identity in relation to various discursive processes (e.g. class, race, gender, and sexuality), to other subjects, and to layers of institutions and practices – all located concretely in time and space”\textsuperscript{176}. Generalising across vast temporal and spatial distances is not enough. Nor is reducing people’s ever-changing understandings and experiences of livelihood change and gender politics to quantifiable amounts.

While this post-structural framing of livelihood change has introduced a fresh set of research questions, there are obviously many issues still unaddressed. By drawing concern to masculinity and femininity as contingent, internally dissonant and ambivalence-laden constructions, I have tried to bring into focus the merits of understanding gender in relation to other forms of difference and equality. But this relativity could definitely be elaborated. One of the interesting insights generated from this study is the importance of life course perspectives in effecting perceptions of gender interests, as well as the livelihood strategies that individuals are willing to adopt. Exploration of how gender intersects with other systems of power, including age, could

therefore form an exciting future research project. de Haan and Zoomers' conceptualisation of *livelihood trajectories* may be useful in this respect. This concept emphasises how people’s past experiences shape their strategic behaviour.

Further to this last point, interesting insight could also be gained by bringing the environment more closely into studies of agrarian change and livelihood diversification. Feminist and post-structural political ecologists have already begun to demonstrate how gender relations are salient in the symbolic and material construction of environmental issues, but their analyses have tended to be temporally (and spatially) bounded, such that the relationships between gender and natural resource management in conditions of change are still little understood.

Finally, I think it is important to elaborate the importance of these research proposals, and in fact further scholarship on agrarian change in the Philippines more generally. At the time of writing, protests are taking place throughout the Philippines by farmers seeking to extend and improve the currently inadequate Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). As researchers, it is our duty to align our priorities to further their cause; to once again heed Richa Nagar’s words and not merely address what is theoretically exciting or trendy here, but also what is considered politically imperative over there.

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179 Richa Nagar (2004), Ibid.
References


Fraser, Nancy (1989), Unruly practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


**Websites**

Metro PESO, URL: http://www.naga.gov.ph/metropeso/
Appendix One

Barangay Committee Structure. The secretarial position is the only one held by a female. [Source: Pacol Barangay Council, names removed by myself].

Female
*Brgy. Secretary*

Male
*Brgy. Treasurer*

Male
*Barangay Captain*

Male
*Committee on Health*

Male
*Committee on Livelihood*

Male
*Committee on Peace & Order*

Male
*Committee on Appropriation*

Male
*Committee on Environment*

Male
*Committee on Education, Resolutions, & Ordinances*

Male
*Committee on Infrastructure*

Male
*Committee on Youth*
Appendix Two

UBC Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

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Other locations where the research will be conducted: Department of Geography, University of British Columbia Naga City Government Offices, Philippines Various agricultural sites in Naga City, Philippines

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CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: May 11, 2008

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The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

- Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair
- Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
- Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair
- Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair
- Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair