


**Looking Within: Postmodern Reflections
on Feminism and Development**

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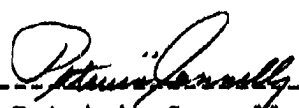
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Abstract

The last twenty years have borne witness to a crisis of momentous proportions - a crisis of knowledge. Debates have raged throughout the academic world, bringing into question the theoretical foundations of Western tradition. The international development industry and discipline have been central in these debates. No group of critics have been more fierce than women, who have pointed out the androcentric economism which systematically exclude women from the equation.

In order to understand the impact the recent crisis of knowledge has had on development discourse specifically, I will look at some of the major debates within postmodern theory. The overt purpose of this thesis therefore, is twofold: it aims to provide a clearer understanding of postmodernism. Secondly, it attempts to contribute to a framework which may be helpful for students in the development industry. The secret hope of this thesis is to look at the discourse which has shaped women's political and theoretical understanding of themselves. Leading to a deconstruction of how the assumed political, economic and intellectual inferiority of women has come to be understood by men and women alike as natural.

The major theorists within the broad category of postmodernism will be introduced in chapter one to clarify how knowledge and discourse effect the power relations in society. These theories will be applied in chapter two to a present trend in the expression of cross cultural knowledge: testimonial. An analysis of the testimonial text I Rigoberta Mench: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (IRM) will be looked at as an example of cultural production for the purpose of cross-cultural understanding and alliance. Chapter three presents a study of the a "Third World" development initiative which attempts to reduce the hierarchical knowledge/ power relation between the executing agency of the Ecuadorian government, and the Southern women and children which it is set up to empower. An investigation will be done of the internal communication of this development agency, and its attempt to implement an interactive and participatory discourse with its participants.

It's memory that keeps us in the world. That is the past to us. Structured by language. And by the Polis. And if one function of language is to harbour coherence, or social identity, then our writing must admit and deal with this social identity, which means with our privilege, as well as with our silence. We only have the symbolic to give us the terms to discuss what precedes its laws. A pre-linguistic memory, the memory of the mother, is unrepresentable without its trace in words, in writing. The Law is hidden in these traces, the Law that privileges some of us. Yet it is only the traces of words that shows us those gaps in language where maternal non-sense is. We have to question those traces in our writing, through the writing itself. Because the social function of language marks our civic place as women. Marks civic memory. For women, these marks are a structure of anaesthesia. They also encode the privilege of some of us. Why frame our writing in this order?

-Erin Moure-¹

¹ Erin Moure, 'Poetry, Memory and the Polis' Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard and Eleanor Wachtel ed, Language in Her Eye: Writing and Gender: Views by Canadian Women Writing in English (Toronto: Coach House Press 1990)206.

Introduction: Getting to Know Me

I say these things, as if I understood them, myself.
- Lori Barker -²

The overall impact of postmodernism is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding even if it is not informed by shared circumstance. Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race etc, that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy-ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition.

-Bell Hooks-³

When we define ourselves, when I define myself, the place in which I am like you and the place in which I am not like you, I'm not excluding you from the joining - I'm broadening the joining. -Audre Lorde-⁴

Today, I wake within the historic moment which holds "The Piano" and gangster rap as cultural icons.⁵ The ambiguity seems to reflect itself in a mosaic of violence, misogyny, racist fundamentalism, and imperialist ideological construction. Progressive and conservative thinkers are scrambling to understand the emergence of these contradictory cultural expressions? Random drive-by shootings from Ottawa's fourteen year old rebels, and the reenactment of the movie Childsplay on the train tracks of

² Qtd. in Robert Peters, "Biopsies: Reflections on Language Poetry" in Greg Boyd, ed Asylum Annual 1994 (Santa Maria CA: McNaughton & Gunn 1994)143.

³ Bell Hooks ., Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics (Toronto: Between the Lines 1992)27

⁴ Audre Lorde., Sister Outsider (USA: The Crossing Press Feminist Series 1984)11

⁵ Bell Hooks, 'Sexism and Misogyny: Who Takes the Rap' Z Magazine A Political Monthly vol 7 No 2 February 1994 (Boston: The Institute for Social and Cultural Change inc 1994)26

Liverpool, have brought on a profound questioning of the power culture and ideology have on how we live and think. Just like the Gary Larson comic in which the two men in a fishing boat see a pending nuclear mushroom cloud and decide to ignore fishing regulations, critical thinkers and children alike are struggling to find their own moral behavioral code. Institutions, religion, and old paradigms of perception are being dissected with the scalpel of postmodernism, creating a profound questioning of how one understands the "truth of the world".

Postmodern theories have claimed the world's truth(s) achieves its existence when it comes to birth in the human mind.⁶ Fundamental debates around knowledge have not escaped the development industry where the androcentric Western biases of "progress" and "development" are in a crisis of legitimation. The power and economics of transnational culture make it difficult to understand the implications of our divided world. Problems associated with collective agency plague academic theorists attempting to find "hope" for "progress". "Identity politics" hinder the achievement of democratically supported action, leaving the committed activist with little grounds for collective political agency. Development discourse is caught at the crux of these debates, with the contradictions between theory and practice crashing in on themselves. It is no

⁶ Richard Tarnas, The Passion of the Western Mind Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View (New York: Ballantine Books 1991)435

longer possible to simply implement a development project or model, as the ambivalences between theory and action have surfaced to slap us in the face. Can development discourse move away from its historic connection with Western modernization and economic interests? Can development adopt policies which consider the power relations of colonial, racial and sexual discourse?⁷ Can women and men within development discourse consider the limitations of feminist discourse which lumps women together as a monolithic group? Postmodern theories provide a venue for development students and practitioners to expand their understanding of the multiple, complex, global social relations which educate identity and political agency.

My starting place begins with an investigation into the forces which shape my knowledge; affecting how I come to understand the world around me. As I strip away the layers of my economic, cultural, and ideological construction, I begin to understand how my own knowledge is shaped by forces outside my own mind. This thesis attempts to take you the reader through a personal journey into the social, economic, racial, sexual, and ideological forces on which knowledge is based. This is done as an example of how knowledge is scraped out from the many ideological forces which exist in tandem in every culture and epoch. I understand my reality as a series of subjective perceptions scraped out from the margins of the dominant ideologies.

⁷ Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplen, ed. Scattered Hegemonies (Minnesota: University of Minnesota 1994)2-3.

This journey may not provide any answers for the reader as it has only provided the author with questions. These questions are a gateway into a new and more inclusive future, where agency can be expanded to allow for the inclusion of the multiple forces which make up one's identity and experience of reality. The six years I have attended post-secondary education have been accompanied by a void and sense of exclusion. How do the dominant schools of thought in development discourse fit into my understanding of the world around me? I am a privileged white woman with sensitivity to the fact that my world was defined by ideologies which are "other" to myself. I have grown up in a world dictated by mass media, global business and transnational interaction. The effects of these and other forces have on one's personal consciousness are varied, and difficult to prove in empirical terms. Even the strongest sceptic is not immune to the strong cultural reactions emerging in this confusing era. The youth of my generation are reacting in complex and contradictory ways. The reactions of women vary from internal battle of self-induced starvation, to separatist political action based on notions of biological determinism. The male identity returns to abstract violence and religious fundamentalism, with the divisions between the genders appearing to broaden with every woman killed by her partner.

The study of knowledge as power, and the implications of the production of knowledge has become a prevalent intellectual undertaking in this postmodern era. How have

development students and practitioners come to be the authority on "development theory", and "global feminism"? By looking at the construction of cross-cultural knowledge of gender, we begin to see how gender relations, and our understanding of ourselves as women, have been formed to support established patterns of gendered behaviour. Certain ideas and beliefs around gender relations, and women political agency, have become understood as the way it is. These beliefs are reinforced by transnational culture and international political practices which in turn dictate institutionalized ideologies and operations which are oppressive to women.⁸ Various patriarchal beliefs and activities within transnational culture collaborate and reinforce oppressive behaviour and actions towards women. The beliefs and activities of hegemonic society translate into women's understanding of themselves. Women's perception of gender relations, experience, knowledge, power and identity shape their political understanding of themselves.⁹ Until the forces at play in one's perception

⁸ Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, ed. Scattered Hegemonies ibid p-24. Transnational Culture - is the idea that individual identity is not formed solely by race, class and gender. There are forces beyond nationalism (race, class, and gender) which contribute to the formation of individual identity. Individual identity can multiply in the context of transnational cultures. Some areas of study around these issues have been looked at in the connection between transnational economics and religious fundamentalism. see Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. ed. Ibid. p.5-25.

⁹ Gender refers to the social construction of gender specific behaviour. Gender behaviour is a culturally specific learned reaction which varies over time. Gender behaviour is not a fixed or static code of behaviour;

of oneself are addressed it seems unlikely that individual political agency will seriously threaten the institutional forces which benefit from women's continued oppression. The ideology around male social and political privilege needs to be understood in relation to our own contribution to reinforcement of these beliefs.

The major theorists within the broad category of postmodernism will be introduced in chapter one to clarify how knowledge and discourse affect the power relations in society. These theories will be applied in chapter two to a present trend in the expressions of cross cultural knowledge: testimonial.¹⁰ An analysis of the testimonial text I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (IRM) will be looked at as an example of cultural production for the purpose of cross-cultural understanding and alliance. This testimonial gives a telling example of the production of "Third World" experience for the purpose of "First World" consumption. Furthermore, within the context of a larger goal, IRM will be used to trace the process in which the experience of the "Third World" becomes interpreted, embedded, and shaped by the political, social, and economic

instead, gender behaviour is in a state of continual flux and is in a constant state of negotiation. This is different from sex which signifies the biological characteristics of men and women.

¹⁰ The term testimonio or testimonial Narrative in relation to cultural knowledge production is a dynamic new form of literature and literary criticism. see John Beverley, "The Margin at the Centre On Testimonio" in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, ed. De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis 1992) 91-113.

forces which make up the web of transnational capitalism and patriarchy.

Chapter three presents a study of a "Third world" development initiative which attempts to reduce the hierarchical knowledge/ power relation between the executing agency of the Ecuadorian government, and the southern women and children which it is set up to empower. An investigation will be done of the internal communication of this development agency (INFFA), and its attempt to implement an interactive and participatory discourse with its participants. Although the development initiative of INNFA attempts to move away from more traditional development approaches towards women, it fails to negotiate the discourse and resulting practice towards its empowering objectives. By looking at this development initiative we can hypothesize about similar institutions, and understand more clearly the systemic forces which affect the outcome of development initiatives.

The discourse or progressive theory (gender and development- GAD) employed by the Ecuadorian government comes into conflict with many forces (ideological, political, economic etc...) which work against change. The forces, which come into conflict with the functioning of GAD knowledge, reinforces women's oppression and political weakness. Internal communication is the first step in a more inclusive venue for the participants of development to control and influence the implementation, methodology, and outcome of the development initiative. The failure of

communication in development projects is often the result of conflicts (both behavioural and theoretical) with already existing patterns of behaviour. Behaviour, or the rationale which directs behaviour, is grounded in the basic assumptions and beliefs of a specific cultural epoch. Shared beliefs and assumptions set up unwritten rules which regulate social interaction and behaviour. Much can be learned from the investigation of reactions to and deterioration of the theoretical objectives of development projects. By looking at the reactions of those involved in the development process we can see how certain beliefs and assumptions perpetuate oppressive attitudes towards women without clear intent.

-Development Theory in Transit-

The last twenty years have borne witness to a crisis of momentous proportions - a crisis of knowledge. Debates have raged throughout the academic world, bringing into question the theoretical foundations of Western tradition. The international development industry and discipline have been central in these debates. No group of critics has been more fierce than women, who have pointed out the androcentric economism which systematically exclude women from the equation.

In recent strains of development discourse there has been a tendency to prioritize women's role in promoting and

advancing development.¹¹ The dominant liberal assumption of "development" as a natural advancement to the Western model of "progress", focuses on increasing women's access to opportunity.¹²

This liberal tradition, so prevalent within development discourse, negates how the ideological and material forces permeate from the foundations of theories of race, class, culture and gender. Women's position in our changing world needs to be examined in relation to how gender, race, class, and culture are discursively constructed and shaped by women.¹³

Development discourse has recently focused on the importance of women's role in the context of the global

¹¹ Please note the inclusion of women into development planning and implementation has been the result of strong theoretical activism and lobbying for and by women. There is a long and rich herstory focusing on women's inclusion, and the differential impact development has in relation to gender, race, class, and culture. The confines of this paper can not do justice to the magnitude of this herstory; however, it is important to note the inclusion of gender sensitive issues was the result of hard work and commitment by women.

¹² For an example of an influential work with a liberal feminist bias please see Ester Boserup, Woman's Role in Economic Development (USA: St Martin's Press 1970)

¹³ Discursive: The official definition of discursive in The Gaga Canadian Dictionary (Toronto: Educational Pub. Co. 1983)337 is to wander or shift from one subject to another; rambling. I will expand the notion of discursive in relation to its use in this paper. Discursive construction of identity is the idea there are many contributing elements from which identity is formed. The wandering and unfixed elements combine to form a social construct. In this way we can see not only how material reality affects us, but also how broader forces like ideology, morality, and individual world view factor into a discursive conceptualization of reality.

economic crisis.¹⁴ Women have been particularly praised for their ability to formulate innovative survival and basic needs strategies within the context of the adverse conditions of the present economic crisis. The recent debates around knowledge/power have important implications for an analysis of women within and beyond the present economic crisis.¹⁵ The current trend of globalization of production, communication, and trade implies that cross-cultural policy and theory are of increasing importance.¹⁶

An understanding of knowledge and theory as discursively constructed helps make evident the range of forces which affect our praxis and agency.¹⁷ As the theories around gender seek to bring about progressive change for a more equitable world, the very knowledge which is used as the foundation for these arguments should be deconstructed. Common assumptions and beliefs are often used to bring about change; however, the foundations of our knowledge is often riddled with the cultural, racial and sexual logic from which women and other oppressed groups

¹⁴ See: Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis (London: Zed Press 1991)

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-1977 Trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. (New York: Pantheon 1980)

¹⁶ Diane Elson, in Beneria Lourdes and Shelly Feldman, eds. Unequal Burden: Economic Crisis, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work (Boulder: Westview Press 1992) 27

¹⁷ Agency: meaning to act, to pursue. The concept has come to be synonymous with self-determination and empowerment or the ability to shape and determine social reality.

seek to escape (be it modernity or patriarchy). Looking at the process through which knowledge becomes authority and power provide a telling explanation of how certain ideas within the dominant world view become reinforced. An intense investigation into knowledge can illuminate the magnitude that these forces have to shape ones' ideas and beliefs. This investigation is the starting point toward an understanding of how Western capitalist culture of modernity, racism and patriarchy are perpetuated in the development industry which focuses on women. Looking at the knowledge in development discourse as the perpetuation of hegemonic forces is often the antithesis of the desired outcome of this cultural exchange.¹⁸

In order to understand the impact the recent crisis of knowledge has had on development discourse in general, and the gender and development (GAD) discourse specifically, I will look at some of the major debates within postmodern theory.¹⁹ The overt purpose of this thesis; therefore is twofold, it aims to provide a clearer understanding of postmodernism. Secondly, it attempts to contribute to a

¹⁸ Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. Scattered Hegemonies Ibid. p-5.

¹⁹ Please note there are many labels, and names given to the current debates over knowledge. These include: post-structuralism, critical theory, post-marxist and contemporary theory to name a few. The use of the word postmodern in this essay is not because I subscribe to any one school of thought in this matter; instead, I have selected certain elements from these debates as a whole, which I perceive as relevant to international development discourse. The use of the word postmodern is a catch all phrase for these debates as a whole.

framework which may be helpful for students in the development industry. The secret hope of this thesis is to look at the discourse which has shaped women's political and theoretical understanding of themselves, leading to a deconstruction of how the assumed political, economic and intellectual inferiority of women has come to be understood by men and women alike as natural. This re-conceptualization of our own knowledge and the mechanisms through which they become power/authority, is where I find hope for an expansive multiple agency.

Chapter One: Theoretical Underwear
A Brief Review of the Underside of Postmodern Theory

The children's game of Cats Cradle can be used as a metaphor to illustrate how ideas function within a discursive society. In the game a simple string is passed from person to person, each pass brings a new shape. The form of the string is dependent on the child's knowledge, subjectivity, and conception of what the string should and could look like in her/his particular time and place.¹ The holder of the previous shape has little control over the new shape, beyond the knowledge their string led to, and is part of the new shape. Knowledge functions in a similar fashion, ideas alter according to the subjectivity within time and place of the person possessing the idea. With each pass of an idea, or fact, it becomes interactive with the beliefs, morality, subjectivity of the thinker in the discursive field in that precise life/context. In this way postmodernism brings into question the "truth" of any fact

¹ Time and Place: The use of the phrase 'time and place' in relation to this paper is based on Roland Barthes essay entitled 'Death of the Author' in Dan Latimer, Contemporary Critical Theory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1989) 54- 59. The basic idea being all communication exists between a sender and a receiver. These parties are always already within the confines of their subjectivity in a particular material place and an instant in time. The meaning generated through communication is locked within a moment in time and location which is in a state of constant flux. The generation of meaning occurs within the relationship between the sender and the receiver in the time and place of the communication. Therefore the communication of ideas is always in a state of continual renegotiation. The generation of meaning will be looked at in further detail later in this paper - it is important to grasp now the relation meaning has to time and place. We will look at how meanings vary according to discourse in Section One: Language and Meaning.

or idea, for all knowledge is within the game. Postmodern discourse has emerged not to cut the string, instead it attempts to illustrate the structures of the "game".

Contrary to what the empirical methodologies would have us believe, it is impossible to extract ourselves from the discursive construction of our reality.² The theoretical justification of one's objectivity can no longer be held as valid without contempt.³ One must look at where, why, and how her/his knowledge of the "Third World" is produced, examining knowledge in the form of a history of the "Third World", as a reinterpretation of the past in relation to the present.⁴ Often knowledge is used as power to control and

² Empiricism claims that pre-formed individual identity and objectivity can be maintained through the use of science and empirical data to prove the "truth". Foucault and others brought into question the very notion that an individual can exist/stand outside of culture as a discursive construct. There are a number of methodologies which claim objectivity in empirical data and research techniques. It is not possible to recount the vastness of these issues concerning methodologies; however, some works I found useful are: Sandra Harding, and Merrill B Hintikka, ed Discovering Realities: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and the Philosophy of Science (Boston: D.Reilel Pub Co. 1983) AND Harding's, Feminism and Methodology 1987 For an example of an empirical research methodology within development discourse see Maurice Zeitlin and R. Ratcliff, Landlords and Capitalists: The Dominant Class of Chile (New Jersey: Princeton 1988)

³ It is hard to trace the origins of the thought that there can be no objective knowledge only perspectives of reality; however, early notions of this can be found in: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Use and Abuse of History (New York: The Liberal Arts Press 1949)

⁴ see Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (NY: Pamtheon Books 1984)79

dictate the actions of others.⁵ As we peel back the layers of our knowledge, we gain a clearer understanding of the forces which shape our multiple realities.

It is impossible to summarize all the debates which fall into the category of postmodernism, because these debates have diffused into many disciplines, and disseminated into all levels of our culture. Instead, a selection of specific theorists, who address some of the major issues, will be looked at. This, however, should only be seen as a tantalizing taste of what in many cases are much larger debates. The confines of this thesis cannot claim to do justice to these issues, instead this overt simplification is intended as an introduction for students of development who may be otherwise unfamiliar with postmodernist thought.

Language And Meaning: The Underside of My Tongue

Jacques Derrida wrote throughout the 1970's and 1980's on post-structural linguistics and deconstruction. Derrida looked at how the meanings of words are formed. Claiming no single word makes sense in itself, he argued words are understood through binary opposites. The meaning and primacy of words are generated and understood in relation to the

⁵ This debate will be looked at in greater detail later in this paper. However some of the major theorists in this area are: Edward Said, Orientalism 1978- Michel Foucault., "Power and Knowledge" - Antonio Gramsci, Selection From the Prison Notebooks 1971 - Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" 1970 - Michel Pecheux, "Language, Semantics and Ideology" 1975. More...

definition of its opposite.⁶ Some examples of binary opposites are up/down, hot/cold and male/female.

Patricia Hill Collins, in her article " Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought" looks at the "construction of dichotomous difference".⁷ Hill Collins sees the construction of opposites as linked to the systemic oppression of race, class and gender. Collins looks at how binary opposites are organized hierarchically:

Since such dualities rarely represent different-but equal relationships, the inherently unstable relationship is resolved by subordinating one half of each pair. Thus, Whites rule Blacks, males dominate females, reason is touted as superior to emotion in ascertaining truth, facts supersede opinion in evaluating knowledge, and subjects rule objects. Dichotomous differences invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical relationships that mesh with political economies of domination and subordination.⁸

Hill Collins looks at the oppression of African-American women in relation to their connection with the inferior half of a number of binary opposites.⁹ In this way, the expression of difference within a text is a difference which is not equal.

⁶ For a discussion of Derrida's work see- Dan Latimer., Contemporary Critical Theory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick 1989)165 OR David Lodge., Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader (New York:Longman Press 1988)

⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, in Joan Hartman, and Ellen Messer-Davidow, ed (En) Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1991)47

⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Ibid* p-47.

⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Ibid* p-48.

We gain an understanding of the "other" or difference through the comparison to "us" which is seen as superior. Using Hill Collins analysis of the hierarchical organization of binary opposites, it becomes clear our choice of language is in itself a political one. Integral to the choices we make in language are our perceptions of reality, change, and progress. This choice is informed by how one comes to understand one's reality, "progress" and possibilities for "change". To further illustrate the concept of binary opposites we will look at the word "gender" in relation to its use in development discourse. Although the term gender does not have a direct binary opposite, it's meaning is generated through the relationship gender has with the binary opposites male/female.

"Gender" is not specifically male, or specifically female, neither androcentric nor feminist in nature. Taking into account how language functions in a system of binary opposites; we can interpret the term "gender" as a political choice which removes the discourse from more threatening words such as "woman" or "feminist". "Gender" takes on a neutral and apolitical meaning which is less threatening to men, and the economic forces dominant in development. Although women are included as part of "gender" the use of this term writes "women" out of the text, distancing women from the text, and depoliticizing the connection with radical elements of feminism (ie. notions of women's separatism). The term "gender" reinforces a more acceptable and milder political discourse. The language used to

articulate the deferential impact of development on women distances its political connection with radical elements of feminism.¹⁰

An understanding of Derrida's concept of binary opposites will enable students of development to "deconstruct" the language of development discourse. For Derrida there can be no "true" or "absolute" meaning of words. The meaning of words is generated at the sight of conflicting and contrasting definitions in a specific time and place.¹¹ Words mean different things at different times and within different discourses. For example, the word "feminism" can be used to illustrate Derrida's concept of the discursive construction of meaning. "Feminism" in the 1960's generally meant women who were active in the women's movement. This understanding is distinctly different from

¹⁰ This should not imply the selection of politically neutral terms is done unconsciously. The art of compromise and the act of cloaking feminist issues is a daily decision made by women in order to get things done. These decisions have a price, which is down played as less important than the immediate needs of women. The result of these decisions has very serious ramifications on women's understanding of themselves and the importance of their strategic needs. I realize that it is my very privileged position which allows me the luxury of thinking about the implication these decisions have on women's strategic position. I can therefore not impose the importance I personally place on strategic needs of women as the way it should be done. Instead I am attempting to point out the possible implications these decisions have on others and on women's understanding of themselves.

¹¹ Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory (New York: Basil Blackwell 1987)25.

any contemporary meaning associated with this term .¹² The meaning of "feminist" can also vary between discourses occurring at the same time. This can be illustrated by a comparison of the precise meaning derivative of the stereotypical male discourse of an athletic locker room, and the meaning in academic feminist theory. These two discourses have very different understandings and use of the term "feminist" even though they are occurring within the same period of time. The meaning of any word depends on the discursive circumstances which surround it, leaving the meaning of words open to interpretation and critical scrutiny each time they enter a specific discourse.¹³

In Outside in the Teaching Machine, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, looks at the strategic implications of the term "Third World". Spivak proposes the "Third World", as a monolithic category, distancing Western academics from internal issues of race, class and gender which parallel the two regions. She claims the focus on the "Third World" by Western academics displaces attention from oppressed peoples in the "First World". This negates any connection between

¹² Feminism at present is fragmented into specific fractions, sometimes referred to as identity politics. In general there is not one meaning to the term feminism, instead the word feminism is generally defined with a clarifying adjective. Examples: Anglo-American Feminist-criticism, Radical feminism, Feminist Materialists, Poststructuralist feminism, Black feminism...see example of the historic use of the term 'gay' and 'black' in Butler, and Scott, 'Experience', Feminists Theorize The Political (London: Routledge 1992)35.

¹³ Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice 25.

the struggles of groups within the "Third World" can be similar to oppressed groups within Western society.¹⁴

The focus on finding a solution to the "Third World" as a monolithic whole limits any one culture's ability to assert their differences, and develop solutions specific to their needs. The term "Third World" tends to prioritize the struggles of nationhood, regionalism and sovereignty at the expense of ethnicity, religion, class and gender. Instead of focusing on the specific circumstances which brought about oppression, the focus is centred on band-aid solutions and the fulfilment of practical needs. Lumping the "Third World" into a monolithic category facilitates issues of trade and "progress" over issues of social equality (i.e.- consciousness and equity). Similar to Patricia Hill Collins notion of the construction of dichotomous difference, we see how the "Third World" is locked within a hierarchical comparison with its binary opposites. The meaning of the term "Third World" is dependant on this comparison and is locked in a relationship which deems it to be "other", "different", and "inferior".

The analysis of binary opposites, and their contribution to the generation of meaning, enables development students to be more critical of the words used in their discourse. This analysis makes evident our subjective position when creating development discourse. As development practitioners and students our position, basic

¹⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine (London: Routledge 1993)12-13.

assumptions, and biases educate the cross- cultural knowledge which justifies the interplay of development.

Just as the meaning of words are specific to temporal location, so too are theories. All theories are grounded on basic assumptions, and social mores which become discursively agreed upon and reified as "natural", "true" or "common sense". These assumptions become unspoken reference points of communication specific to time and place.¹⁵ Since theories are grounded in basic assumptions of a particular epoch, their meaning and effectiveness change when applied to other countries or different time periods. The deconstruction of cultural assumptions in policy and cross-cultural theory is a progression towards making development theory more accountable and appropriate.

Many critical theorists and postmodernists are highly suspicious of claims to universal "truth". This does not imply that postmodernists are opposed to all theory; instead they question grand theories and views of theory as "truth". For postmodernists, theory is seen as a part of ideology, subject to a culture's discursive formations. Theory is used to perpetuate ideology by reifying certain meanings and cultural beliefs. Although ideology becomes reified through theory it should not be seen as a stagnate or over determined process. Instead ideology is always in a state of renegotiation in relation to its discursive influences. The

¹⁵ Lecture given at Carleton University (TV series 18.282 V) Sat, March 6th 93 - 10pm. by Prof. Gildea (Carleton English department)

concept of theory as ideology is explained further by
Rosemary Hennessy in Materialist Feminism and the Politics
of Discourse:

From the standpoint of ideology, no theory is outside the discourses of culture. As ideology, theory is one of many cultural narratives. It inquires more directly than others into the conditions of possibility of knowledge, but it does not for that reason claim the statues of metaphysical truth or provide any fixed "outside" frame for knowledge.¹⁶

The connection between theory and ideology dispels the possibility of theory as a universal or totalizing "truth". For the postmodern mind theory is a site of social and cultural construction which perpetuates, through its praxis, a specific world view.

Language is seen as the vehicle through which people make and articulate meaning. When using language to express difference, the author is in the paradoxical situation of articulating notions of difference within a language engulfed in what has become the dominant understanding of the signifier.¹⁷ In this way language suppresses notions of

¹⁶ Rosemary Hennessy, Materialist Feminist and the Politics of Discourse (London: Routledge 1993)7

¹⁷ The term **Signifier** was first used by Ferdinand de Saussure. There has been much debate around how accurate language is to reality/ thought. The mental image or idea goes through a process of signification where ideas travel from the mind to an audible concept. Tzvetan Todorov theorized the profound difference between the signifier (the mental thought) and the signified (the spoken concept). Julia Kristava, and others' see the interplay between signifier and signified as the opening for a more inclusive language free of closure of confined meaning. For further reading see Julia Kristava, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art Ed. Leon Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press 1980)

difference by reinforcing and perpetuating dominant signification.

To illustrate this notion of dominant signification I will look at the term "bad". In certain discourses a term is manipulated to alter its dominant signified meaning in order to bring into question the dominant understanding. Generally the dominant signification of "bad" is negative; however, the African-American community has an alternative re-interpretation of the term "bad" to challenge its existing meaning. They began using "bad" in a way which subverted its dominant signification. The term "bad" was used in situations and discourses where Western hegemonic would use "good". This free play with the signified meaning indirectly questions the process of how all meaning is generated and formed. In this way the African-American community subverts the dominant white Western construction of meaning and their control over the process of meaning formation. Derrida's theory expands the debate around signifier to include how authors subvert or obscure their position under the presumed neutrality of language.¹⁸ Postmodernism calls for the exposure of one's subjectivity in creating and influencing the meaning of language. The praxis of reconceptualizing the generation of meaning in language as subjective and undetermined will develop the ability to subvert cultural

¹⁸ Andrea Nye, Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man (London: Routledge 1988)187. Also see Joseph Adamson, in Irena R. Makaryk ed. Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory (Toronto: U Of T Press 1993)27

assumptions and temporal inappropriateness.¹⁹ Looking at how the meaning of language is generated can broaden the understanding of the assumptions implicit in the words used to describe other cultures. This is particularly important for Western academics who, by virtue of their place of origin, are perceived as the "authority" possessing the "truth".²⁰

Derrida's next relevant concept, in relation to our understanding of the debates around knowledge, is the idea of absences within the text.²¹ Derrida claims in language, the generation of meaning is dependent on a high level of redundancy. This redundancy occurs through the selection of words which are familiar, common and easily understood. The selection of common words glosses over counter arguments, down- playing concepts which are hard to explain. The selection of familiar terms makes it more difficult to express ideas which are outside of the ordinary or unfamiliar. Maurice Merleau-Ponty elaborates on this aspect of Derrida's work, where language and speech represent:

¹⁹ See Paul de Man. The Resistance to Theory (Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis Press 1986)

²⁰ This attitude is changing as "Third world" authors have reclaimed their voice in creating theory. Notable examples are the Dependency school of CEPAL and R. Prebisch and E. Galeano's, Open Veins of Latin America; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside the Teaching Machine; Gita Sen and Caren Grown, Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions

²¹ Jacques Derrida, "Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" Translated by Alan Bass in 1978. in David Lodge, ed. Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader (New York: Longman Press 1988) p-108-123 specifically p-111

that paradoxical operation through which, by using words of a given sense, and already available meaning, we try to follow up an intention which necessarily outstrips, modifies and in the last analysis stabilizes the meaning of the words which translate it.²²

The conservative nature of the selection of words is significant when discussing how difference is expressed/represented. The dominant way of thinking is reinforced through the act of writing which suppresses differences through the process of selection. Language can be seen as a restrictive tool to individuals attempting to generate new meanings. Since language is a tool for communication, the recognition of its limitations is a stepping stone towards making meaning more accountable and open to difference. In the words of Ani Defranco "...every tool is a weapon if you hold it right."²³

Derrida's concept of absences within a text must also be understood in relation to which group of people is not represented within dominant discourse. This is achieved by looking at how certain groups and peoples are represented or absent from representation. Ynestra King, in "The Other Body: Reflections on Difference, Disability, and Identity Politics " examines how women with disabilities are misrepresented or absent from inclusion in the majority of

²² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p-389. Qtd in Christopher Norris, Deconstruction Theory and Practice (London: Routledge 1991)52.

²³ Ani Difranco, Puddle Dive., (NY:Righteous babe music 1993) in poem called "My IQ".

popular cultures.²⁴ Exclusion from mainstream culture makes political activism more difficult. Those outside of mainstream culture are unlikely to be included in the planning or implementation stages of political activity.

Section Two: History and Knowledge

History is often perceived as an objective account of the past. It can be argued that history is used to reinterpret the past according to present assumptions.²⁵ History looks at primary sources, written in a different time and place, and interprets them in relation to present discourses. Both the authors' and the readers' subjectivity, assumptions, and beliefs will affect the construction, generation and understanding of the meaning given to history.²⁶ Michel Foucault looks at history not as an understanding of origin or roots, but as an interpretation of events by those who held power. Foucault sees the creation of knowledge, in the form of mainstream history, as a formation of power through which the dominant discourses

²⁴ Ynestra King, "The Other Body: Reflections on Difference, Disability, and Identity Politics" in MS. Magazine Vol, III No, 5 (March- April 1993) p-72

²⁵ Micaela di Leonardo, "Introduction: Gender, Culture, and Political Economy: Feminist Anthropology in Historical Perspective" in Micaela di Leonardo, ed. Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era (Los Angeles: University of California Press 1991)29.

²⁶ Werner J. Dannhauser, "Friedrich Nietzsche" in Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, ed. History of Political Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987)p-831-833.

perpetuate ideology.²⁷ Foucault's essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" looks at history as being embedded in an ideological web from which no one is exempt.²⁸ This more inclusive understanding of history is different from the notion that knowledge is controlled from the top, or the view of history as an investigation into the origin of the past; instead Foucault sees knowledge as an ideological tool in which all members of a society compete and contribute:

If interpretation were the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules the development of humanity is a series of interpretations.²⁹

²⁷ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" Paul Rabinow., ed. The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books 1984)p-78 to 99.

²⁸ Knowledge (in the form of history) influences and informs the behaviour of all members of a society. This is done through what Foucault calls 'technologies of the self' which are the various techniques through which human beings come to know who they are and what they should do... can also be called social codification... This is different from the idea that those in power tell the rest of society what to think. Instead Foucault looks at the many different social beliefs, assumptions and actions which work in tandem to reinforce the social codification of an idea. This process of social codification makes each individual responsible for their thoughts while acknowledging certain forms of knowledge can perpetuate themselves through very powerful forms of persuasion. - original idea taken from Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish. Trans by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books 1977)

²⁹ Michel Foucault, in Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader. p-86.

For Foucault effective history looks at what we don't know, questioning and challenging our tradition, and answering questions never asked:

Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on "rediscovery" and it emphatically excludes the "rediscovery of ourselves". History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being- as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, manipulates our bodies and sets it against itself. "Effective" history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy towards a millennial ending. It will up-root its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.³⁰

The notion of history (knowledge), as a form of ideology (power) which methodologically suppresses alternative versions of history (knowledge), has been pointed out by many people. Women, Native peoples, women and men of colour, and the many voices of the "Third World", have vocalized their opposition to the white, Western, and androcentric biases of history.³¹ With this scrutiny of a unitary history, critical theorists have developed new methodologies for the creation of history. There has been a recent investigation into the active role of the reader in

³⁰ Michel Foucault, in Paul Rabinow, ed. The Foucault Reader 88.

³¹ Two recent examples of this critique can be found in: Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning From The Outsider Within" critical look at sociology and Micaela di Leonardo, Gender and the Crossroads of Knowledge in Anthropology. Both in Joan Hartman, ed. (En) Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe

generating the meaning(s) of history.³² The subjectivity of the reader is always already present, and is the sight of a praxis for many theorists who attempt to understand history not as "truth" but as the site of political launching.³³

Another way of interpreting history is that present reality stems from, or is created as a result of, history. The ideological influence of what is perceived as history affects what is felt and thought in the present. Each individual in a given society is perceived to be inserted into an already existing history with the desire to reclaim it and make it their own. In this way one interprets the past in relation to their current assumptions and world view for the future. History is never outside its ideological purpose, as a justification for past or future actions. As we move away from notions of history as a static recollection of the past, one can see history as a mechanism through which certain beliefs, assumptions and certain ideologies are perpetuated.

To further expand the view of knowledge and history as a discursive mechanism of ideology, we will turn to a discussion of knowledge. Foucault sees knowledge as

³² The issues concerning a postmodern reading will be looked at in further detail in this thesis, in chapter entitled: "Recreating History: Understandings of I Rigoberta Menchu". Also see Michel Foucault, in Paul Rabinow, *Ibid.* p-85-89.

³³ Barbara Godard, "Becoming My Hero, Becoming Myself: Notes Towards a Feminist Theory of Reading " in Libby Scheier, ed. Language in her Eye: Writing and Gender (Toronto: Coach House Press 1990)112.

emerging from and perpetuated through institutionalized discourses. The historic condition in which discourse exists is the site of struggle for and between contesting discourses.³⁴ Foucault looks at how the relationship between power and knowledge functions within our society above and beyond state control:

...but I believe that in ours (society) the relationship between power, right and truth is organized in a highly specific fashion. If I were to characterize, not its mechanism itself, but its intensity and constancy, I would say that we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place.³⁵

The idea that knowledge is discursively constructed is a hard concept to swallow. Traditionally, knowledge based on "empirical", "scientific", and objective research has been valued as the "truth". Once knowledge is seen as a subjective mechanism through which power functions, it becomes easier to see how knowledge affects one's understanding of "reality" and personal agency.

³⁴ Colin Gordin, ed "Afterward" Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writing 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books 1980)237-239 --The use of the phrase "historic condition" is meant to convey the idea that one is always affected by their understanding of history. In this way dominant notions of the past become thought of as "fact".

³⁵ Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" in Colin Gordon, ed. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writing 1972-1977 93.

To illustrate the connection between power and knowledge, Foucault looks at how knowledge is perpetuated through institutions/ history/ law/ science etc. - through which knowledge becomes power.³⁶ Foucault looks at how knowledge functions through institutions as a source of ideological power. This type of analysis attempts to reveal why a certain term, or form of knowledge, has been chosen, for whom, and for what end.

Amongst the discourses of previous epochs or of foreign cultures, which are the ones that are retained, which are valued, which are important, which one tries to reconstitute?...What individuals, what group, what classes have access to such a kind of discourse? In what way is the relationship between the discourse and he who gives it, and he who receives it institutionalized?³⁷

The articulation and affirmation of a certain discourse, or form of knowledge, is reflective of the power relations within a society. In this way the study of knowledge and discourse can be a telling investigation into who holds power and how power is held in society.

Since the formation of knowledge is the site of a discursive struggle, the silence or suppression of types of knowledge is as significant in understanding power in a society as an investigation into existing forms of knowledge. To further expose the connection between power

³⁶ Michel Foucault, in Colin Gordon, ed. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other writings 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books 1972) 120-121.

³⁷ Michael Foucault, "History, Discourse and Discontinuity" Salmagundi, no. 20 (Summer-Fall) p-225-248. 234.

and knowledge, we will look at how knowledge controls and suppresses alternative forms of knowledge. Although homophobic attitudes are becoming less prevalent, homosexuality in mainstream society is generally considered morally and legally unacceptable.³⁸ The heterosexual assumptions of morality is perpetuated through institutions, law and the media (to name but a few). Homosexual knowledge must contest, and live with the multiple forces within a given society which reinforce heterosexual knowledge as the "norm".³⁹ The heterosexual "truth" then serves to disempower homosexual knowledge. Moral discrimination has served to regulate the expression of alternative sexual knowledge and has resulted in constraining alternative lifestyles from full fruition and legitimation. Any type of sexuality which is outside of the heterosexual "norm" is automatically seen as "different" or "other". With this notion of difference comes an implication of inferiority, with the heterosexual "norm" as the superior half of the

³⁸ Please see the recent decision of the Canadian supreme court, which denied two homosexual men the legal right to be married. OR the British decision passed in parliament on March 22/94 that the legal age of sexual relations between two men is 18 years old. However, the legal age of consent between heterosexual couples is 16 years of age.

³⁹ -- The definition of homosexual used in this paper refers to both men and women - gay and lesbian or same sex partners. This should not imply there is one type of homosexual knowledge, I am merely making this group association for the sake of simplicity. I do not wish to detract from the diversity of thought/knowledge which exists within these rich and variant communities. I do not wish to complicate the point at hand by addressing issues of identity politics.

binary opposite. Referring back to Patricia Hill-Collins' Derridean analysis, the heterosexual norm is positioned as the positive side of its binary opposite - the homosexual. Society codifies that which is known or seen as "normal", anything outside of this codification is seen as "deviant/abnormal/ strange" and is stripped of social power.

To illustrate the power associated with knowledge the Cat's Cradle metaphor can again be used. In order to play the game successfully a child must learn the rules and boundaries of the game. Once the child understands the parameters set out by the game they can play as long as they conform to the rules, ideas, and what is discursively constructed as knowledge, are learned in varying degrees by all individuals who function in any given society. Anyone outside these boundaries and rules is either prosecuted or seen as "other". In this way what is seen as knowledge functions as power in regulating the functioning of society.

If knowledge is discursively constructed, as has been previously argued, what does this mean for many "Third world", feminist, and bottom up theorists who see the foundations of their knowledge/truth as experience? ⁴⁰ Rosemary Hennessy, in her book Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse, articulates the need to investigate

⁴⁰ For standpoint theory, liberation theology, bottom up - grass roots development strategies- See Sandra Harding, or Nancy Hartsock, " The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism" in Harding and Hintikka, ed. Discovering Reality (London:D. Reidel Publishing Company 1983) and E.F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful 1974.

how, why and to what end experienced reality is constructed. Hennessy looks at women's experience as mediated and constructed within the ambiguous formation of language and knowledge.⁴¹ In other words, people's experience is understood by themselves within the context of the conflicting forces competing for legitimation within society. The knowledge which is derived from experience is therefore subjective, and varies depending on discursive forces within one's particular time and place. The following quotation by Joan Scott expands the notion of experience:

...This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of "experience" and on the politics of its construction. Experience is at once already interpretation and is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, always therefore political.⁴²

Understanding experience as affected by "knowledge" opens up a venue for agency toward change. If knowledge reflects the discursive forces within a society's temporal location, then it would seem logical that the material world in which experience functions is also affected by conflicting discourses. To take this one step further, since our experience is in itself embedded in the discursive forces which make up our knowledge/reality, then so also are the theories which are based on that experience. In this way

⁴¹ Rosemary Hennessy, Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse (New York:Routledge 1993)p-70.

⁴² Joan W. Scott, "Experience", in Feminists Theorize The Political ed. Judith Butler and Joan Scott, (London: Routledge 1992)37.

women's lives can never be free from theory. This is suggested by Hennessy in the following passage:

If it is acknowledged that the mechanisms of political and social identity are discursive and that it is not overdetermined discursive formation which sets the terms by which subjects are formed, feminists can claim that the grounds for their authority are always theoretical. Put differently, from the vantage point of ideology, women's lives are never outside theory because theories inform the discursive ways of making sense and their accompanying structures of value and belief which circulate in any culture.⁴³

According to Hennessy one can affect reality by changing knowledge and theory. This can be done by looking at theory/knowledge not as a reflection of women's experience, but instead theory/ knowledge is seen as the mechanism from which the discursive reality is reified into the power of definition.

If knowledge based on experience is seen as "true", we limit the possibilities for change by that which has already been experienced. Once experience is seen as emerging from, and understood and interpreted within the conflicting ideological forces of a particular time, one gains a broader understanding of the possibility for change outside of one's experience. This suggests that knowledge can create - or at least affect - reality, in the same manner reality creates the understanding of experience (i.e. knowledge as based on experience). If knowledge can create reality, then new types of knowledge can influence and create new realities. The recognition of the forces which affect reality does not

⁴³ Rosemary Hennessy, Ibid.p-96.

necessarily require a rejection of standpoint theory, or bottom up development strategies in their entirety. In relating this section to the larger goal of understanding what postmodern theories can contribute to our work in development, one can look at how, and by whom, the production of knowledge can transfer into concrete material activities. By assuming the purpose of "development" practice and theory is to make more equitable the world's privileges and resources (which is clearly not always the intent) the understanding of reality and change are of utmost importance.

Section Three: Ideology

Louis Althusser, a French marxist, defined ideology as a extensive group of practices in which all classes are constant participants, rather than a set of ideas imposed by one class upon another.⁴⁴ Althusser's concept of ideology explains the depth with which ideology influences society. His notion of ideology is that it is rooted in the lifestyles and ways of thinking of all classes.⁴⁵ Althusser claims every individual participates in their social and ideological construction.⁴⁶ Hennessy explains

⁴⁴ Diane Macdonell, Theories of Discourse An Introduction Ibid p-25-27.

⁴⁵ Definition of Althusser's conception of Ideology: In Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, Materialist Feminisms (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers 1993)5.

⁴⁶ John Fiske., Introduction to Communication Studies (New York: Routledge 1990)

Althusser's notion of ideology as "no longer thought to be a monolithic determining force, but rather an articulated ensemble of contesting discourses which produce what comes to count as the "way it is."⁴⁷ In this way women and other subjugated groups perpetuate their own subordination through the internalization of dominant ideological discourses. An example of this can be seen in the monolithic conception of patriarchy used in mainstream feminist discourse. The desire for unity against a monolithic patriarchy negates the many different shapes and sizes which patriarchy takes.⁴⁸ Althusser emphasizes the role of ideology in maintaining the power of dominant discourses. Education is put forward by Althusser as a strong mechanism for the perpetuation of dominant ideologies. Althusser's conception of ideology is determinant, leaving little room for contradictory ideologies and alternative perceptions of change.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" has influenced postmodern theorists towards a more interactive definition of ideology. For Gramsci, ideology takes on an active component as the site of a discursive battle among and

⁴⁷ Rosemary Hennessy, Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse Ibid p-76.

⁴⁸ Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity" in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, ed. Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1994)p-11

between contesting discourses.⁴⁹ The following quotation, from "Notes On Italian History", describes Gramsci's perception of the precarious nature of hegemonic control:

Between consent and force stands corruption/fraud which is characteristic of certain situations when it is hard to exercise the hegemonic function... (C)racks open up everywhere in the hegemonic apparatus, and the exercise of hegemony (becomes) permanently difficult and aleatory.⁵⁰

John Fiske looks at how the different conceptions of ideology affect one's ability to promote change: "Gramsci's theory makes social change appear possible, Marx's makes it inevitable, and Althusser's improbable."⁵¹ Understanding ideology as an active discursive construct expands the comprehension of the hegemonic order, as well as aiding possible forms of resistance.

Section Four: Institutions, Laws, Education, Government

Both Foucault and Althusser look at the role of institutions, laws, education and government, as power

⁴⁹ Hegemony : representing the set of values and beliefs through which the ruling class exercises its power over the masses, including religion, education and the media...hegemonic ideas are the common sense' or myths' that govern a society and which the masses freely consent. As defined in The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory ed. Irena R. Makaryk, (Toronto: University of Toronto press 1993)345. Also see - David Hoey, "Capitalist Hegemony and the New World Order: A Gramscian Analysis of Global Restructuring" Thesis presented to St Mary's University April 1992.

⁵⁰ Antonio Gramsci, "Notes on Italian History" in Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith, (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1971)p-80

⁵¹ John Fiske, Introduction to Communication Studies Ibid. 178.

machines. These mechanisms function as regulating forces of dominant discourses, keeping order and distributing power.⁵² Edward Said, a student of Foucault, attempts to explain the effectiveness of these institutional matrixes in Orientalism. Said achieves a systemic analysis of the connection between power/knowledge. Said looks at which discourses create and manage the construction of knowledge, which in turn dictates power relations. For Said, the control, creation and management of discourse on the East lies in the hands of the West. The West has an investment in the maintenance and control over this discourse/knowledge. Western discourse disseminates into many different disciplines, shaping the origin, and forming the policies of interaction towards the East.⁵³ The Western discourses become self-perpetuating and mutually reinforcing - becoming the foundations of the knowledge about the East. The discourse of the West constructs certain stereotypes, and reifies these misconceptions, making them seem "true" or "factual".⁵⁴ These are the "facts" which become the basis for both calculated and unwitting political and economic domination.

⁵² Michel Foucault, "The Structures of Punishment" Translated by Alan Sheridan 1975. in Dan Latimer, Contemporary Critical Theory Ibid 108.

⁵³ Edward Said, "Crisis [in Orientalism]" in David Lodge ed, Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader Ibid p-295-309. AND E.Said, Orientalism (New York: Random House 1979)

⁵⁴ Edward Said, "Orientalizing the Orient" in Dan Latimer, ed. Contemporary Critical Theory (NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick 1989)p-253-77.

Said's analysis provides fuel for the fire of development critics, who view development as the intellectual and material justification for economic exploitation and cultural imperialism.⁵⁵ If you are not quite a house burner yourself, and believe development may still hold some promise, there is still much to Said's analysis. As students of development we must be aware of what our research and data will be used for. Said analysis expands to include an investigation into how imperial culture is woven into the literature and education systems. Opposition to the colonial influences of Western discourse, education and ideology is expressed in the form of "Third World" nationalism. In an attempt to regain control over the knowledge of and about the "Third World" a strong wave of nationalistic self-justification has emerged to counteract the strength of Western influences. Said views this nationalism as a manifesto for prejudices and hatred.⁵⁶ There needs to be a critical analysis of received ideas, and data, as the power of imperial culture penetrates the consciousness of all.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Sachs, ed. The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power (London: Zed Books 1992)

⁵⁶ Saul Landau, 'A Book Review of Culture and Imperialism by Edward Said' in Race and Class: A Journal for Black and Third World Liberation (Volume 35 Oct-Dec 1993 Number 2)99

⁵⁷ Edward W Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred Knopf 1993)333-336.

Setting the Stage: Clo(sure)

To begin an analysis of I Rigoberta Menchu in chapter two, it is helpful to review the postmodern conception of identity, experience and reality. Postmodernism questions the creation of a sense of total or totalized comprehension. This is to say, as critical thinkers we are unable to simplify all products of culture including our own writing,⁵⁸ not to say old paradigms, philosophies, and theories of the "truth" have lost their intellectual appeal. The postmodern predicament seeks to disprove claims of complete authority - or the site of closure.⁵⁹ Linda Hutcheon considers this the "ex-centric" paradox of a postmodern closure/disclosure:

One of the things we must be open to listening to is what I have called the "ex-centric", the off-centre. Postmodernism questions centralized, totalized, hierarchized, closed systems: questions but does not destroy. It acknowledges the human urge to make order, while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs, not natural or given entities...Such interrogations of the impulse to sameness (or single otherness) and homogeneity, unity and certainty, make room for a consideration of the

⁵⁸ Frederic Jameson, "The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodern Debate" 1984 in David Lodge, ed Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader (New York: Longman 1988)373-383.

⁵⁹ The idea of closure stems from Derrida's perception of the universal problematic in language: "the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything becomes discourse... that is to say, a system where the central signified, is never absolutely present outside a transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely." see Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (1978) in David Lodge, ed. Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader (New York: Longman 1988) 110.

different and the heterogeneous, the hybrid and the provisional. This is not a rejection of the former values in favour of the latter; it is a rethinking of each in the light of the other.⁶⁰

For the postmodernist the security of knowing the "truth" is never possible.⁶¹ This leaves the postmodernist paradoxically situated in their fear - the fear of finding oneself guilty of what one has placed on trial. The unclosed circle which the postmodern approach creates should not be seen as a theoretical flaw, as it is instead the essence of it's beauty. What we may find is "the opposite of the truth, which is untrue may not be a lie".⁶² The self-reflexive postmodernist lives and thinks within the confines of their discursive reality, conscious that nothing is outside of this circle, not even their own knowledge.

The paradoxical freedom which a postmodern discourse seeks to create can leave the writer in what seems to be a state of inertia. This paralysis lifts as the postmodernist includes their own subjectivity, investigating their own ideological construction, and reconceptualize reality. What is left behind is a text filled with subjective ellipsis and personal reactions. This may seem distracting at first as the writer recognizes the text as a site of discursive construction.

⁶⁰ Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (Cambridge: Routledge 1988)41-42.

⁶¹ Jane Falx, "The End of Innocence" in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, ed. Feminists Theorize the Political Ibid p-452.

⁶² Erin Moure, Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love (Montreal: Vehicule Press 1992)27.

Word/ Wor(1)d/ Wor(sene)d

This leads us to the next significant trend which postmodernism has contributed to our thinking: the question of language.⁶³ Language has been traditionally understood as a neutral mechanism which articulates meaning (truth). A postmodern understanding of language argues meaning cannot be generated outside of "identity" or one's concept of difference.⁶⁴ All language functions within a conceptual matrix, leaving no human thought (or discourse) outside of the linguistic structures which generate meaning.⁶⁵ Deconstruction questions all claims of authority and "truth", examining what is written between these lines of meaning. Derrida clarifies below how a "postmodern" deconstruction of language has a different agenda than the simple articulation of fact or "truth":

Very schematically: an opposition of metaphysical concepts (eg., speech/writing, presence/absence, etc.) is never the confrontation of two terms, but a hierarchy and the order of subordination. Deconstruction cannot be restricted or immediately pass to a neutralization: it must, through a double gesture, a double science, a double writing

⁶³ The list of those contributing theory on language is great, however, some notable theorists are: Nietzsche, C.S Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, Barthes, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur...

⁶⁴ For further explanation of identity as connected to difference please see the following section on identity.

⁶⁵ Kristeva and other "postmodern" theorists have investigated the notion that there is a level of thought beyond/ or before the level of linguistic consciousness. This is the idea there is some degree of response (thought) beyond what can be expressed linguistically. These ideas would function in the most basic notions one possesses, at the pre-infant stage of development. Examples are hunger, love, desire, etc...

- put into practice a reversal of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of intervening in the field of opposition, it criticizes and that is also a field of non-discursive forces... Deconstruction does not consist in moving from one concept to another, but reversing and displacing a conceptual order as well as the non-conceptual order with which it is articulated.⁶⁶

Both Jacques Lacan and Derrida look at the conceptual order of language as being fundamentally gendered.⁶⁷ Denoting not simply an under-representation of women in language, Derrida and Lacan claim the semantic structure of language is both phallogentric and ethnocentric.⁶⁸ Postmodernism questions the neutrality of language, developing a deeper understanding of how the meaning in language is generated. This new approach to language enables marginalized individuals to "bite that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language she can get inside of. This inside must be outside the text of patriarchy."⁶⁹

Self-Centred: Identity

⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, Signature Event Context trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman in Glyph no.1 (1977) 1988.p-21)

⁶⁷ Karle Jirgens, " Jacques-Marie Lacan" in Irena Mekaryk, ed Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1993)397.

⁶⁸ Two feminist theorists who look at the inherent gender bias in dominant discourse are Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous.

⁶⁹ Helene Cixous, Qtd in Andrea Nye, Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man (New York: Routledge 1988)198.

Psychoanalytic theory within postmodernism questions the notion of identity as a unified social agent, expanding the conception of identity to include an assembly of subject positions, functioning within the multiple discourses which make up social relations.⁷⁰ The social agent (or subject, as investigated through psychoanalysis) is considered to be structured by the multiple levels of their subjectivity: both conscious and unconscious. This conception of identity expanded to include identification and implicit comparison of the subject as "other". Identity understood as consisting of multiple subject positions within the different discursive discourses which make up each reality.⁷¹

Lacan expands the discussion to include questions of the signifier/signified. Lacan elaborates Descartes' metaphysical statement "I think therefore I am". Lacan claims "I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think."⁷² Postmodern identity always contains an "it" within the "I" of the self, making identity multiple. We learn to conceptualize our identity in what Lacan calls the "mirror stage". The "mirror stage" is where one reacts to their

⁷⁰ Chantal Mouffe, 'Feminism, Citizenship and Radical Democratic Politics' in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, Feminists Theorize the Political Ibid. p-370.

⁷¹ For a discussion of identity as multiple beyond dominant gender norms see Ruth Leys, "The Real Miss Beauchamp: Gender and the Subject of Imitation" in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, Feminists Theorize the Political Ibid.p-167-214.

⁷² Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton 1977)166.

reflection as "other", indicating there can be no notion of a unified self. An individual comes to understand her/his identity from a recognition of difference, and from a desire for recognition. When a child sees itself as "other", its identity develops as a recognition of its difference. It is this recognition of difference which forms the social identity of the child.⁷³

Questions which surround the issue of identity have been highly politicized within feminist circles. Debates around the theoretical implications of essentialist conceptions of "women" remain central. There are difficulties associated with politicizing an anti-essentialist agency. Many women fear an anti-essentialist conception of subject construction will lead to the analogy of throwing the baby out with the bath water. Kate Soper describes this fear:

Feminism, like any other politics, has always implied a banding together, a movement based on the solidarity and sisterhood of women, who are linked by perhaps very little else than their sameness and common cause as women. If this sameness itself is challenged on the grounds that there is no "presence" of womanhood, nothing that the term "women" immediately expresses, and nothing instantiated concretely except particular women in particular situations, then the idea of a political community built around women - the central aspiration of the early feminist movement collapses.⁷⁴

The reconceptualization of identity as multiple, within the discursive functioning of social realities, could lead to

⁷³ Andrea Nye, Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man (New York: Routledge 1988)138.

⁷⁴ Kate Soper, Qtd in Chantal Mouffe, in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, Feminists Theorize the Political Ibid p-381.

the impregnation of new formations for feminist life. The birth of which could lead to a broader more inclusive understanding between and among peoples.

What is Experience

Joan Scott, in her article entitled "Experience" articulates the danger of regarding experience as the foundation of knowledge. Similar to Hennessy, Scott attempts to reclaim a broader notion of experience:

This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of "experience" and on the politics of its construction. Experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straight forward; it is always contested, always therefore political. The study of experience, therefore, must call into question its originary status in historical explanation. This will happen when historians take as their project not the reproduction and transmission of knowledge said to be arrived at through experience, but the analysis of the production of knowledge itself.⁷⁵

We are living in a world in which globalization is taking many overt and subtle forms. It seems dangerous to skim over these forces which form the matrices through which we define both ourselves and "others". Once the foundations of our "identity" and "experience" are seen as discursively constructed we can examine how certain experiences and identities are valued and reinforced systematically. Global codification intensifies with the increase in multi-national business, telecommunication, and global trade. In no way should this suggest the globalization of values is an ideal

⁷⁵ Joan Scott, 'Experience' in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, ed. Feminists Theorize the Political Ibid.p- 37.

situation; instead, a postmodern analysis can help one in understanding the massive range of influences which affect even the "identity and experience" of those considered to live outside of mainstream culture.

The foundations of postmodernism have been looked at in order to examine the ideology encoded in the text I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala. The following quote by Catherine Belsey, examines how ideology functions through knowledge as a constructive element of identity, experience, and reality:

I use "ideology" here in two senses, to mean not only a conscious system of belief, either imposed on or willingly adopted by the believer, but also the unconscious grounding of individual experience...the very condition of our experience of the world. In this sense, ideology works to impose unified, consensus meaning on disparate experience and perceptions, to mystify or disguise difference as deviation. Most customary social systems as natural relations; cultural systems in which one notion of gender has power over another, for instance, are presented as the natural order. It is through this guise of the natural that the second sense of ideology becomes operative: we take for granted what is natural, and hence ideology becomes the unexamined ground of our experience. Thus internalized, ideology becomes cultural practice, the way we live.⁷⁶

This paper is a modest attempt to introduce students of development discourse to postmodernism. This step into the confusing and contradictory literature within the broad category of postmodernism is a necessary battle. "For every

⁷⁶ Catherine Belsey, qtd in Johanna Smith, "Too Beautiful Altogether: Patriarchal Ideology in Heart of Darkness" in Ross Murfin, ed. Heart of Darkness: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism (New York: St Martin's Press 1989)180.

lie I unlearn, I learn something new."⁷⁷ Postmodernism has come to the forefront of intellectual debates for many reasons; none more pending than the realization that our environment will not allow us to live under deluded misconceptions of "progress". As the world scrambles into trading blocks, and the global information highway is paved in intellectual property rights, there is a growing trend to understand the oppo/sites from which knowledge and ideology emerge. For many years groups of marginalized peoples have been calling for a level playing field - now we all need to look at the rules and decide if we even want to play the game.

The game of Cat's Cradle utilizes a simple piece of string, and the imagination and ingenuity of the children playing. The string is made into a circle to represent the ever connected movement of ideas. The functioning of ideas in society is always interconnected, yet flexible as ideas can always change shape and develop in different directions. The string remains in the shape of a circle unless there is human interaction. This implies the need for personal and collective agency, as we have to work together to keep the game growing and changing. It is easy to keep repeating the same shapes, as they are the shapes which we have seen, proven as possible, and understood based on experience. Difficulty emerges as ideas and shapes are developed beyond what has been tried in the past. If you join the game mid-

⁷⁷ Ani Difranco, Puddle Dive, (Buffalo: Righteous Records 1993)

way you may lose sight of the continuity of the string's original circular shape, getting caught up in the formation of new and better shapes. The creation of ideas becomes the quest for the development of new dogmas of intellectual paradigms which seek to claim authority. The connection between the function of ideas and the cat's cradle makes it impossible to forget when all is said and done we live in an interconnected world. We are after all players in the global game of life.

**Chapter Two: A Postmodern Reading
A Cultural Signifier:
Rigoberta Menchu**

But if the postmodern mind has sometimes been prone to a dogmatic relativism and a compulsively fragmenting scepticism, and if the cultural ethos that has accompanied it has sometimes deteriorated into cynical detachment and spiritless pastiche, it is evident that the most significant characteristic of the larger postmodern intellectual situation- its pluralism, complexity, and ambiguity - are precisely the characteristics necessary for the potential emergence of a fundamentally new form of intellectual vision, one that might both preserve and transcend the current state of extraordinary differentiation.

-Richard Tarnas - ¹

My commitment to our struggle recognizes neither boundaries nor limits: only those of us who carry our cause in our hearts are willing to run the risk.

- Rigoberta Menchu-²

Leaving or giving up a place that is safe, that is "home"- physically, emotionally, linguistically, epistemologically- for another place that is unknown and risky, that is not only emotionally but conceptually other; a place of discourse from which speaking and thinking are at best tentative, uncertain, unguaranteed. This is not so much a choice as it is a necessary feature of feminism. There can be no "home", no completely secure place for women within the context of classist, racist, and heterosexist patriarchal society. Leaving our homes is not a choice, for one could not live there in the first place.

-Teresa de Lauretis-³

In order to understand how postmodern theories are useful in an analysis of development texts, the connection between development knowledge and the systems of power is reexamined. The growing trend in cross cultural knowledge

¹ Richard Tarnas, The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View (New York:Ballantine Books 1991)402.

² Elizabeth Burgos-Debray ed. and introduction I Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Women in Guatemala (New York: Verso 1984)236.

³ Teresa de Lauretis, Qtd in Jana Sawicki, Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body (London: Routledge 1991)107

formation -testimonials - will be examined in relation to the authority it has received by those individuals attempting to be accountable for the Western bias of the majority of "Third World" knowledge. This chapter will raise questions on experience, location and identity in the textual presentation of knowledge which claims to be "real" or "true". As well, this chapter attempts to expose theoretical problems associated with knowledge generated by testimonials. It's objective is to make evident the transnational influences of capitalism, patriarchy, global communication, environmentalism, religious, and racial identity in the formation of knowledge. For this purpose I have chosen I Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Women in Guatemala (IRM).

The recognition of IRM by the international literary world is no small event in shaping how one understands the text. Although the book was written in 1983, it's importance increased after it was translated in 1987, and was officially recognized (1992) by the Western literary world. IRM's popularity reflects the recent theoretical trends within the feminist discourses of standpoint theory, and anthropological research on cross cultural knowledge production.⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, these

⁴ For an introduction to Feminist Anthropology see Micaela di Leonardo, ed. Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era (Los Angeles: U of California Press 1991) Standpoint theory see...Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives" Feminist Studies 14 no.3 p-575-599.1988 and Nancy Hartsock, Money, Sex, and Power: Towards A Feminist

theories advocate the expansion of theory to include marginalized voices.⁵ An attempt is made in progressive academic discourses to be accountable and self-reflective of the reality of the oppressed, poor and under-represented. One can not argue against the need for a reclaiming of a voice for those individuals and groups which have been subordinated in the ideology, language, and literature of Western discourse. The logocentrism, phonocentrism, phallogentrism and ethnocentrism of Western discourses have been noted as a prevalent characteristic of mainstream Western discourse.⁶ The knee jerk reaction is to favour methodologies which claim space for oppressed voices which the dominant discourses exclude. However, I will argue not to take away the voices of marginal peoples, but instead to broaden the understanding of where, what, why and how these voices are heard and formed. Postmodern theories expanded the understanding of the forces which shape all voices, and

Materialism (New York: Longman 1985)
Dorothy Smith, The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology (Toronto: University of Toronto press 1987)

⁵ Marginality: the object of mechanisms of exclusion brought to bear by the economic or ideological requirements of power. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, trans, Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage 1980) vol 1 p-98-99.

⁶ These terms were introduced and came to prominence by Derrida. Logocentrism: designates the theological gesture of posing the word (the logo) as a manifestation of divine presence and a sign of an original oneness or identity. Phallogentrism: denotes the system of power relations which promotes and perpetuates the phallus as the transcendent symbol of empowerment. Phonocentrism: emphasizes the orality of Western and Judeo-Christian metaphysics that can be traced from Saussurean linguistics - his model for language from speech. See Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory (Toronto: U of T Press 93)

influence how agency is perceived.⁷ How do the dominant ideologies which perpetuate male privilege, Western culture, and racism creep into the voices of those who are attempting to break down the existing power structure? Looking at Rigoberta Menchu's desire for change within the social location of her discourse may not lead us to a "truer" or more accurate understanding. However it may lead to a dismantling of the pretentious Western fantasies which have brought us to the brink of intellectual crisis.⁸ In understanding a broader conception of knowledge, which recognizes its production, value coding, and ideology, one can begin to reconceptualize (know)l(edge) in order to

⁷ The broader notion of forces which affect agency have been looked at through various critiques of ideology. There has been a primacy on class, gender, and race as the driving forces in human thought which are seen as the dominant force in personal agency. Postmodernism has expanded the understanding of both ideology and agency to include the materiality of such forces as will, imagination, religious faith, apocalyptic notions, hope and of course empathy...etc... Some major theorists are Gramsci, Bakhtin, Althusser, Barthes, and Foucault.

⁸ From this point on I will use Rigoberta when referring to Rigoberta Menchu. This is done for a number of reason which should not be taken as an oversight. The main reason I have chosen to use only her given name, over her family name, is because of her position within the text as the subject/speaker (or first person narrator). This puts us as a postmodern reader into direct contact with the subjectivity of Rigoberta, giving us a feeling of intimacy. The rejection of the family name is in an attempt to illustrate Lacan's notion of the "name-of-the-father" as the signifier in society. The rejection of this phallus (which has come to signify the entire structure of law and desire within a discursive formation) sets her outside of this symbolic order. The absence of the phallus signifier is done in an attempt to point out the power language contains to rule, dictate and conform. see- Jacques Lacan, Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis trans., Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press 1968)

(re)(dis)(cover) our world as the site of multiple realities.

There has been a trend in development discourse to view the people of the "Third World" as victims of the material and ideological forces of Western imperialism, patriarchy and racism.⁹ IRM is one of many examples of the profound and needed critique of imperialist forces at work in Guatemala. What is missing in this analysis is an investigation of the role the marginal peoples of Guatemala have in creating, perpetuating, and influencing their ideological constructs. This view puts the control of ideological construction into the hands of the West, negating the contribution the "Third World" has in shaping and perpetuating its own reality. Downplaying the influence the "Third World" has on its reality the west implies the "Third World" is in a situation out of its own control. This attitude implies the "Third World" needs the guidance and involvement of the people in control - the West.¹⁰

This type of literature appeals to the West for a number of reasons; first it is embedded in the notion of the West as the authority, or having control. Rigoberta is attempting to re-claim a voice for the people of Guatemala,

⁹ Another example can be seen in the text : Domitila Barrios De Chungara with Moema Viezzer, Let Me Speak!: Testimony of Domitila, A Women of the Bolivian Mines (New York: Monthly Review Press 1978)

¹⁰ Kay Warren and Susan Bourque, "Women, Technology, and International Development Ideologies: Analyzing Feminist Voices" in Micaela di Leonardo, Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge Ibid. 1991 p-302.

as she is attempting to regain control for her people. Rigoberta's analysis is locked within the trap of expressing her reality through the glorification of her culture and people as the victims of the exterior forces of oppression. The following quotation from IRM of a wedding ceremony attempts to show how Rigoberta feels her reality is moulded by outside forces, without which she feels all would be fine:

They make a new pledge to honour the Indian Race. They affirm our importance. They say it is the duty of each one of us to reproduce the earth and the traditions of our ancestors, who were humble. They refer back to the time of Columbus and say: "Our forefathers were dishonoured by the White Man- sinners and murderers", and: "it is not the fault of our ancestors. They died from hunger because they weren't paid. We want to destroy the wicked lessons we were taught by them. If they hadn't come, we would all be united, equal, and our children would not suffer. We would not have boundaries to our land." (IRM p-67)

In no way should this imply the external forces of oppression do not play an important role in shaping the ideology and consciousness (and ultimately the reality) of the people of Guatemala. The potential danger lies in handing over control of one's reality to an "other". By questioning her social structure the above passage shows how Rigoberta is attempting to change the consciousness of her people, in order to end the desire to become white.¹¹ In her attempt to do this, Rigoberta glorifies her tradition as being free from responsibility for their oppressive

¹¹ There has been much written on the consciousness of oppressed peoples, please see: Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Mask p-100. and Pablo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

situation. The perpetuation of the notion the West is solely responsible for Rigoberta's oppression under emphasizes her own agency.

If reality is seen as a multiple discursive construct then oppression becomes reified, and is hence perpetuated, through knowledge and beliefs of both the oppressive forces and those being oppressed. It must be remembered Rigoberta and her people are not void of the ideological forces which shape the conceptualization of reality by virtue of their oppression. Part of the postmodern understanding of reality is to be aware of one's subjective agency in the ideological constructs. In this way Rigoberta is seen as an active contributing agent in the discursive formation of reality.

In order to understand how reality is discursive, I will deconstruct the previously cited passage in order to better understand how Rigoberta's consciousness and beliefs effect her "reality". Rigoberta conceptualizes identity as a set of innate groupings which somehow exist outside of the discursive forces of her reality. In doing so, she lumps the "Indian" population and the white population into monolithic categories.¹² These categories are determined through

¹² I have some concerns using the term "Indian", as it has been the sight of racist stereotype of indigenous people. The term "Indian" as a monolithic category also serves to lump this group of people together as being the same. For these reasons I find this term problematic; however, I have chosen to use it because it is the term used by the author/editor/translator. For this reason I too attempt to reclaim "Indian" while reconceptualizing it as multiple, complex and temporal.

racial identity and have little to do with one's consciousness or social construction.

Barbara Jeanne Fields deconstructs the ideology of racism in "Slavery, Race and Ideology, in the United States of America", to show how each individual as a social agent, functions in the construction and perpetuation of racist ideologies:

Race is not an element of human biology(like breathing oxygen or reproducing sexually); nor is it even an idea (like the speed of light...) that can be plausibly imagined to live an external life of its own. Race is not an idea but an ideology. It came into existence at a discernible historical moment for rationally understandable historical reasons and is subject to change for similar reasons.¹³

IRM, assumes race is a set or fixed essence, not a social and cultural ideology in time and place which can be used or applied when appropriate.¹⁴

Rigoberta's statement marks a change in the racial identity of her people at the time of contact with Western colonizing forces.(IRM p-67) This implies an awareness and change of Rigoberta's Indigenous identity through a comparison with the "other" - the colonizers. The colonizers became the defining culture with which Rigoberta's identity was compared. This places importance and value on the colonizers' culture even though this was not Rigoberta's overt intent. Rigoberta thereby defines her culture and

¹³ Barbara Jeanne Fields, 'Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America' New Left Review 181:95-118.1990 p-101. Qtd in Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, Materialist Feminisms Ibid. p-185.

¹⁴ Henry Louis Gates, ed Race, Writing and Difference: (Chicago: University of Chicago press 1986)p-4-5.

reality through its comparison and interaction with Western signifiers of early capitalism.

Understanding the ideological construction of identity clarifies how identities of race and gender are used in the "cultural logic of late capitalism" as the rationale justification for oppressive behaviour.¹⁵ Rigoberta presents her reality as the transcendental signifier, placing her reality in the context of current trends in the interconnected structures of international trade, unilateral control and economics. By placing IRM into the context in which it functions, the text can be looked at in relation to its geopolitical influence on the production of cultural knowledge. Robert Carr in "Crossing the First World/Third World Divides: Testimonial, Transnational Feminisms, and the postmodern Condition" investigates the global implications of the success of testimonial literature as a form of control of knowledge as power:

The emergence of testimonial literature in the First World marketplace (geographically defined) is thus involved in an ongoing history of mapping of otherized communities and their worlds (dehistoricized and deterritorialized) for the accumulation of knowledge and power by bourgeois/ruling-class Anglo-Americans and their descendants.¹⁶

¹⁵ Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke University Press 1992)1984

¹⁶ Robert Carr, "Crossing the First World/Third World Divides: Testimonial, Transnational Feminism, and the Postmodern Condition" in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1994)p-154.

Knowledge of gender, race, and culture is created in tandem with the intellectual forces of imperialist "First World" interests attempting to justify production policy.

Multinational corporations produce and consume race and gender ideology as the justification for hiring Indigenous women under unregulated and highly exploitive conditions.

The Maquiladora sector of Mexico, and industrial subcontracting in Latin America are two growing industries which stand to gain in the cultural construction of knowledge about the "Third World". Multinational corporations together with patriarchal networks of capitalism play an active part in the production of a cultural knowledge which allows for the exploitation of women in the periphery.¹⁷ Lourdes Beneria looks at the use of assumed characteristics of women, as the foundation for hiring. Women's natural predisposition for highly exploitive work is not based on biological determinism, or an over supply of female labour, instead this knowledge is socialized into the formation of gender traits:

These gender traits may be acquired through a long process of socialization or gender formation - ranging from learning to work with nimble fingers by sewing and embroidering at home to being socialized to please and serve, follow orders, and accept subordinate positions. Because they are socially acquired, such characteristics are not natural or universal but specific to a given society, race, or ethnic group and affected by other factors such as class and level of

¹⁷ Beneria Lourdes, Feldman Shelly, ed. Unequal Burden: Economic Crisis, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work (Boulder: Westview Press 1992) And Elizabeth Kadetsky, "The Human Cost of Free Trade: On the Mexican Border NAFTA Offers Little Hope" in MS Vol, IV, number 4.p-11-15.

education; they derive from ideological constructs and can obviously change through time...¹⁸

Similarly, Rigoberta describes the gender socialization in her community. The social construction of gender traits is the foundation from which the sexual division of labour in Rigoberta's community is based. This understanding does not assume Rigoberta has not evaluated the sexual division of labour, and found it valid for her own personal reasons: be it tradition, respect for her elders, or simply her own logical conclusion. Rigoberta's understanding is not outside the site of criticism any more than our own. However, it may be useful to point out the ideological roots in order to deconstruct how the assumed gender characteristics of a particular culture and epoch are reified into beliefs and traditions.

Rigoberta describes her community as having a holistic approach to child rearing, as their education is combined with "fun" in the name of survival:

When the baby joins the community, with him in the circle of candles- together with his little red bag- he will have his hoe, his machete, his axe and all the tools he will need in life. These will be his playthings. A little girl will have her washing board and all the things she will need when she grows up. She must learn the things of the house, to clean, to wash, and sew her brothers' trousers, for example. The little boy must begin to live like a man, to be responsible and learn to love the work in the field...the community explain to us that all these things come down to us from our grandfathers and we must conserve them. Nearly everything we do today is based on what our ancestors did...(IRM p-15-17)

¹⁸ Lourdes Beneria, Martha Roldan, The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1987)50.

Rigoberta articulates, and subsequently perpetuates, the gender oppression embedded in the beliefs of past histories. There is much to be learned from the holistic and environmental approaches held by Rigoberta's community; however, her commentary lacks awareness of how, where and why these approaches are formed, and what are the material and ideological influences from which they stem. Without an analysis of the ideological foundations behind and within all cultural knowledge there is the risk that ideas and attitudes which are not reflective of a culture's current beliefs will be perpetuated.

Lacan's notion of identity can be used when looking at IRM, as Rigoberta is claiming authority based on her identity. Rigoberta glosses over multiple construction of self as a unified subject which she uses as the foundation of collective political agency.¹⁹ Rigoberta recognizes the multiple forces which shape her identity; however, she negates how these forces are reified in her understanding of her identity. The recognition of the multiple nature of identity is limited or underscored by Rigoberta's political desire, the attempts to see her Indian identity as the dominant unifying element. Once the idea of the

¹⁹ This should not imply that Rigoberta does not articulate the multiple forces which effect her life. Rigoberta gives a vivid and compelling account of the magnitude of her oppression. The connection these forces have on shaping her beliefs, traditions and most of all her Indian identity are not looked at. The notion of a multiple identity, makes difficult political unity around a common "identity". This idea has been talked about within feminist circles about the desire to unify around our common identity as "women".

self/identity is seen in relation to its multiple differences then one can understand how identity formation, and conceptualization, are within the influence of ideology.

In IRM, Rigoberta discusses in great detail her community's connection with nature. The earth is seen as an integral part of the life cycle of all members of the community. "Every part of our culture comes from the earth. Our religion comes from the maize and bean harvests which are so vital to our community." (IRM p-16) The focus on the earth and the environment are aspects of the text which appeal to Western environmental movements. Rigoberta holds the earth as a uniting force for all Indian peoples, using the connection to maize (or corn) as the foundation of their unity. The first part of the passage below is said to be a quotation from Rigoberta's father:

"I (Rigoberta's father) know my experience is valuable and that I must share it with others." And this confirmed my certainty that the justification for our struggle was to erase all the images imposed on us, all the cultural differences, and the ethnic barriers, so that we Indians might understand each other in spite of different ways of expressing our religion and beliefs. Our culture is still the same. I discovered that all Indians have a common culture in spite of the linguistic barriers, ethnic barriers, and different modes of dress. The basis of our culture is maize. (IRM p-169)

This passage is a very telling segment for understanding the foundations of Rigoberta's knowledge as based in an Indian culture of maize. This section expresses the magnitude of patriarchal, male authority in the thinking of Rigoberta's consciousness. Although Westerners may initially be uncomfortable with the notion of identity based on a crop

(maize), it is a telling example of our different world view. Earlier, we looked at how experience is an interpretation within the discursive construction of reality.²⁰ The above quotation looks at how the ideological/cultural influences from the outside world are a hindrance to the unity of the Indian people. However, there is no connection to how these influences could have shaped the experience of Rigoberta's father or her own experience and logic. Rigoberta talks in detail on the lessons she learned from her mother; however, she focuses on the logic and experience of her father as influential in shaping her identity. This can be seen as a reflection of the patriarchal codification of male knowledge over female.

A culture of maize for Rigoberta is the unifying element of the Indian identity, going beyond religious, ethnic and dress differences. The Indian population can unite based on Rigoberta's view of a single culture. This thesis attempts to point out how culture, among other things, is discursively constructed from multiple forces and influences. By lumping the Indian population into a monolithic culture, Rigoberta negates the diversity of this culture in an attempt to promote her version of political agency.

Recent writing within the environmental movement has focused on nature (in IRM this case represented through the symbol maize) and the environment, as a unifying force

²⁰ Joan Scott, 'Experience' in Judith Butler and J Scott, Feminists Theorize the Political Ibid.p- 37.

leading to human cooperation and understanding. Within the context of the environmental movement, Rigoberta's logic is appealing to advocates of human co-operation based on environmental considerations. Although Rigoberta is not overtly advocating human cooperation based on environmental concerns, she is presenting a snap shot of a way of life which is environmentally sound and holistic. This is appealing to those individuals advocating a turn from technology toward a simpler environmentally sustainable lifestyle.²¹

Rigoberta attempts to articulate race, class and gender in her text, viewing them not as mutually reinforcing and interconnected, but as contributing unequally to her oppression. Since Rigoberta downplays the connection between the forces of ideological oppression, she negates the larger power play of a patriarchal capitalist society. The separation of ideologies into distinct camps, or identity politics, in conventional epistemological and political philosophies becomes a way of controlling the identity and social location of "others".²² The epistemic conceptualization of identity as fragmented rather than multiple, suppresses a possible discursive - multiple foundation for social agency. Rigoberta's focus on class and

²¹ Wolfgang Sachs, "Environment" in Wolfgang Sachs, ed. The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power (London: Zed Books 1992) 34-36.

²² Sandra Harding, "Subjectivity, Experience, and Knowledge: an Epistemology from/for Rainbow Coalition Politics" in Development and Change (London: SAGE Publications 1992) vol-23, no.3 p-188-190.

race can be seen as an example of the primacy of marxist and racist knowledge in Western academic cross cultural discourse.²³

The inclusion of IRM in the dominant discourse of Western cultural analysis can be looked at for what is not represented. IRM was included in dominant Western discourses because it negates the multiple discursive nature of oppression. The absence of a broader transnational patriarchal systemic analysis in IRM makes it more easily consumable by Western hegemonies. By detaching Rigoberta's oppression from a systemic analysis it becomes more difficult to form a collective opposition to transnational economic patriarchal power structures.

The ideologies which envision the "Third World" as victims of a reality beyond their control stems from the paternal assumption the West controls the "Third World". The belief in the West which envisions themselves as saviours of the "Third World", negates that Western personal privilege comes at the expense of the "Third World".²⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out the contradictions and limitations in the self-congratulatory attitude of Western development practitioners and theorists. For Spivak, "First World" readers desire to understand, fix and diagnose

²³ For an example of how Rigoberta's prioritizes race over class and gender see page IRM p-119.

²⁴ Marianna Gronemeyer, "Helping" in Wolfgang Sachs, ed The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power (London: Zed Press 1992)53-69.

marginal "identity".²⁵ The recognition of IRM can be looked at as an example of the centre's separation from the margin through investigation of the "other". This makes it more difficult for oppressed groups in the centre to see the connection between their oppression and the forms of oppression occurring in the "Third World". In this way, the "Third World" gains an identity through it's validation from the centre.²⁶ Until the production of knowledge is deconstructed it is difficult not to perpetuate covert Western values in an exchange of cross cultural knowledge.

As a result of critiques from "Third World" theorists, there is a growing trend in development discourse to open up theory and research on and about the "Third World" to include marginalized voices. This more inclusive research attempts to make development more accountable and reflective of the lives and desires of "Third World" peoples. Often, what is skimmed over in this analysis is how "identity" and "experience" are constructed within the broad notions of ideology, imperial history, colonial language and religion (to name but a few). A postmodern analysis of IRM helps make evident how the "identity" of the indigenous population of Guatemala has emerged from within these social constructs. The magnitude of the impact colonization has/had on the current global system, (from direct contact of

²⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine (New York: Routledge 1993)61

²⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine (New York: Routledge 1993)55

Imperial rule, Westernization of culture, religion, the IMF, and the military role of the US/UN as the grand protectorate of "justice"), is difficult to ignore. By deconstructing the impact of the globalization of knowledge, postmodernism makes it increasingly difficult to claim legitimacy for the many forms of colonialism.

The power of colonialism appears in subtle forms, often camouflaged under the heading of neocolonialism.²⁷ The support for certain selected representations of marginality is one way neocolonial discourse is shaped by dominant Western influences. Looking at IRM, as a text which is held up by the Western literary world, we can understand its popularity beyond its telling and passionate account of one women's life. Looking at this text for its role in what the dominant discourses consider legitimate, it then becomes a narrative of the "appropriate" version of marginal identity. All texts contain both text and context through which the ideological apparatus of knowledge negotiates meaning. This is the location from which the postmodern must begin.

Development Knowledge: The Globalization of Knowledge

Development is embedded in the identification of the margin, or "Third World", through the comparison to the centre - binary opposite - or "First World". Through development discourse, (which has been an important force in global interaction since World War Two,) the West has

²⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine Ibid p-57.

learned to understand the South as "other". The West values those aspects of a culture which fit into it's conception of "other". The recognition of IRM can be seen not simply as an attempt to reclaim a voice and identity for the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, but it also serves to legitimize certain Western ideals and values which have become rooted in how the West understands "other".

Edward Said's Orientalism, as previously noted looks at how the West constructs stereotypes and misconceptions about other cultures, creating an object for investigation to control and influence.²⁸ IRM through its international recognition functions in the ideological parameters of "difference" accepted by the West. Understanding IRM within the ideological constructs of the dominant Western beliefs and values, should not negate the personal agency Rigoberta had in the construction of this text. What a postmodern reading of IRM does is look at how certain beliefs are reified by the thinking of Rigoberta. In the context of Western notions of a proper interpretation of the margin, one can understand IRM beyond the words on the page, examining the text as a socio-political reflection of Western ideology.

Debates rage throughout the feminist academic world over validity of Western white women's interpretations of the lives of women of "other" cultures, or different races.

²⁸ Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A Knopf 1993) Please note that Said is only one theorist in the ever growing body of literature on Post-colonial theory.

Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, articulate their concern around "imperial feminism":

Because [white feminists] are not acquainted with traditions outside of their own cultures and histories, the ideological and the theoretical legacies that they write from inevitably deny as valid any modes of struggle and organization which have their origins in non-European philosophical traditions.²⁹

It is difficult to argue against the glaring evidence which expresses the need for a critique of mainstream feminist discourse. The understanding of Western white women as embedded in their discursive ideology, feeds fuel to the fire for postmodernists attempting to understand the material and ideological forces which shape one's consciousness. The desire of this type of postmodern analysis is to make evident the notion that all members of society live in negotiation, contained in the circle of ideologies.

The Text/Context of I, Rigoberta Menchu

Similar to feminist works which are always already political, Rigoberta's text is meshed with a political desire to promote change. (IRM p-1) The political nature of IRM prefaces the comprehension of Rigoberta's social location from which her subjectivity is constructed. Since Rigoberta's quest is political, her agenda affects how she represents the world and her place in it. The questioning of

²⁹ Valerie Amos, and Palmar Pratibha, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism' in Feminist Review 17:3-17, 1984 p-8. Qtd in Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, Materialist Feminisms (Cambridge:Blackwell Publishing 1993)p-183.

why this text was written is not done to place value judgment on the plausibility or validity of Rigoberta's political plight; instead, it attempts to point out how her politics effect how she portrays certain events and perceptions of reality.

With IRM, Rigoberta attempts to create an universal foundation for political action for the Indian population of the Americas. This is done through the creation of an identity based on similar experiences of oppression and racism. "I'd (Rigoberta) like to stress that it's not only my life, it's also the testimony of my people." (IRM p-1) A universal conception of oppression and racism can be criticized as making inaccurate assumptions of cross-cultural similarities which are influenced by Western notions of oppression and racism (i.e. the primacy on class over gender as the dominant catalyze for oppression instead of viewing oppression as multiple). In an attempt to claim authority for representation of Indian identity Rigoberta glosses over differences or alternative interpretations. This is what Judith Butler considers the "fictive universality of the structures of domination".³⁰ The process of excluding certain experiences under the guise of creating unity for progressive change in itself has restrictive properties and limits effectiveness and inclusion.

³⁰ Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge 1990)5

It is impossible to extract ourselves from the discursive reality in our social location; therefore, for the postmodern reader it is imperative to look at both the text and context in which IRM was written and is read. I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Women In Guatemala won the nobel prize in 1992, a date which is timely for a number of political reasons; the most pressing of which are the massive protests and publicity around the 500 year anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of America. In an attempt to reclaim this event, Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas organized around 500 years of resistance. In the context of increased vocalization from (margin) Indigenous peoples, there was an increase in consciousness over the plight of America's native population. The desire to set things straight by collective guilty conscious of Western culture, increased the enthusiasm for alternative voices. This should not imply IRM is not an important text, I am attempting to point out the social climate in which this text gained popularity/ authority.

In the attempt to omit oneself from ethnocentric bias, students of international development studies sought writers which were overtly conscious of their marginality. The most readily available marginal text often gained status. Availability over accuracy becomes the dominant criteria for popularity of "marginal" representations. The closeness to Western culture, or way of thinking, would facilitate exposure as the text could be easily consumed by the West. The West sets the conditions in which Rigoberta must fit (in

order to be accepted) before she is able to represent her reality/identity.³¹ As a result the texts which were selected as "marginal" are generally a result of the author/subjects connection to neocolonial pedagogy. The act of articulating one's marginal status is reflective of the author's empowered position in having access to the venues of articulation (ie- the right linguistic knowledge, access to publication knowledge and material, the availability of time allocation for the production of knowledge, access to education etc...). In this way what is promoted is not the voice of those who have no voice, instead it is the voice of those with relative privilege or who are inclined to upward mobility within the marginal community.³²

The power inherent in how and what is considered marginality is looked at by Foucault in the following way:

One must not suppose that there exists a certain sphere of "marginality" that would be the legitimate concern of a free and disinterested scientific inquiry were it not the object of mechanisms of exclusion brought to bear by the economic or ideological requirements of power. If "marginality" is being constituted as an area of investigation, this is only because relations of power have established it as a possible object; and conversely if power is able to take it as a target, this is because techniques of knowledge were capable of switching it on. Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority, even if they have specific roles and are linked together on the basis of their difference... Not to look for who has the power in the order of marginality... and who is

³¹ Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity Ibid. p-1-3.

³² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine Ibid p-59.

deprived of it... but to look rather for the pattern of the modifications which the relationships of force imply by the very nature of their process.³³

It may seem hard to view Rigoberta as relatively privileged in comparison to Western standards; however, in the context of her reality Rigoberta is both privileged and inclined toward upward mobility. Rigoberta is the child of a prominent local and national leader, with access to education and language through her contact with dominant discourses as an international representative or "expert". (IRM p- xvii) Rigoberta's leadership is no small achievement, and the strength and commitment her actions require must be acknowledged. There are implications, beyond her personal strength and ability to promote praxis, which a postmodern reader attempting to understand the implications of this text will include.

An in depth investigation into the background of IRM leads one to further questions on the subjectivity of the experience which she claimed reflects the collective Indigenous "reality". Rigoberta is the child of two important community leaders: "In our community there is an elected representative, someone who is highly respected. He's not a king but someone whom the community looks up to like a father. In our village, my father and mother were the representatives." (IRM p- 7) This quote makes evident the privileged position from which Rigoberta "experienced" her

³³Michel Foucault, trans Robert Hurley, The History of Sexuality vol 1 (New York: Pantheon 1978)98-99.

reality. As well, the quote illustrates the phallocentric nature of Rigoberta's community structure.

The political involvement of her family privileges Rigoberta in many ways; primarily Rigoberta's voice holds authority in relation to her family. Her father, who spoke Spanish, was situated in the paradoxical position between two cultures and two ways of thinking. This relatively elite consciousness increased Rigoberta's access to dominant discourses and colonial influences. Rigoberta's privilege makes one question how reflective her reality is of those for whom she is claiming a voice for. Rigoberta's privilege would not be as significant an issue in this text if she did not claim her text represented "Indian" knowledge. Since Rigoberta makes this essentialist claim, the reading of the text becomes increasingly questionable, as it moves from a subjective account to the objective claim of "simply stating the facts".(IRM p-xvii)

The limits of Rigoberta's knowledge of Spanish, and level of formal education prohibit her from engaging in the writing of her own thoughts. Rigoberta is dependent on Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, a Venezuelan living in Paris, to organize and select her voice in order to gain entrance into a mainstream audience. Burgos- Debray conducted a week long series of taped interviews which she then transcribed, and restated the words of Rigoberta. She organized and edited both the questions being asked and the final print version of the answers. What makes this editing different from so much anthropological work is it does not claim authority to

interpret and place value on the experience of the object/person of investigation. Bourgos-Debray attempts to leave the authorship of the experience in the hands of Rigoberta. For this reason IRM is written as first person narrative, implying the text was authored by its own subject.

There are many aspects concerning the methodology used in creating IRM (text) which bring into question how reflective the text is to Rigoberta's reality. One area of concern is the use of a language which is "other" than Rigoberta's mother tongue, a language she has only spoken for three years. (IRM p-xi) With Rigoberta's limited knowledge of Spanish she claims to speak not only for herself but for all Indian peoples of the Americas (IRM p-xi). Having studied languages myself, I remember vividly having to constantly alter my initial meaning to fit my limited foreign vocabulary. This made Derrida's notions of the conservative nature of language worse, as I had to rely on common words and easy to explain phrases. When learning to speak an "other" language compromises are always made necessary in order to assure some level of comprehension. This is often done at the expense of accuracy, where hard to explain concepts and difference get smoothed over or left out. In view of Rigoberta's limited language ability, it is important to remain cautious of how accurately Rigoberta's spanish vocabulary can articulate her thoughts.

Both the translator and the editor are overly cautious of articulating the voice of Rigoberta Menchu as closely as they can. They are so confident in their methodology they

give the impression of complete accuracy. Both the editor and the translator remove themselves from the text in order to make the text seem more authentic:

I soon reached the decision to give the manuscript the form of a monologue: that was how it came back to me as I re-read it. I therefore decided to delete all my questions. By doing so I became what I really was Rigoberta's listener...I had to insert linking passages if the manuscript was to read like a monologue. (IRM p-xx)

By deleting herself from the text the editor is hiding her personal agency in altering and affecting the manuscript. The omission of the agency of the editor/author is misleading for many reasons, none more powerful than the ability of the interviewer to influence the outcome of the interview. The beliefs, cultural norms, and subjectivity of the interviewer can have profound effect on the type of questions asked and which part of the response is emphasized, entered or omitted.³⁴ Interviewers can place value on certain aspects of response which they feel are "true" or in line with how they understand the situation.

The selection inherent in the interview process can lead to an emphasis on characteristics which are similar to the belief, culture, behaviour and identity of the interviewer. The appropriation of Indian traditions and beliefs is often done to back up Western theories of development. In this way, Indian experience is investigated for it's usefulness to certain theories: concerning

³⁴ Julia Emberley, Thresholds of Difference Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writings, Postcolonial Theory (Toronto:University of Toronto Press 1993)112.

feminism, ecology, the environment, and in the perpetuation of global trade. The information obtained in cross cultural interviews can be seen as a reappropriation of the Indian self through the colonial forces of ideology.³⁵ Similar to Edward Said notion of "Orientalism", one can see how certain cultural stereotypes are investigated which reinforces Western notions of "other".

IRM emerged in a climate of profound intellectual reorganization. It is difficult to look at IRM without the realization that the audience has influenced both content and interpretation of the text. The methodology used in IRM is sensitive to recent knowledge centred around the deconstruction of power and knowledge. Elizabeth Bourgos-Debray makes evident the process from which the text emerged. The introduction is filled with detailed accounts of the process of information gathering. The main text is void of any recognition of the influence the translator and the editor/author brought to the text. As stated earlier, the author deleted signs of her influence, in the form of her questions, from the text. The detailed methodology described in the introduction can be seen as a progressive step towards making the context and subjectivity evident in the creation of knowledge. An example of what we can learn as readers from a self-evident methodological style can be seen in the following excerpt from the introduction where

³⁵ Julia Emberley, 1993 *ibid.* p-111-112. and please see - Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870 (Winnepeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd 1980)

Burgos-Debray describes her background in relation to the text:

I have never studied Maya-Quiche culture and have never done fieldwork in Guatemala. Initially, I thought that knowing nothing about Rigoberta's culture would be a handicap, but it soon proved to be a positive advantage. I was able to adopt the position of someone who is learning. (IRM p-xix)

Although one might not agree that ignorance leads to objectivity, the expression of the editor's concerns enables the reader to understand some of the text biases. Once the editor and the translator are viewed as contributing forces in the construction of the text, the broader implications of the purpose of the text become more evident. The text stems from a social location in time which will influence how and why it was created and how it is understood.

Debates have raged, in development discourse, around the possible ramifications of the North American Free Trade Deal, and the globalization of production. Feminist and "Third World" scholars have looked at how women and other marginalized groups have been affected by the globalization of production.³⁶ In accordance with this research, IRM downplays the differential impact these forms of production have on women. Rigoberta portrays gender as a subordinate foundation for social agency, and social determination. Rigoberta focuses on class and race divisions as the primary forces in her reality, by looking at class or race in

³⁶ see Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis (London: Zed Press 1991) AND Beneria Lourdes, Shelly Feldman, ed Unequal Burden: Economic Crisis, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work (Boulder: Westview Press 1992)

isolation, or as the overriding force, suppressing the view of oppression and agency as multiple, interconnected, and mutually reinforcing. Rigoberta's focus on class and economic disparity, paves a path for development practitioners who view job creation as the "solution" for the economically marginal. Implying that divisions between people will disappear as income disparity grows narrower. IRM is less threatening to the status quo as it's focus on class does not include more radical conceptions of oppression. This focus of oppression makes IRM more popular to mainstream development which seeks the liberalization of free enterprise. A more radical interpretation of marginal reality (i.e.- the life testimony of an industrial home worker) makes it more difficult to justify increased investment by foreign companies or setting up free trade zones under the guise of improving the lives of "Third World" peoples. It cannot be assumed that Rigoberta consciously attempts to advocate foreign investment as the primary solution to her economic inequalities; however, all texts have the possibility of misappropriation of its content. A postmodern self-critical reading and writing of text attempts to promote the creation of a text which can be "used without excuse".³⁷

³⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine Ibid p-129.

In Her Words?

The purpose of IRM is to break silence and create an identity for the indigenous population of Guatemala. In order to do this Rigoberta must compromise her own words for those of the language of the colonizers. With increased connection to Spanish Rigoberta becomes subjected to the ideological influences inherent in the language of the dominant discourses of Guatemala. Inscribed in language and communication is the vision or world view of the hegemonic cultural form.³⁸ Rigoberta's comprehension of the power in language is exposed when she describes how her community avoids linguistic interaction with the dominant discourses of the colonizers. (IRM p-9 -170) For Rigoberta, language and culture is integrated, as the many indigenous languages are seen as accompanied by corresponding cultural differences. The different cultural and linguistic traditions of the diverse communities in Guatemala are explained by Rigoberta in the following ways:

What happens in Guatemala is that the Quiche language is the most common. The main languages are Quiche, Cakchiquel and Mam, and from these three mother languages spring all the other languages found here. However one ethnic group doesn't all speak the same language. For instance, the Lxiles are Quiches but they don't speak Quiche and their customs differ from those of the Quiche. So there's a conglomeration of ethnic groups, languages, customs and traditions, and even though there are three mother languages, that doesn't mean we all understand each other. We don't. (IRM p-143)

This passage illustrates how Rigoberta links language

³⁸ Susan Gal, "Between Speech and Silence: The Problematic of Research on Language and Gender" in Micaela di Leonardo, Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era Ibid p-196-197.

together with culture. The understanding of the connection between language and culture helps deconstruct how an "other" culture's language carries with it the ideology and tradition of that culture. The acknowledgment of the biases (culture/ ideology) which exists in language does not mean language cannot be used to create change.

Rigoberta is in the paradoxical situation of speaking in a language which is encoded by the hegemony, while simultaneously attempting to articulate notions of "difference". The frustration of attempting to express difference in another language is articulated by Gloria Anzaldua:

Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity - I am my language...Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speaker rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, White. I will have my serpent's tongue - my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice.³⁹

The deconstruction of language in IRM makes it clear how the function of language allows Rigoberta to express difference, but not difference which is equal. In order to eliminate this inequality in language a postmodern deconstruction of language leads to a self-critical reading and writing of language, exposing the biases inherent in the production of

³⁹ Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute 1987) p-59.

meaning. One goal of this paper is to contribute to the growing desire for a self-reflexive writing/criticism which questions the boundaries, authorities, as well as the margins.⁴⁰

In the previous chapter, I discussed the discursive construction of language; however, what needs to be expanded is how one creates a sense of themselves through language.⁴¹ In IRM, Rigoberta denies the influence Spanish had on her way of thinking, seeing the inability of her community to speak Spanish as a hindrance in their defence and unity. (IRM p-164) Although Rigoberta is critical of the difficulties in language, she does not question the prevailing dominance of Spanish as the mediating language. Rigoberta accepts the prevalence of Spanish for the sake of simplicity and unity. Glossing over the ideological influences language contains, Rigoberta refers to the political choice she made to learn the language of her oppressors in order to use it against them. The power associated with Spanish was evident as the frustration of exclusion from authority and power (through language) was used by the upper classes in Guatemala to keep the indigenous population separated and controlled:

This was the first time my father went to prison.

⁴⁰ This is further illustrated in Hutcheon's notion of the "ex-centric" of postmodernism. This Postmodern writing from a decentred perspective, where "the centre no longer holds". See Linda Hutcheon, A Poetic of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (Cambridge:Routledge 1988)12.

⁴¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine Ibid p-176.

My brother said, "We don't know what to do for him because the lawyers say Papa will be in jail for eighteen years. We need money to get educated people to help us." In Guatemala this is what happens with the poor, especially Indians, because they can't speak Spanish. The Indians can't speak up for what he wants. (IRM p-102)

IRM claims the voice of an Indigenous women in Guatemala through the eyes of a British/Third World academic which is translated by a Western academic into English. At each stage of the metamorphosis of Rigoberta's testimony it is subjected to further integration into the discourses and subjectivity of those producing the text. The translator and editor have Western associations which codify how they understand Rigoberta's identity and experience. The consciousness and agency of both the translator and the editor affect the politics of the translation, editing, and ultimately, the production of the text.⁴²

To learn Spanish Rigoberta turns to her oppressors for education. Rigoberta learns Spanish from Catholic nuns and from political doctrines of protest in Latin America. Frantz Fanon in Black Skin White Masks sees language as embedded in a cultural way of thinking. Rigoberta's choice "to speak a language (spanish) is to take on a world, a culture."⁴³ Encoded in the language of Catholic religion and revolutionary politics is the ideology which perpetuates a bias of race, class, gender, and religion implicit in these

⁴² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine Ibid p-181-182.

⁴³ Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks trans. Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove Press Inc 1967)38.

schools of thought. Rigoberta enters into the language of her oppressor in an attempt to articulate her reality. This reclaiming of the language, to articulate the plight of the oppressed, removes Rigoberta from the direct meaning generated and believed in the marginal location of the Indigenous population of Guatemala. Since Rigoberta comes from an oral tradition of knowledge, her involvement in mainstream formal education removes her further from her traditional education. The ideological power inherent in language and education has an impact on the consciousness and identity of those within it.⁴⁴ With Rigoberta's choice to learn Spanish, she has dislocated or separated herself from the people she is claiming a voice for. Rigoberta's claim of possessing an "objective" voice for her people is one of the major problems in this work. A postmodern analysis makes it impossible to see language (in this case in the form of a testimonial) as separate from the subjectivity and ideology in time and place in which the language is received and written. Although this recognition of the limitation of language will not provide the author/reader with a better or more accurate way of articulating the "truth", it will dispel the notion that language is neutral and therefore not political.

One contradiction in Rigoberta's testimony surrounds the issue of power and language. On one hand Rigoberta is conscious of the power contained in linguistic expression

⁴⁴Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks Ibid p-20-21.

between her culture and Spanish Guatemala. Rigoberta articulates how the Indigenous population hides by not speaking of their traditions in order to keep them safe from outside interpretation and influence:

We Indians have always hidden our identity and kept our secrets to ourselves. This is why we are discriminated against. We often find it hard to talk about ourselves because we know we must hide so much in order to preserve our Indian culture and prevent it being taken away from us. So I can only tell you very general things about the nahaul. (IRM p-20)

The contradiction arises as Rigoberta fails to make the connection to how language affects her thinking as she becomes more involved in Spanish. A postmodern understanding of language does not change the political desire to use language of the oppressors against them. (IRM p-xii)

A postmodern conception of language expands Rigoberta's understanding of language so she is able to be critical of the ideological forces imbedded in her words. Judith Butler explains this concept in her book Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity :

It is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category "women", the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought.⁴⁵

To deconstruct the language in IRM is to investigate how ideology infiltrates Rigoberta's language and how it can restrict her conception of change.

⁴⁵ Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge 1990)2

Derrida's notion of the construction of meaning in language may be useful in understanding how Rigoberta articulated her reality. Derrida's illustration of the meaning of words in relation to time and place, indicates the problems associated with the use of an "other's" language when describing a different cultural reality. The use of a language can be misleading if the inherent cultural biases are not taken into consideration as a manipulating force.

Rigoberta's analysis is similar to Derrida's theories of language as cultural and temporal; however, she denies the impact ideological influences in religious and language have on her identity. This ignores any connection between religion and the forces of her oppression. The cultural transfer of beliefs often occurs through language and education which perpetuate cultural ideologies under the guise of religious faith. The following example from IRM can be seen as an example of how cultural beliefs are passed on and reclaimed:

It's twice the work for us, because we have to learn the doctrine, and we have to learn to pray...We just had to memorize the prayers they tell us to use and add them to our own. Everything has to be in our own language. Well, sometimes it's something we do, not because we understand it, but because that's the way it has to be. Because I remember that at first the prayers weren't even in Spanish but in Latin or something like that. So although it's something we say and express with all our faith, we don't always understand what it means. Since the priests don't know our language and they say the prayers in Spanish, our job is to memorize the prayers, and the chants... At first, I really didn't understand what this whole Catholic' thing was, but I was ready to open myself to it all the same. So I began teaching the doctrine in our community. (IRM p-81)

The previous passage shows how Rigoberta embraced an "other"'s knowledge without examining the implications and ramifications of how, why, and where this knowledge was developed. This passage also makes evident how certain colonial values are reified through Rigoberta's acceptance of a European based religion.

If we look at the title of the book I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala in relation to it's binary opposites we deconstruct the deeper meaning within the title. Similar to Patricia Hill-Collins analysis, words in the title are connected to the inferior half of a number of binary opposites.⁴⁶ The title can be viewed as follows White -over- Indian, men - over - women, First World - over- Third world. Looking at the binary opposites this title sets up how difference is expressed but not difference which is equal.

The title IRM gives the impression of subjectivity with the use of the term 'I'. However, the title brings an end to any further recognition of subjectivity, as the introduction and first section of the book are filled with claims of essentialist notions of Indian identity.(IRM p-1) The title is an example of Rigoberta defining herself in relation to Western, white, male signifiers as they are the superior half of a binary opposition. In relation to the presumed norm (white, Western, male) is how Rigoberta defines herself

⁴⁶ Patricia Hill Collins, in Joan Hartman and Ellen Messer-Davidow, ed. (En) Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1991) p-47.

Indian, women, and "Third World". The title can be seen as an example of Rigoberta writing herself into a role for an audience. This may not be Rigoberta's overt purpose, however, it results from the structure of linguistic expression. Implicit in communication is the comparison to the "other" and the desire for recognition in relation to the dominant signifier.

Rigoberta prioritizes her own agency into categories which reflect issues set out by hegemonic Western culture.⁴⁷ Rigoberta is an "Indian" before a "women" prior to her location in Guatemala. The prioritizing of Rigoberta's location in the final, or least important position within her self defining title, implies the connection of "Indian" and female identity over the specific cultural circumstances of her identity. The expression of Rigoberta's location as the least defining element separates Indian identity with social location. This implies racial identity has an existence separate from its location. Rigoberta puts forth the idea that Indian peoples can be united around their common identity regardless of geographic differences. Although it is important to understand the

⁴⁷ This is the idea that oppression can be understood not as a multiple discursive construct but as a result of certain distinct forces which are seen as autonomous rather than overlapping. A notable example, which has been previously stated, is the primacy of class analysis over other forms of oppression within traditional marxist schools of thought. Please note that there has been a constituted effort by socialist feminists to point out the interconnected nature of oppression. See Shiela Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, Hilary Wainwright, Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism (London:Merlin Press 1979)

trends in oppression, difficulties arise when the forms of an oppression are assumed to be the same. This can lead to stereotypes of oppressive reality and a monolithic notion of the forces which created it.

The following passage from IRM is on the birth of a male child. A deconstruction of the language used to explain gender roles can illustrate what gender relation in Rigoberta's community are. It is possible to learn much about the gender dynamic in a community by what is not said:

When a male child is born, there are special celebrations, not because he's male but because of all the hard work and responsibility he'll have as a man. It's not that machismo doesn't exist among our people, but it doesn't present a problem for the community because it's so much part of our way of life. The male child is given an extra day alone with his mother. The usual custom is to celebrate a male child by killing a sheep or some chickens. Boys are given more, they get more food because their work is harder and they have more responsibility. At the same time, he is head of the household, not in the bad sense of the word, but because he is responsible for so many things. This does not mean girls aren't valued. Their work is hard too and there are other things that are due to them as mothers... The earth is like a mother which multiplies life. So the girl child will multiply the life of our generation and of our ancestors whom we must respect... Nevertheless, the community is always happier when a male child is born and the men feel much prouder. (IRM p-14)

This codification of male superiority in Rigoberta's community is based on an assumed culturally signified biological superiority. Rigoberta's understanding of her community's attitude is based on the perceived contribution men made to their community. Men in her community are seen as "responsible" and economically secure. The male bias undervalues women's economic activities and unpaid work.

What is interesting in relation to this passage is Rigoberta assuming a defensive posture against anticipated Western condemnation, implying again that this text was written to be consumed by a Western audience.

Rigoberta is attempting to justify her cultures beliefs from the standpoint of tradition - "its so much part of our way of life". (IRM p-14) Rigoberta recognizes that machismo functions as a force in her community; however, it is not seen as "presenting a problem for the community." ⁴⁸ This demonstrates how behaviour and knowledge which is oppressive to Rigoberta is perpetuated through the assumed neutrality of tradition.

In IRM, Rigoberta provides another disclaimer on the value of girls in her community, based on their ability to give birth. Rigoberta explains the status of girls in relation to their role as mothers. The focus on motherhood is seen as a natural biological response for women as they are closer to the earth as givers of life. This view is held by some strains of eco-feminism who look at women's natural role as environmentalist based on their connection as

⁴⁸ Machismo and Marianismo are two concepts believed to effect the socialization of many/some Latin American people in a profound manner. These two concepts have assimilated elements from both Catholic church and sexist stereotypes. Machismo is explained by Evelin Stevens, Qtd in June Nash, ed Women and Change in Latin America (Massachusetts: Bergin and Gravey Publishers 1986)p-299. as " the cult of virility, an exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in male -to- male interpersonal relationships." Marianismo is explained as 'the cult of female spiritual superiority which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior and spiritually stronger than men.'

mothers to the reproduction of life. This belief can be seen in the work of Vandana Shiva Staying Alive :

Women of the Third World have been dispossessed of their base for sustenance, but not of their minds, and in their uncolonized minds are conserved the oppositional categories that make the sustenance of life possible for all. The producers of life alone can be its real protectors. Women embedded in nature, producing life with nature, are therefore taking the initiative in the recovery of nature.⁴⁹

The view of women as connected to nature, through a female principle, reinforces the notion that it is women's natural role to reproduce. Rigoberta holds women's role up as mothers in order to reclaim value for women. In this way IRM has elements which are appealing to some of the more radical strains of eco-feminism, which claim female superiority based on their close connection with nature.

In IRM, Rigoberta states that "the earth is like a mother which multiplies life".(IRM p-14) This is followed by a value judgment claiming the male sex has a higher cultural status: "the community is always happier when a male child is born and the men feel much prouder"(IRM p-14). The cycle of male superiority, is perpetuated through the customs Rigoberta experienced in her community. These customs are perpetuated into material reality as the boys are given better care and more food. The female child gets trapped in the web of malnutrition and submissive behaviour based on the community's assumptions of female inferiority. Gender attitudes become reified into the thinking of both

⁴⁹ Vandana Shiva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development (London:Zed Press 1989)47

the women and men of a community. For men, it is difficult to come to grips with their personal privilege when they are socialized with the ideological belief of male superiority. Men's privilege proliferates in society where male superiority has been reified into "the way it is". This hinders the political efficiency of women's groups as men are generally less likely to be willing allies in altering the system which provides them with privileges.⁵⁰ The ability to rationalize their oppression on moral grounds, (ie- women as more moral through their natural connection to nature/earth) makes Rigoberta less likely to challenge the existing patriarchal structures. Instead Rigoberta understands Machismo as not presenting a problem for the community because it's so much "part of our way of life".(IRM p-14)

Tradition is often used as a mechanism for passing on oppressive behaviour and attitude which are reified as part of the community's traditional history. Gita Sen and Caren Grown members of DAWN, a "Third World" women's collective, state in Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives that:

Traditions have always been a double-edged sword for women. Subordinate economic and social status, and restrictions on women's activity and mobility are embedded in most traditional cultures, as our research over the last fifteen years has shown. The call to cultural purity is often a thinly veiled attempt to continue women's subjugation in a rapidly changing society. But traditions and culture also divide women

⁵⁰ Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and the Revolution in Nicaragua" Feminist Studies 11 (2): 226-254 1985.

themselves, since traditions and practices often vary across classes in the same society.⁵¹

This should not imply that all traditions need to be rejected, instead traditions which adhere to consciousness-raising and self empowerment need to be reclaimed.

If one views tradition as an ideological construct, which is passed on between generations, we can see how certain beliefs and behaviour is perpetuated. If traditions are questioned and self-reflective, they are more likely to be in conjunction with the needs and desires of a culture in their current time and location. I am not calling for a rejection of tradition; instead, I am merely stating tradition should not be held outside the realms of public scrutiny. As a female white Westerner it is difficult and inappropriate for me to criticize Rigoberta's culture. I am attempting, however, to point out how tradition is partially determined as a discursive ideological construct, and subsequently can be looked at in its broader implications regarding social formation and perpetuation.

Having made overt my Western reading of Rigoberta's text, I must state my understanding of tradition, as an ideology, can be conceptualized very differently. Rigoberta understands her tradition as linked to an ancestral chain stretching back generations. In this way she may be more defensive about radical changes in her traditional life on the foundation that she owes it to her ancestors and future

⁵¹ Sen Gita, and Grown Caren, Development, Crisis, and alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives (New York: New Feminist Library- Monthly Review Press 1987)p-76.

generations to pass on her tradition. As I come from a subject position outside of Rigoberta's tradition I have problems conceptualizing tradition in the same way. I am, however, willing to take responsibility for my conceptualization of tradition as reflective of my subjectivity in time and place. We all have agency in influencing the discursive realities in which we live, when we place tradition into the particular temporal location in which it functions, we can reevaluate the assumptions of the past in relation to the creation of the future.

A Postmodern Methodological Reading

When a word is spoken it is always connected to the subjectivity of the person speaking. In speech it is understood that the subjectivity of the person influences the meaning of the word. The act of speaking places the information into a temporal location. In this way the articulation of knowledge is generally placed in an appropriate context. When a word is written it loses the sense of subjectivity from the speaker, as the written text serves to distance the word from it's source. Written histories have been prioritized as closer to the "truth". The priority of the written text is owing to the primacy of the written text over oral traditions. The quest for "truth" through scientific inquiry, has proliferated into

many different methodologies and disciplines.⁵² The assumed neutrality of empirical literature in development discourse informed cross-cultural policy, training, and practice which is protected under the banner of promoting the common good.⁵³ Postmodernism brings into question how authority is given to texts, written and oral. Postmodernism places the text into the discursive socio-political context of power and knowledge. The process of valuing the written text over the oral should not imply authenticity or legitimacy, but, can be seen as a function of power with a given temporal location.⁵⁴

Both Rigoberta and Burgos-Debray are embedded in the belief that "truth" can be understood through "experience", or from a standpoint of oppression. This can be seen in the following quotation by Burgos-Debray:

The voice of Rigoberta Menchu allows the defeated to speak. She is a privileged witness: she has survived the genocide that destroyed her family and community and is stubbornly determined to break the silence and to confront the systemic extermination of her people...Her story is overwhelming because what she has to say is simple and true...
(IRM introduction p- xiii)

⁵² Please see Empirical Science of Literature and Constructivist Theory of Literature which were developed in the 1980's - some major thinkers are Hugo Dingler, Immanuel Kant, Tony Bennett, and Anthony Esthope.

⁵³ Caroline Moser, Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training (London: Routledge 1993)7

⁵⁴ Steve McCaffery, "Language Writing from Productive to Libidinal Economy" (1980) in North of Intention (Toronto: Nightwood Editions 1986)144.

Critiques against knowledge based on experience does not imply Rigoberta is not accurate in assessing the events of her life, they merely point out the text is a subjective assessment. The editor looks at Rigoberta's position as a "privileged witness" from her standpoint as an oppressed women. Based in her experiences Rigoberta's testimony is presented as "simple and true".(IRM introduction) Universal claims of "truth" are particularly problematic when experience is used as the foundation for knowledge about others.

Rigoberta relies heavily on the accuracy of her memory to recount the events of her past - even before her own birth.(IRM p-p-3-5) Rigoberta's identity is constructed out of the fragments of her selected memory. Christopher Dewdney points out the problematic associated with basing one's identity on the fragile temporal existence of memory:

You assume that your memory is the only thing that stays the same in a constantly changing world. All else may change, but the fact that you did a certain thing at a certain time does not. In reality every memory transforms over time, embellished by your own transformations and mutated by the light of the present...We suppress or revise our memories according to our present circumstances. Furthermore, if self consists of a model that we construct largely out of memory, and if personal memory is hobbled by larger discontinuities, then what is the self? It is full of holes, memory gaps...What we perceive as self is only an aggregate of index memories, appropriated personas and revisionist histories...⁵⁵

Pointing out the problems associated with memory, brings us into negotiation with the text in a new way. If a reader

⁵⁵ Christopher Dewdney, The Secular Grail: Paradigms of Perception (Toronto: Somerville House Publishing 1993)50-51.

understands history based on the memory of experience the reader can miss that the text is an interpretation of the past in relation to the present. The Current consciousness of the subject/writer must be accounted as having an effect on the text. Not negating what is being said, simply reexamines how the meaning of the text is generated and for what purpose.

- Conclusion -

The purpose of this text was to gain validation for the plight of the marginal peoples of Guatemala in order to encourage solidarity for change. This objective was extremely successful as many people have held this work up as an "honest" or "truthful" account of life in the margin of Guatemala. We can of course speculate about why this book has been valued at this particular time and space in intellectual thinking. This is not to say IRM is not an important text; instead, one can view the text for its broader interpretation in the global ideological apparatus of intellectual authority and power.

A postmodern reading cannot be separated from writing, as to read is in itself the act of re-writing/re-reading.⁵⁶ In development discourse our power as writers and readers of "other" cultures should not be beyond question. Just as the text itself is the site of negotiation with the context in which it is prevalent.

⁵⁶ Kathy Mezei, "Reading as Writing/Writing as Reading: The Reader and the Decline of the Writer/ or the Ride and Fall of the Slash" in La Nouvelle Barre du Jour 157 (Sept 1985) 22-25.

**Chapter Three: Demystifying Communication
Interactive Dialogue in Development:
A Postmodern Framework**

In this work you have to constantly fight your enemies, and the greatest enemy is yourself.

-Muhammed Anisur Rahman ¹

Postmodern theories have largely been focused on issues concerning language and writing. These theories, however, are not restricted to an analysis of text. Development practitioners, social scientists, and feminists have expanded postmodern discourse analysis to investigate how political, religious and cultural beliefs create knowledge. Postmodern deconstruction can be empowering for many marginalized voices which are subjugated and suppressed by the dominant discourses in their society. Looking at postmodernism in the context of how development projects function can allow us to examine how knowledge educates all aspects of development discourse. Postmodern discourse provides a venue to conceptualize how development functions as a force in the discursive construction of a social reality.²

This chapter attempts to examine how the discourse used in development is shaped by certain beliefs which can come into conflict with seemingly "progressive" forms of development. To illustrate how a postmodern analysis

¹ Rahman, Muhammed Anisur, "The Theory and Practice of Participatory Research" in Orlando Fals Bora, ed. The Challenge of Social Change (London: International Sociological Association 1985)124.

² Christine Faveri, "The Evolution of CIDA's Women in Development Discourse: Shaping Knowledge of Southern Women" (Ottawa: Norman Paterson School Of International Affairs 1992)34-

functions, we will look at a case study of the National Institute of Children and Families (INNFA) in Ecuador. To move beyond an evaluation of the "success" or "failure" of this development project, we will place INNFA into a broader postmodern analysis. The ultimate goal of this chapter is twofold; first to show the extensive difficulties associated with formulating large scale state run development programs; and secondly to advance the theoretical understanding of the function of power through institutions.

Forces which would not normally be seen as having material properties, such as ideology, tradition, faith, racial and sexual stereotypes are seen as contributing and affecting the material world. This expansive postmodern analysis will address some of the politically paralyzing aspects of both traditional Marxist emphasis on class, and monolithic notions of global feminism.³

In order to do justice to INNFA's practice, we will examine INNFA in a historic global analysis. This is done by analyzing the economic crisis in Latin America, and its deferential impact on women. This is a particularly important aspect as the INNFA project was designed to address many of the immediately perceived needs of women and children in Ecuador. The dominant discourses at play in Latin America function through a multitude of material and ideological forces: geo-political positioning, legal

³ global Feminism -Which tends to universalize women's agency into a generic, monolithic, Western- white - middle class category.

systems, institutions, culture, traditions, religions, ideologies, racism, patriarchy and economic positioning. These forces will be examined for their effect on women's consciousness, women's material condition, and women's ability to promote social change. This is not to say the ideological and material forces of the dominant ideologies are not felt by men; however, the differential impact on women tends to be more severe as women in Ecuador are also affected by an ideology of male supremacy.

The final section of this chapter addresses how INNFA functions in accordance with its self-defined methodology and goals. INNFA attempts to be sensitive to alternative types of knowledge; however, this methodology fails to be maintained in the practice of this large bureaucratic institution. There are numerous contributing factors for INNFA's divergence away from its goals. These factors should be viewed as a result of conflicting interests, both internal and external to INNFA, which compete for legitimation, and hinder the daily functioning of INNFA. By looking at a broader conception of the discursive reality in which INNFA functions, a more extensive understanding will emerge of how alternative development projects can function unwittingly as perpetuators of dominant discourses and existing power structures. The reality in which INNFA functions should not be seen as an overdetermined static reality. Instead INNFA functions at the site of an ongoing discursive process in which conflicting forces are

constantly juxtaposed: locked between its progressive methodology and its pragmatic functioning.

Internally INNFA pays lip service to the recognition and integration of Indigenous knowledges. In practice, types of marginalized knowledge are often glossed over, under the pretence of helping the "greater good". The criteria used to inform decision making in a development project can be a telling example of which knowledge is prioritized and which is under valued. The priorities, language, and communication involved in the functioning of a development project are all venues through which knowledge as power is transferred. By looking at INNFA in relation to project development, implementation, and evaluation one can investigate the connection between power and knowledge at work in the Ecuadorian development community.

The purpose of this section is to describe the goals of INNFA.⁴ This will include an explanation of both the methodology from which the data was obtained, and INNFA's self-defined methodology. The goal of this section is to expose the reification process embedded in development policy formulation, planning, and implementation.

Every development project operates within a certain time and location. It is highly problematic to use a "successful" project as a model for development.

⁴ Please note the information gathered for this paper was conducted in 1990-91. We are attempting to look at this development project only within and from our understanding of the information available at this time. In this way we are looking at the past in relation to our present understanding of the debates around postmodern discourse.

Implementation of a development model in another time or location, runs the very real risk of being inappropriate and unsuccessful. This is not to say we cannot learn from the study of both "successful" and "unsuccessful" projects. When formulating development policy it is necessary to investigate the material and ideological realities of the specific place and time in which the project operates. This will help in formulating an appropriate project, which is more likely to "succeed", and be reflective of the participants needs in time and place. By placing INNFA's practice against it's theory, the larger forces of "power" can be understood as restricting meaningful change.

The National Institute of Children and Families

The roots of National Institute of Children and Families (INNFA), stem from the Presidency of Dr. Jose Volasco Ibarra in the 1960's. President Ibarra founded the National Patron of the Child, to enhance the commitment of the government and encourage private organizations in the protection of children.⁵ The National Patron of the Child's mandate included: nutrition, programs for mentally and physically challenged youth, orphan projects, and job training for juvenile delinquents. Assisted by the petroleum profits in the 1970's, Ibarra's projects evolved into the National Institute of Children and Families in 1980. INNFA's mandate included coordination and

⁵ Program de Desarrollo Infantil, "Manual de Administration de Fondos" (Quito: INNFA 1990)1-5.

collaboration with other organizations at work in Ecuador with similar goals, including organizations which focused on the advancement of women. In 1984 INNFA commissioned an extensive self-analysis to determine how closely the institution fulfilled its goals. As a result of this report, and INNFA's commitment to self-critique, INNFA has developed into the organization I witnessed in 1990-1991. INNFA is funded directly by: the government of Ecuador, donations from national and international institutions, donations from individuals - in the form of public fund raising, and funding provided by foreign governments and international aid organizations (ie UNICEF).⁶

The Child Development Program or PDI (Programa de Desarrollo Infantil) was the location of my field placement during the winter of 1991. The information gathered during my placement was collected in the following manner: literature review of the institutional internal memos and public propaganda, and observations collected during a ten week placement in Chirihauasi (a rural community)- where I worked on a daily basis in a daycare centre. Further information was gathered at the regional office in Quito, where I carried out informal interviews with INNFA employees and with participants in the daycare centre in Chirihauasi and Ibarra. The remainder of my placement was spent observing and participating in the day to day activities of

⁶ Programa de Desarrollo Infantil, "Manual Operativo de las Unidades Moviles", Hacia una Movilizacion Nacional por los Ninos (Quito: INNFA 1990)

the regional office, including numerous field visits, workshops and community meetings. The nature of the research for this chapter has limited empirical documentation as much of the information was gathered through informal interviews, and is a reflection of the lack of written history and methodology of many development projects. Although there was plenty of written information on INNFA's daily functioning, larger patterns of organizational dynamics were lacking. For this reason documentation in this chapter is sparse and my personal interpretation of the events occurring at INNFA during my placement should be seen as highly subjective.

In no way should this suggest that the methodology used in obtaining this information was flawless, as it was a reflection of my understanding of the issues in 1990-91. In order to encourage the normal functioning of INNFA and the community I attempted to be unobtrusive. I now know it was not possible to deny my personal agency, and disregard my "authority" as a white Western development student. I would like to state that my chosen methodology - as an objective observer/participant - I now feel was highly problematic. It is impossible to extract personal agency from the discursive construction of reality, as the empirical methodologies would have us understand. As development practitioners our role in producing and perpetuating, value coded knowledge of and about the "Third World" should be undertaken with extreme caution and awareness of the influence this authority can have.

The Child development programme (PDI) functions as an institutional apparatus of the national community-run daycare program. The PDI is the administrative level responsible for the restructuring of the system of child care. INNFA is structured hierarchically with the PDI filling the upper echelons with senior policy "experts" and operational department staff. The main purpose of the PDI is to supervise the administration and implementation of daycare centres, ensuring the implementation of INNFA's mandate and methodology.⁷ According to INNFA's policy, any organized community which is committed to the project, can receive funding for the implementation of a child-development centre.⁸ The PDI acts as an overseer of the community run Child Development Centres CDI (Centro de Desarrollo Infantil). These CDI's exist to provide child care for children between infancy and 6 years of age.⁹ The CDI are run by neighbourhood care givers who are assisted by a committee of parents. Parental participation is the foundation of the CDI. INNFA's role is limited to administration, funding, training and guidelines. Instead of

⁷ The function of the PDI is similar to what Caroline Moser calls a high level steering committee. Caroline Moser, Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice & Training (London: Routledge 1993) 132-134.

⁸ The power plays of Ecuadorian politics often played a determining force in the decisions for fund allocation. However, in theory any community could obtain funding for a daycare center if they met the criteria set out by INNFA. This will be looked at in greater detail later on in this paper.

⁹ Programa de Desarrollo Infantil, "Manual Operativo de las Unidades Movies" Hacia una Movilizacion Nacional por los Ninos (Quoto: INNFA 1990) Introduction

hiring professional "outsiders", local people are trained by INNFA to operate and administer the centres. The neighbourhood care givers are trained by INNFA to implement the daily administrative duties of the centre.

Through the centre the children are to receive 70% of their daily food intake, along with recreation, mental and physical stimulation, instruction in health and hygiene, and weight and growth monitoring. Each child receives a grant per month for food and education materials.¹⁰ Since the centres are run by the local people, the objective is for them to include the teachings, skills, values, and popular wisdom of the community.¹¹ Except for the initial funding decisions at the institutional level all other financial matters, including the allocation of the monthly grants, are administered by the committee of parents.

The Child development project is an example of an institution attempting to de-institutionalize itself.¹² The program gives management responsibility to the communities, and attempts to function increasingly as a resource and

¹⁰ Programa de Desarrollo Infantil, Manual de Administration de Fondos" (Quito: INNFA 1990)

¹¹ Michel Foucault, Power and Knowledge - Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" 1970 - and Edward Said, Orientalism 1978 - have all looked at the role of institutions and the education system as powerful agents for the functioning, regulation, and perpetuation of the forces of the dominant discourses. INNFA attempts to place education in the hands of the community; however, this broke down in the daily workings of the institutional-community interaction.

¹² Wendy Fischer, "Participatory Communication on the National Institute of Children and Families" (Quito: Trent University student paper 1991)

information transfer service. The objective is to move continually toward autonomous responsibility by the communities, with INFFA functioning as a resource base for inter-community networking, mobilization, and training.

The short term goals of the project are: 1) to improve the quality of child care, 2) to improve the general health and weight of the children of Ecuador, 3) to relieve pressure from women and extended female family for the responsibility of child care, 4) to mobilize national and international efforts and resources for the implementation of community daycare, and 5) to counteract the ethnocentric curriculum of mainstream education in Ecuador.

INNFA is not merely a program for the poor, it promotes a way of working with communities. The PDI can be seen as a informal adult education program. The child development centres function as an agent for adult education in the form of organizational skills, leadership and consciousness, while challenging the sexual division of labour in Ecuador by including men in child care responsibilities. The daycare methodology works from the principles of participatory development as an agent for community development. The objectives of INNFA are not simply to encourage participation from Ecuadorian communities, it attempts to promote interactive horizontal dialogue between all levels of the organization. The concentration on interactive dialogue is to create an environment from which each community can be a reflection of the priorities of each specific community. INFFA provides the opportunity for child

development, adult education, and community development through the implementation, organization, and running of an INNFA daycare centre.

The long term goals of the project are: 1) the promotion of daycare centres as an agent for community development, 2) mobilization of women in rural and marginal areas through participation, 3) freeing women of the time constraints resulting from responsibility for reproductive and productive labour, and 4) the reassessment of the sexual division of labour.

The formation of daycare centres ideally encourages men to see child care as a joint responsibility. The lack of participation by Ecuadorian men in the daycare centre is a major obstacle the communities must overcome. If men can be incorporated into the committee of parents they may see child care as partially their responsibility.¹³

The structures of INNFA attempt to function in a centralized and a decentralized framework. The dual nature of the framework often affects the organization's efficiency, as the opposing forces in the bureaucratic institution often end up intertwined. This in turn affects the ability of the other to function in accordance with its mandate and methodology. The value of standardization,

¹³ Please note- all families are not monolithic, and in many cases children are cared for by their fathers. Responsibility for childcare varies depending on class, race, culture - in accordance with the multiple forces which create discursive reality. Having said this, I must state during my placement I witnessed very little participation by men in childcare. But again this should not be assumed to be the only possible reality.

efficiency, consistent quality, and a unified direction which is achieved through central control is weighed against participation and community appropriateness.

The demands of the centralized hierarchal institution, greatly impact INNFA's ability to implement its philosophy into the programme development, implementation, and evaluation of the child development centres. A system of communication and evaluation is set up by INNFA in an attempt to connect the (centralized) bureaucracy with the (decentralized) participants. INNFA attempts to promote interactive dialogue between the community and the organizational levels. In theory there is an open awareness of how cultural, class, gender and race infringe on the efficiency of communication. The lines of communication become crossed in the name of "efficiency" and expansion, leaving the knowledge of the communities ignored. In order to do justice to the complexities of the discursive influences which contributed to INNFA's movement away from its objectives, it is helpful to investigate the economic situation in which INNFA functioned.

Debt and the Internationalization of Production

This section will broadly sketch the economic backdrop in which INNFA functions. The economic reality and its material functioning served as highly restrictive constraints toward the fulfilment of INNFA's objectives. To paint the context in which INNFA is situated it is necessary

to consider some generalizations of the economic trends in Latin America.

The turn to neo-classical economic theory in the 1980's has resulted in the view that "Third World" problems were a result of internal factors and distortions caused by state intervention in the free flow of the market.¹⁴ The recent turn to social Darwinism, in lieu of the "keynesian" welfare state, in prominent strains of economic thinking has resulted in an adverse effect on social services.¹⁵ The acceptance of the neo-classical economic model can be seen as a contributing force to the deteriorating social conditions in most areas of the "Third World". The North American Free Trade agreement, and the opening up of other Latin American economies to the market forces of western capitalism are just a few indicators of the increasing supremacy of the "democratic" capitalist market model.

Deterioration of the terms of trade for Latin American primary products, and the failure of the import substitution industrialization policies, led Latin America to export oriented or outward strategies for development.¹⁶ In the 1970's, Latin America sanctioned export-oriented development

¹⁴ Lawrence Harrison, "Finally the Alliance Shows Progress" The Washington Post March 17 1991. Also see Underdevelopment is a State of Mind -The Latin American Case same author.

¹⁵ David Hooey, "The Struggle For Capitalist Hegemony in a Changing World: A Gramscian Analysis of the Rise of Dominance of the New Intellectual and Political Right" (Halifax: St Mary's University Thesis 1992)62.

¹⁶ Gita Sen, Carmen Grown, Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective p-59.

policies, and accepted high levels of commercial loans from petrodollars. The 1980's in Latin America witnessed an end to the availability of private lending, and a stagnation of the development aid which had been prevalent through the "Alliance For Progress". The global recession, in combination with northern protectionist policies, made it difficult for Latin America to gain the required revenue necessary to meet loan payments.¹⁷ What became known as the "debt crisis", can be seen through the net negative outflow from developing countries. In 1986, fifty billion went to the North, where previously, in 1979 there had been an inflow of thirty eight billion to the capital accounts of the South.¹⁸

Latin America experienced a severe balance of payment problem as import prices rose as their export earnings diminished; the cost of foreign credit became unmanageable.¹⁹ One of the few options left to Latin America was to swallow the austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Kari Levitt describes the consequence of large scale borrowing:

The new phenomenon of large-scale private banks lending to developing countries governments, on floating interest rates and short maturities, hailed as a creative initiative of the private sector in the 1970's, proved to be an all round

¹⁷ Gita Sen, Caren Grown, Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective Ibid p-60.

¹⁸ Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis (London: Zed Press 1991)1

¹⁹ Susan Joeke, qtd in Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis Ibid p-2

disaster prolonging and deepening the adjustment of debtor countries to conditions of recession, falling commodity prices and rising interest rates. Adjustment replaced development, finance replaced sensible economics, exports replaced production for domestic use, and crisis management replaced economic and social planning. The human costs have been horrendous.²⁰

The economic crisis increased Latin America's foreign indebtedness, resulting in a decrease in the per capita national income. This has resulted in subsequent negative growth rates of formal employment, and an increase in the informal sector.²¹

As structural adjustment policies pried open the economies of the "Third World" to foreign corporations, there has been a reorganization of global production.²² The effect of the debt crisis and internationalization of production are shaped by: a country's geo-political position, its integration into the global economy, and their natural resource base (which includes a complacent labour force - or human capital).²³ The internationalization of production must be looked at in relation to its differential impact on the most marginalized sector of the economy -

²⁰ Kari Levitt, "Debt, Adjustment and Development Looking to the 1990's" Economic and Political Weekly (July 21 1990) 1585.

²¹ Diane Elson, "The Impact of Structural Adjustment of Women Concepts and Issues" (London: Institute for African Alternatives - City University) Paper presented at a conference on the impact of IMF and World Bank policies on the people of the "Third World" 1987.

²² Mark Neufeld, "Increasing the Burden of Third World Women" Globe & Mail September 22, 1992.

²³ Lourdes Beneria, Shelly Feldman, ed. Unequal Burden: Economic Crisis, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work (Boulder: Westview Press 1992)p-6

women and children. The impact of the economic crisis is especially important when analyzing INNFA, as women have generally remained the sole supporters of child development centres.

For the people of Latin America "No hay alternative" - are there no alternatives? Perhaps now, in this time of crisis of knowledge --with dissatisfaction with the dominant neo-classical paradigm, and with the historic foundations of the nation state surrendering to the transnational trade -- it is an appropriate time for a closer look at the effects the crisis has on the discursive construction of reality. In order to develop alternative vision for the future there needs to be an investigation of how development institutions reinforce dominant discourses while suppressing alternative knowledge. Development students must learn to be conscious of the way development discourse becomes "power" by deconstructing how it functions in development projects. This reconceptualization will eventually lead to greater sensitivity to how, what, and who's knowledge is being suppressed and why. The inner workings of a large bureaucratic machines can work as a controlling force suppressing marginal discourses, as alternative knowledge is literally buried under mounds of bureaucratic regulations, and paperwork, thereby prioritizing institutional efficiency over practical functioning. In this way we can see how institutional methodology and knowledge translates into INNFA's "power" over the lives of those they are trying to empower.

The Differential Impact on Women

Structural adjustment policies and the debt crisis affect women of Latin America in many ways. There is a slight emphasis in this section on how the crisis has affected women in their "productive" role. This is in part a reflection of the type of literature available; however, this should not downplay the significance of the impact this crisis has had on women's health, self-defined quality of life, and the overall social conditions for women. The differential impact on women is important in relation to the functioning of INNFA, as it had a severe impact on the community's ability to participate. The economic crisis increased each community's need for INNFA's services and funding. The increase in needs of children in Ecuador during the 1980's, and increased demand for childcare associated with increased female participation in the labour force, altered the power dynamic between the funding institute and the communities. The power dynamic between the community and INNFA became increasingly lopsided in favour of the institution. The shift in power relations associated with this increase in need can be seen as a contributing factor in the deterioration of INNFA's initial methodology.

The impact of the economic crisis falls disproportionately on women in Latin America. As household incomes decrease, more women have taken up income-generating activities. The Inter-American Development Bank President, Enrique Iglesias, stated:

The per capita income of the average Latin American

is 9% lower today than it was in 1980. This is the average. In some countries the standard of living has slipped back to what it was 20 years ago. It does not take much imagination to realize that behind this statistic are plummeting real wage levels, soaring unemployment (some open some hidden), increased levels of marginality and acute poverty- in short, an erosion of every measure of social well-being. Today, one third of Latin America's population -130 million people - live in dire poverty.²⁴

Women have entered production in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. High unemployment, in combination with gender stereotypes, has meant women were generally found in low skill and marginal employment, or in the informal sector.²⁵ This is not to say women have not been active members of the economy until this crisis; instead, it points to an increase in the resultant workload of women.

An inaccurate understanding of women's economic activities has resulted in the exclusion of women's contribution from the dominant macro economic policies. Employment is often based on assumed socially constructed

²⁴ Enrique Iglesias, qtd in Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis Ibid p-17.

²⁵ **The informal sector** - is used as a catch-all phrase for economic activities which do not meet the criteria used to define formal sector employment. Informal enterprises are usually small scale, operate with traditional labour intensive production methods and rarely have access to foreign capital. Unionization is rare, and earnings tend to be low and irregular. There is no paid holiday, maternity leave, pension or other social security benefits. Most types of informal employment operates on the margins of the law, with differing degrees of illegality. Please see Lynne Brydon, Sylvia Chant, Women in the Third World: Gender Issues in Rural and Urban Areas (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1989)165.

characteristics of women.²⁶ Not only are women's roles undervalued in reproduction and production, but their unpaid labour, which subsidizes production, is ignored. The majority of national and international policies take for granted the pliant nature of women's work.²⁷ INNFA is no exception to this attitude as it assumes local staff can rearrange the community's schedules (usually only the female parent) in order to make the centre a priority in the allocation of labour.

There has been considerable debate regarding the effect increased participation by women in formal employment will have. The socially constructed perception of women's work has resulted in the feminization of marginal and low skill jobs. The economic crisis has exacerbated the distribution of income by sex. Women's income has fallen to half the average income of men.²⁸ The drop in income for women is felt most severely by female headed households, which make up approximately a third of households in Latin America. To understand the reasons behind this segmentation of the labour force, we must examine the causal influences, which

²⁶ Lourdes Beneria, Martha Roldan, The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontraction, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1987) p-50.

²⁷ Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis Ibid p-24.

²⁸ Arriagada Irma, "Latin American Women and the Crisis: Impact on the Work Market"

are low wages and assumed characteristics of women workers.²⁹

The inclusion of women in the formal sector has brought into question women's position within the inter-household division of labour.³⁰ Women's role in the household is codified leaving the sexual division of labour (SDL) virtually unchanged. The entrenched nature of the SDL in Latin America has meant that within both the work place and the household, the position and exploitation of women has worsened.

The increase in the number of women participating in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy has not resulted in a significant restructuring of the sexual division of labour within Latin American households. Instead women are left with the burden of domestic reproduction as well as their productive roles. The SDL in Latin America is partially based on biological determinism, as it is viewed that women's comparative advantage is reproductive activities.³¹ There needs to be an investigation into how intra-household dynamics and their relations to production are discursively constructed. Examining how these dynamics are discursively constructed will provide an analysis of all

²⁹ Lourdes Beneria, Martha Roldan, The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homeworkers, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1987)45

³⁰ Shelly Feldman, "Current Themes and Issues" in Lourdes Beneria, Unequal Burden Ibid. p-5

³¹ Lourdes Beneria, Shelly Feldman, Unequal Burden Ibid p-10.

members of the household as active agents in the creation of their reality. Conceptualizing the view of women as the victims of oppressive household dynamics, takes agency away from women. A postmodern analysis understands women as active agents in the formation of discursive reality.

The misconceptions of the sexual division of labour have had a detrimental impact on Latin American women. The SDL has increased women's workload, contributing to what became known as women's triple burden - women's productive role, reproductive role, and their role in community management.³² The time constraints associated with increased workload for women has meant INNFA's organizational and labour demands pushed the community's ability to absorb additional work. The fact INNFA requires parent participation in every aspect of the centre is a very important element of participatory development projects. What needs to be addressed is the capacity of women, in each specific community, to absorb additional responsibilities and activities.

There are a number of social constructs which affect Latin American women's ability to express their agency. These forces are felt by all members of a society but their effect can vary depending on the individual's connection to the inferior or superior position in the hegemonic order. In other words, even though we are all active agents in the

³² Caroline Moser, "Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs" World Development (Great Britain: vol-17, no-11, 1989) p-1817.

discursive construction of our reality, there are certain beliefs and assumptions which have been solidified into the social structure of society. These assumptions become encoded into most functions of society: Laws, institutions, education - etc ; acting as a venue for their perpetuation.

Machismo and Marianismo are two concepts which effect the socialization of Latin American people in a profound manner. These concepts have assimilated elements from both the Catholic church and sexist stereotypes. Machismo is explained by Evelin Stevens as "the cult of virility, an exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in male -to- male interpersonal relationships." ³³ Marianismo is explained as "the cult of female spiritual superiority which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior and spiritually stronger than men".³⁴ These two concepts affect the discursive social construct of gender. They are often used in patriarchal societies to justify the oppression of women.³⁵ Looking at ideology as a hegemonic discursive construction one can see how women and subjugated groups can perpetuate their subordination through the internalization of dominant ideological discourses.³⁶ The

³³ Evelin Stevens, qtd in June Nash, ed Women and Change in Latin America (Massachusetts: Bergin and Gravey publishers 1986)299

³⁴ Evelin Stevens, qtd in June Nash, Women and Change in Latin America Ibid p-229.

³⁵ Tracy Ehlers, Silent Looms (San Francisco: Westview Press 1990)135

³⁶ Diane Macdonell, Theories of Discourse an Introduction (New York: Blackwell 1986)25-27

ability to rationalize oppression on moral grounds makes women less likely to challenge the existing patriarchal structures. The ridged SDL within many communities of Ecuador is a serious hindrance to an equal distribution of community responsibilities.

IMF structural adjustment policies require the reorganization of "Third World" economies toward export production of tradeable goods. With the switch to export production, the assumption is the cost of reorganization can be absorbed by the household.³⁷ Jeanne Vickers argues in Women and the World Economic Crisis :

The export-oriented policies required under the IMF adjustment practices have increased women's participation in cash crop production and other foreign exchange activities, but at the same time have devalued the traditional areas of women's work, and subsistence agriculture, and reinforces their marginalization. Micro-level income-generation programmes for women have often, inadvertently, reinforced women's marginalisation from the wider economic process.³⁸

International capitalism's perpetuation of the reification of women's exploitation as cheap labour needs to be addressed. This is important in relation to the current trends of expansion in internationalization of production, and the North American Free Trade Deal.

The encouragement by "Third World" governments of direct foreign investment results in the exploitation of women as the comparative advantage. The exploitive

³⁷ Diane Elson, "From Survival Strategies to Transformation Strategies: Women's Needs and Structural Adjustment" in Lourdes Beneria, Shelly Feldman, Unequal Burden Ibid p-31.

³⁸ Jeanne Vickers, Shelly Feldman, ed Unequal Burden Ibid p-20.

conditions in both the maquiladora free trade zone, and the expansion of industrial homework, can be seen as two examples of the detrimental effects on women in Latin America. There are many reasons and personal rationality for women's incorporation into the feminized industries of the maquiladora sector. Basic needs and survival strategies are important factors in women's decision to work in these industries. A postmodern analysis of discourse focuses on the ideological apparatus which has developed in order to convince women to accept poor conditions.³⁹ A broader level of analysis of discourse looks at how discourse is used to create an environment of acceptance by those outside the experience.⁴⁰

The internationalization of production and the increase in foreign investment has permeated beyond the exploitation of women in formal employment.⁴¹ Peter Even's study on the tertiary sector (or informal sector) discovered a correlation between the level of foreign capital and the

³⁹ This could be in the form of articles on high unemployment, poor working conditions in other areas, or the importance of women's economic contribution, or more subtle forms such as peer pressure, the reification of wealth with happiness. These articles contribute to how women understand themselves and their possible position in the world economic system.

⁴⁰ This might include information surrounding job creation rather than job quality, focusing on the need for a comparative advantage (cheap labour) because of the international division of labour, statistics on the number of women with out jobs, or a concentration on the dismal conditions in the informal sector.

⁴¹ Swasti Mitter, "On Organizing Women in Casualised Work: A Global Overview" in Sheila Rowbotham and Swasti Mitter, ed. Dignity and Daily Bread: New Forms of Economic Organising Among Poor Women in the Third World and the First (New York: Routledge 1994) p-14-49.

growth in the tertiary sector. The expansion of the tertiary in turn results in an increase in income inequalities.⁴²

As Latin America becomes increasingly open to the free flow of the market, there is reason to believe the expansion of the informal sector is likely to continue. The informal sector tends to dichotomize women out of formal employment, as the informal sector becomes more feminized. This is a serious consideration for all "First" and "Third world" development practitioners advocating a basic needs strategy of micro-enterprise lending. As development students, a lot can be understood by looking at the ideological and material criteria which educates women's decision to enter the informal sector.

The decrease in public expenditures, as a result of the structural adjustment policies of the IMF, has had a negative effect on the material conditions in which women function. The burden of supplementing the depleting social services has generally fallen on the shoulders of women. The assumption is women's labour is infinitely elastic - able to stretch to compensate for the reduction of public services.⁴³ Women's role as primary household manager leaves women with the burden of daily household survival. Younger women are increasingly incorporated into the role of

⁴² Peter Evens, "Dependency, Inequality and the Growth of the Tertiary: A Comparative Analysis of the Less Developed Countries" The American Sociological Review 1980 p-531-538.

⁴³ Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis Ibid p-22.

household manager as the economic reality deteriorates. The increase in labour for female members of the household has serious effects on their ability to attend formal education.⁴⁴ The deficiency of education can seriously limit the type of employment women can access, segregating women into less profitable and unstable employment. As development students one needs to question why and how women become responsible for household management and social services. In order to do this an investigation of the ideologies embedded in the discourses used by and around women can lead to a reconceptualization of how and why women are understood to be ultimately responsible for household management.

Misconceptions of household income pooling plagued research into the lives of Latin American women. Income pooling is the notion kin or households pool their resources for the benefit of the collective unit. The concept of household income pooling does not take into consideration access to income, and how income is distributed within the family.⁴⁵ Although no two families are alike, there are generalizations which can shed light on the notion of income pooling.⁴⁶ In some cases income pooling is a useful and

⁴⁴ Gita Sen, and Grown Carey, Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions Ibid p-63.

⁴⁵ Caroline Moser, Gender Planning and Development Theory, Practice and Training (London: Routledge 1993) p-22-24.

⁴⁶ Gita Sen, qtd in June Nash, ed. Women and Change in Latin America (Massachusetts: Bergin and Gravey Publications 1986) p-179.

supportive aspect of Latin American kinship structures. However, there has been a tendency to glorify the effectiveness of income pooling. Often money is used as a form of control within the family. If a women does not have an income of her own, she can find herself in a position of dependence. Even if women have access to income generating activities, they are generally paid less for their work.⁴⁷ Although equal pay in itself would not lead to the liberation of women, it is a necessary step. Today, women in Latin America can only strive to be as exploited as male labour in this unequal international division of labour.⁴⁸

The economic crisis has been felt most severely by women within the income pooling household. Women have had to bear the burden of raised food prices by increasing time spent on shopping for cheaper products and preparing cheaper semi-refined goods. The severity of increasing food prices often results in disproportionately high rates of female malnutrition as scarce food resources are allocated to male household members.⁴⁹ Prolonged malnutrition and deterioration of health in Latin America severely hinders women's ability to be active (economically and otherwise). When looking at INNFA in the context of increased female malnutrition the implications of equitable food distribution

⁴⁷ Swasti Mitter, in Sheila Rowbotham and Swasti Mitter, ed. Dignity and Daily Bread Ibid p-15.

⁴⁸ Michael Pallis, Slaves of Slaves: The Challenge of Latin American Women (London: Zed Press 1980) p-12.

⁴⁹ Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis Ibid p-15.

has important implications for female political participation.

As development students we seek to investigate the ideological constructs which enable men and women to divide the daily work of life. It is not fair to assume the sexual division of labour has not been looked at intently by those living in the "Third World". All people are active agents in their discursive construction, and make rational decisions based on their consciousness in their discursive reality.

The grave human costs of the economic crisis has brought into question IMF austerity policies; leading many to turn to "adjustment with a human face".⁵⁰ In some strains of development discourse there has been a realization that structural adjustment policies have come at too high a cost to the most vulnerable groups within the "Third World".⁵¹ Poor households cannot absorb the excess labour requirement of rising prices and decreased social services and have suffered from decreased ability to survive. The panel of poor households makes it seem unlikely that INNFA can require additional support in the form of labour from this group.

Since the late 1980's the IMF has devoted more attention to the question of "adjustment with a human face".

⁵⁰ Jeanne Vickers., 1991 *ibid* p-43

⁵¹ Please see United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund - 'adjustment with a human face' and 'The World Bank Report 1987' (Washington D.C.: World Bank 1987) also see Dr. Krishna Ahooja-Patel, in Jeanne Vickers 1991- introduction.

There has been a realization that debt must not only be reduced so debtor nations can make payments, but reduction must allow growth, leading to an eventual departure from indebtedness.⁵² Policy suggestions by advocates of "adjustment with a human face" leave out how the structures of oppression (the state, the economy, ideology, legal system and religion...) make poor households vulnerable.

This is argued by Diane Elson:

Adjustment with a human face is a desirable goal but the strategy advocated to achieve it never really confronts the question of the relation between adjustment and the social relations of capitalism; it never addresses the question of profit.. If the objective is the restoration of higher growth rates and the creation of a more humane society, then this requires some degree of transformation of social relations of production and reproduction. "Adjustment with a human face" thus has to be linked with strategies for struggle as well as for survival. Indeed, struggle (demands, campaigns, institution building, mobilization) is the way from survival strategies to transformation strategies.⁵³

Until the structures of oppression are questioned it is unlikely the subjugation of women will be looked at beyond the welfare of vulnerable groups. The connection between the productive (or economic) and the social sphere (or reproductive) needs to be reworked in the context of a new global capitalism.⁵⁴

⁵² Jeanne Vickers, Women and the World Economic Crisis Ibid p-51.

⁵³ Diane Elson, in Lourdes Beneria, Shelly Feldman, Unequal Burden: Economic Crisis, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work (Boulder: Westview Press 1992) p-33

⁵⁴ Sheila Rowbotham and Swasti Mitter, Dignity and Daily Bread Ibid p-221

The IMF has a strong impact on policy implementation in Latin America. The influence of the IMF directly hinders the fulfilment of INNFA objectives. It is in the interest of the IMF to have an obedient and complacent public, in order to minimize objections to structural adjustment policies imposed on debtor nations. Since INNFA is attempting to promote consciousness and mobilization, which could lead to a more difficult to control population, it would be unlikely for the IMF to support INNFA - or other development projects which seek to build consciousness and self-determination.

As our global economy scrambles into trading blocks the policy implications of the past decade have come into serious debate. Many questions have surfaced regarding the role which periphery nations will play within these trading blocks. Will Latin America benefit from increased interaction with these trading blocks, or will the exploitation now found in the free trade zones spread? If nations are left to specialize in their comparative advantage will Latin America be doomed to be the suppliers of cheap labour? E.Ferris and L.Jones attempt to find "hope" in the horrendous experience of the past decade:

...a first step in this process is to recognise that the current economic system is not neutral or value-free but is geared towards domination and dependency...there is one "good" thing about the debt crisis- the fact that it has brought all the mechanisms of the global economy up to the surface for all to see. This means that we can no longer say that we do not see the injustice in our world, and that therefore we can no longer avoid responsibility.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ E Ferris and L Jones., qtd in Jeanne Vickers., 1991 *ibid* p-32.

Diane Elson "hopes" the crisis will promote change through the conglomeration of social institutions and practices. The internationalization of production may bring new opportunities for solidarity links among workers on a global level. The consolidation of workers could produce new political configurations which could demand a restructuring of the economic system for more favourable conditions for women:

Restructuring opens up new opportunities...(as) change creates conditions for new forms of struggle... (out) of the crisis may come some progressive transformation of the conditions of struggle of oppressed and disadvantaged groups, and the forging of new links between them... In short, an economic crisis may produce new political configurations (understanding "politics" in a very broad sense), new alliances and new demands, with potential for changing the terms of the social and economic restructuring necessitated by the crisis in a way that is more favourable to oppressed and disadvantaged groups.⁵⁶

The above two arguments for "hope" address women as yet another disadvantaged group, within a long list of victimized people. "Women" are often viewed as a monolithic category, lumped into the analysis with other "vulnerable" groups. Women becomes a special interest group, competing for resources and legitimation within the dominate discourses. By viewing women as a special interest group, the dominant discourses are able to manipulate power plays over "identity politics" as a dividing tactic. In this way the real causes of oppression and poverty and the restructuring of the power system are not addressed. A

⁵⁶ Diane Elson, in Lourdes Beneria , Shelly Feldman, ed. Unequal Burden: Economic Crisis, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work Ibid p-13.

movement away from binary thinking regarding women's issues as separate from the concerns of men would contribute to a more inclusive conception of reality. The tendency to hierarchize gender identification, down plays the interconnection, and multi-causal nature of how both interests are entwined with each other and within the larger power plays of ideology.

Women are generally politically weak, and have little bargaining power to bring strategic gender interests into policy. In order to address why women are perceived as politically weak there needs to be an investigation into the discourses which have shaped women's political understanding of themselves. There also needs to be a deconstruction of how the idea of women's relative political weakness come to be understood and believed as the way it is. What can be assumed however, is even within development discourse which seeks to implement progressive projects and policies, there are reified beliefs which work to undermine the progressive nature of a development project. An awareness of the reification process will help development students and practitioners question their beliefs and assumptions, bringing into question the values which shape reality.⁵⁷

This period of transition and change in the international economic system, demands women's full attention. A collective unity among women is difficult because of the multi-causal effect oppression has in Latin

⁵⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (London: Routledge 1987) p-150

America. However, without a clear articulation and investigation into the interconnected web in which gender subordination is entwined, women's strategic interests are likely to be lost in battles between groups.

INNFA in Action: The Break Down of a Dream

Ecuador's discursive construction in time and place can not be overlooked when deconstructing the communication system used in INNFA. There are many cultural beliefs which affect the seemingly free flow of information within this hierarchical organization. Ecuador has distinct cultural and racial groupings which influence the social dynamics of internal communication. Because of the history of exploitation and oppression, some communities in Ecuador are highly suspicious of cross-cultural interaction and communication. Mestizo communities have been embedded in an ideology which attempts to reinforce their racial and cultural superiority over the indigenous populations. This may have originally been done as justification for the exploitive practices of their ancestors; however, it can now take the form of a paternalistic desire to "help" or "fix" the lives of the marginal.⁵⁸ The indigenous communities have developed their agency and consciousness within a culture encoded in the ideological belief on their racial

⁵⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Outside in the Teaching Machine (New York: Routledge 1993) p-61.

inferiority.⁵⁹ In order to understand the breakdown of the methodology and communicative practice of INNFA one cannot ignore the ideological social construction of the people of Ecuador.

Horizontal communication breaks down between the community and the organizational levels of INNFA for numerous reasons, the first of which is the huge volume of information which is transferred at any given time. There is generally little time for a dialogue to occur between the regional "technicos" and the community. In theory, the regional employees act as messengers to the higher levels of the organization, relaying information originating from the community. However, receptiveness to community knowledge is limited by time constraints and overwork of the regional "technicos". INNFA's technical representatives are in direct contact with the communities. There is a large social, cultural, regional, linguistic, and educational gap between "technicos" and the community participants.⁶⁰ The INNFA policy structure does not state specific guidelines to overcome these communication barriers. The lack of institutional commitment to equitable and respectful communication means that sensitivity to the power dynamic in communication is dependant on the personality and

⁵⁹ For an investigation in the ideological effects of the codification of inferiority see the influential text: Frantz Fanon, trans- Charles Lam Markmann, Black Skin White Masks (New York: Grove Press Inc 1967)

⁶⁰ Please note the Indigenous population in Ecuador is Quechua speaking - all the regional "technicos" were of spanish decent and spoke only Spanish.

disposition of the "technico". The strained work load of this understaffed organizations reflects an overly optimistic national project. The overextension of INNFA staff resulted in restricted time allocation for the consideration of cultural, race or gender sensitive considerations within their communication.

INNFA pays little attention to the ideological meaning involved in the specific discourses from which their communication stems. In other words, the meaning of language is embedded in the values, norms and beliefs of each discourse in its temporal location. The communication process interacts at a base level of language comprehension, (since the INNFA staff and the majority of the community members have different mother tongues) as a result INNFA only recognizes what it can easily know. INNFA's discourse relies heavily on common phrases and easy to understand concepts which limits the type of difference which can be expressed and is often imbedded in the more powerful ideological influences at play in that culture. In this way the discourse used by INNFA can perpetuate the reified beliefs of the dominant discourses connected to the ruling groups. These are meanings which exist as a reflection of existing positions of power, and subsequently, their existence reifies these positions. INNFA by virtue of it's position of relative power - as the fund allocator - suppresses alternative knowledge and meaning generation.

The regional history of Ecuador has a very strong influence on the culture of its people. Ecuador is a

geographically diverse country with three distinct regions: the sierra (highlands), the coast, and the oriente (rainforest). Each region has distinct cultural and economic variations which play an important role in regional and cultural politics. Regional considerations must be evaluated in order to gain an understanding of the possible limitations these forces may have on the project methodology. Regional disparities are rarely considered by INNFA, as national guidelines based on "successful" projects are applied to communities regardless of regional variations.

There is a high level of cross community comparisons by INNFA, as all communities are expected to live up to national "standards." This is highly problematic as each community may face some of the same problems, but have distinct local considerations which do not factor into INNFA's requirements of success. Cross community competition is not always an appropriate motivation tactic for development in regions which have distinctive cultural and regional histories.⁶¹

The administration of INNFA appears to be prioritized at the expense of other aspects of the project such as training, education, and community participation. This

⁶¹ An example of this occurred to me only in retrospect. I had borrowed a horse from a friendly hacienda owner, to deliver supplies to a community near the top of Imbabura. I was greeted with severe caution and reservation by this community, which had previously been very open and giving. Of course they recognized the horse, and were questioning my affiliation with the hacienda which had virtually enslaved their families for generations.

reflects the privilege INNFA gives to the knowledge of the organization over community based priorities and knowledge. A concrete example of how this priority is translated into the functioning of the community can be illustrated through the quantity of written forms required by the head office. The completion of forms is the criteria from which INNFA bases the continued support for the project. If the paperwork is done as specified then little attention is placed on other quality considerations of the functioning of the INNFA centre. Although some administration is necessary for the workings of the program, paperwork does not guarantee success, and can work as a restriction to community participation.

An example of the priority on paperwork will be illustrated by events which occurred in Chirihausi during my placement. The CDI in Chirihausi was not given their monthly grants because of incomplete paperwork. Each centre must complete a set of forms every month detailing the height and weight of the children, as well as a list of the food purchased each month. If a centre fails to complete these forms the grants for the next month are held back. The lack of financial support the centre in Chirihausi receives from the committee of parents meant there was little choice but to close the centre. The closure led to a loss of confidence between the staff of the centre, and the committee of parents. The parents were angry and lost interest in supporting the centre as they felt the staff did not perform

their jobs.⁶² Although the centre was re-opened the next week, the CDI staff had large problems renewing motivation, support, and participation from the committee of parents. Decisions regarding fund allocations must be sensitive to why the regulations are not being met. Attention to the causes of a problem are absent from the administration's guidelines.⁶³ This neglect can be seen as a mechanism by which the institution regulates the community. The consequences of these decisions can greatly affect the future functioning of the project.

The controlling relationship between INNFA and the community has the tendency to perpetuate a psychology of dependence. This dependence is the antithesis of INNFA's stated objectives and methodology. The hierarchical structure of INNFA has resulted in many of the methodological debates and problem solving occurred only at the higher levels of administration. This often leaves the community feeling little control over the theoretical issues involved in the program. The hierarchical structure then contributes to the rationale of the communities as "other" which negates their ability to find solutions to their realities. The transfer of agency at the theoretical level, down plays the community's ability to see themselves as

⁶² The paperwork was not done because the women in the centre had not realized the importance the institution was placing on these forms. The women were simply more concerned with the successful functioning of the centre than the paperwork.

⁶³ Inability to live up to institutional regulations of paperwork can be based on criteria such as language ability, education, confidence and time availability.

active agents in the discursive construction of their reality.

Reciprocal communication breaks down when the upper level of the organization imposes political decisions which affect the power dynamic between the organization and the community. Political decisions are often reflective of INNFA's publicity priorities, with little consideration of community development. An example of the use of INNFA as a political tool occurred during the inauguration of CDIs in Imbabura, (in which Chirihausi was one), by INNFA's figure head, the wife of the current President of Ecuador. These visits were accompanied by media fanfare and a small gift of a "Batman" chocolate for each child, guaranteeing big smiles for the national television. The money spent on the chocolate was badly needed by the communities for supplies; however, the candy served the publicity priorities of the upper levels of the institution.

In practice INNFA has strong ties to the Ecuadorian government, in theory, INNFA is a privately run development organization. The close connection between INNFA and the government is not hidden; instead, the connection has become overt with the appointment of the President's wife as the figure head. It should be noted in much of Latin America, getting things done is often reliant on political connections. For this reason, having the wife of political leaders as figureheads could work to some advantage for INNFA. The question is how does one insure that those who receive their jobs through political patronage, take their

job and the methodology of the institution seriously? INNFA must install a protective framework against the prioritizing of individual political agendas of its employees over the needs and desires of those whom the program is designed to serve. INNFA needs to draw attention to what and how power is represented in the organization and how this power dynamic influences the policy and decision making of the institution. The advantages involved in its connection with the governing political party must be counter-balanced to protect implementation of the project's methodology. The decision to remain connected to the national government occurs at a cost. Measures must be taken to ensure autonomous control over decision making, so a more progressive praxis has a chance to develop.

The appointment of the President's wife as the figurehead of INNFA can be used by the reader as a telling example of the dominant gender ideology in Ecuador at the time of this research. On the one hand this appointment can be seen as a progressive step for women in Ecuador into a position of prominence. The appointment, however, occurs because it fits a number of gendered beliefs which are held as natural in the Ecuadorian context. First, the appointment is reliant on the authority, power, and privilege of the male member of the family (her placement was dependent on her husband's position). Her appointment was not based on her own power outside her married relationship. The appointment of a woman as the head of the National Institute of Children and Families fits easily into traditional

assumptions of women's role as mother. By the appointment of a woman in a traditional role as a mother protecting and carding for her children, INNFA can pacify two conflicting elements of Ecuadorian society without changing the fundamental power structure. The appointment serves to appease those elements of society which seek to gain power for women without threatening the traditional assumption of women's position in the sexual division of labour. In this way the INNFA appointment can be seen as a double edged sword as the role model for women in Ecuador is reliant on her connection to male power under the guise of traditional gender codification.

From the birth of the PDI program it was clear the centres were to be used as a political tool. As I have stated previously, project resource allocation, and decisions regarding which community receives a centre, are often politically motivated. This should not imply that INNFA does not have a highly developed methodology for fair allocation, as each stage of project identification has a clearly defined procedure. In theory decisions regarding community selection are based on the organization of the community, need, commitment, and regional proximity to other INNFA projects. Project identification procedure breaks down regularly and is rarely questioned by INNFA's regional or national staff. One example occurred right before the election of 1984 when there was a rush to get contracts signed with communities, even if the normal pre-operational procedures were not completed. Bribery and political favours

are common occurrences in many Latin American societies. However, if INNFA is truly devoted to its participatory methodology then consistency is a key factor in building trust between itself and each community.

One of the goals of INNFA is to provide technical service and assistance so both state and non-governmental organizations can improve and increase the quality of service towards children.⁶⁴ The INNFA objective of sharing information and services often gets clouded in the haze of political battles for funding. Since development assistance is scarce, development projects often have to compete with other worthy institutions for funding. There is another project in Ecuador, Red Comunitaria, which has similar goals INNFA. There is a high level of competition between these two groups, and very little sharing of information. Enrolling the greatest number of children into INNFA projects sometimes seems more important than following its own objectives. INNFA sold information and technical knowledge to Red Comunitaria. In theory the free flow of information between organizations with similar goals would appear to be a requirement under their goal of providing technical service and assistance for the good of the children of Ecuador.

The Program of Infant Development is centred around the issue of childcare. INNFA provides training to community women around their "traditional" role as wife and mother. In

⁶⁴ Programa de Desarrollo Infantil, "Manual de Administration de Fondos" (Quito:INNFA 1990) p-7.

this way INNFA reifies the social construction of gender identification. Although INNFA's project perpetuates certain assumptions of women's role it should not be dismissed as counterproductive of development. The INNFA project must be analyzed in relation to its contribution to women's agency within the community. The women who administered the INNFA centre learned skills, gained confidence and material rewards (be it minimal even in relation to the male average wage). These gains contributed to women's consciousness, and expanded an awareness of personal agency needed for social change. This is a key to a postmodern analysis, which attempts to understand the development process through a holistic conceptualization of the ideological and material discursive construction of reality, identity and experience.

The removal of the burden of childcare out of the household improves women's ability to utilize their agency. Women's time becomes more manageable, opening up new opportunities for employment and social action. The removal of childcare from the home, as the responsibility of the women, helps improve women's position to negotiate in the household dynamic of power.

One of the main objectives of the PDI project was to provide 70% of daily food intake for the children of the centre. The concentration on providing food or basic needs, which does not question the causes of malnutrition or

poverty can be seen as welfarist.⁶⁵ The principle focus on basic needs has a limited long term effect in promoting meaningful social change. The INNFA project may simply temporarily meet immediate needs, which would return if fund allocations (INNFA) were removed. The satisfaction of basic needs is an important stepping stone to enable people to address the larger forces of oppression and power which threaten their survival. The formulation of policy which looks beyond the fulfilment of basic needs into the multi-causal nature of power and oppression could lead to more holistic approaches to the creation of a more equitable world. When formulating policy we must reject the notion of having to choose between types on needs - basic or strategic. If meaningful change is to occur, we must address all levels of our material and ideological reality.

INNFA's lack of awareness of how and what the community perceives as their concerns and priorities is one of the major stumbling blocks to the proper functioning of INNFA's methodology. Problem-solving is oriented towards oiling the central administrative machine. Ideally, solutions which are established in the upper levels of the organization should filter down to benefit all. However, the process in which problem identification and resulting solutions are undertaken rarely reflects the priorities and concerns of

⁶⁵ Kate Young, "Problems That Concern Women and Their Incorporation in Development: The Case of Ecuador" Centro Ecuatoriano de Investigaciones Sociales in Kate Young., ed Women and Economic Development: Local, Regional and National Strategies (New York: Berg NESCO 1989)p-70.

the community. Project participants have autonomous control of their local centres; however, they are not represented in the national level of program design, planning, implementation, or evaluation. The venue for representation is reliant on communication between the centre's representative and the INNFA national employee. The lack of direct input for the community into the INNFA institutional machine reinforces the notion of indigenous knowledge as inferior. By under-representing community involvement in the structural organization, INNFA perpetuates the dominant power structure by codifying the conception of indigenous inferiority. The community's own knowledge should be evaluated as a guide to their own agency and problem solving.⁶⁶ The absence of a community representation at the upper levels of the organization is one of the major constraints on the incorporation of indigenous knowledge into the INNFA program.

More attention must be addressed to communication between the institution and the communities. INNFA's acceptance of vertical communication channels, especially in written form, gives questionable validity to the PDI's "expert" knowledge. As they currently exist, the channels of communication are highly problematic. Information must pass through many hands before it reaches a level where it can influence INNFA's policy and structure. With each transfer

⁶⁶ Muhammed Anisur Raham, "The Theory and Practice of Participatory Research " in Orlando Fals Borda., ed The Challenge of Social Change (London: International Sociological Association 1985)115.

of communication the information is subjected to the beliefs, morality, codification, and prioritizing of each messenger. I will briefly explain how information is transferred: beginning with the participants -> secondly to the local staff-> next to the regional coordinator -> then to field worker-> who in turn passes it on to the national representative-> who then submits the concern to INNFA policy staff for consideration and elaboration. At each level of this transfer the original knowledge is codified by the subjectivity of the individual receiver/ sender. Although this type of system manages to keep everyone informed, it serves to separate the community from access to the bureaucratic elements which control the organization.

Looking at the Cat's Cradle metaphor once again to explain how INNFA's communication system functions in the reification process. The game of cat's cradle is passed down from one generation of children to the next, transformed in relation to the child's interpretation/manipulation of the existing rules. Radical alterations to the game are confined by the parameters of the existing rules and their historic (traditional) meaning. Old rules are passed from generation to generation through the transfer and relearning of the game. Each generation of players is distanced from the initial rationale for the rules. The players' agency is hindered as they learn the game from a distance without a venue for why, where and for what reasons the rules were developed. Communication must succumb to the subjectivity in time and place of the verbal exchange. Radical alteration

of the assumed meaning is limited by traditional definition. INNFA attempts to alter the power dynamic of communication without addressing the meaning hidden in language or the cultural codification of discourse. How can cross cultural interaction be truly interactive and equal when we live in a world where inequalities are ingrained in the structures of how we speak and what we say? Embracing the notion that ideology is codified in language and knowledge, can lead to the sensitization of an open and more inclusive communication (game). The string will bind the effectiveness of INNFA until they address their position in the game of power and knowledge.

-Conclusion-

A postmodern analysis of INNFA requires an investigation into which type of knowledge is valued and why. It is not enough to simply include more community or popular knowledge into INNFA methodology. Moving beyond the glorification of local knowledge as being closer to the "truth". There needs to be an analysis which examines how certain types of knowledge are reified into "truth". Knowledge emerges through institutions within the historic condition from the struggle for and between contesting discourses.⁶⁷ The postmodern conception of knowledge moves beyond the expression of empirical, scientific, objective

⁶⁷ Colin Gordin, ed "Afterward" Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writing of Michel Foucault 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books 1980)p-237-239.

facts to a view of knowledge as discursively constructed between and through human interaction. Communication within INNFA shapes and structures the institution's understanding of the participants of their development initiative. The standardized procedure dictates what the institution perceives and values as knowledge.⁶⁸ The process through which knowledge becomes power is then institutionalized into the bureaucratic planning and management process. In this way alternative (community) knowledge is suppressed through contact with the development initiative.

Until we are critical of our own knowledge production, and the received knowledge of others, there is little hope of emerging free of the engrossing clutches of the dominant discourses. Prying open our hand from the security of knowing the "truth" may leave some grasping at thin air. Others will begin to see how everyday actions and institutions can be an avenue through which one can pursue new and more inclusive forms of change. This may not leave the reader with any more answers to the dilemma of development; however, knowing which questions to ask may change how power is perpetuated.

⁶⁸ A. Mueller, Peasants and Professionals: The Social Organization of Women in Development Knowledge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press)p-119.

Chapter Four:
- Ending with a Beginning -

How does one end something which is really the beginning?

I write this paper as an expression and a release. I am only one voice in a world being defined increasingly by a multitude of conflicting subjectivities. This is not so much a thesis as an attempt to understand my own subjectivity and perceptions, to deconstruct what has been reified in my own life. This for me is an emotional and raw battle, as what I see is often the precise thing which most disturbs me. I have been living at a comfortable level of understanding - choosing to selectively view the world around me - as if my own agency was somehow void of responsibility for my reality. This I have learned through the research for this thesis is not the "truth"; however, understanding the power plays of the dominant ideologies is a step in a journey which has no end.

A postmodern analysis helps us question our beliefs and assumptions, and brings into question the Western values which have influenced global policy formation. A postmodern analysis makes it difficult to ignore one's part in either perpetuating the dominant ideologies/discourses, or helps us to promote change. Postmodernism does not provide the answer to what should be done; instead, a postmodern approach helps us understand the forces which affect our ability to promote change. The investigation of the debates occurring in postmodern critical theory will contribute to our "consciousness" of reality and help us better understand the potential we have for change. The "beliefs" of many development practitioners have been grounded in the

rationality of an eventual "Westernization" and
"modernization" of the "Third World". A postmodern approach
brings into question the "naturalness" of this
"progression".

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