
BORN GIRL IN MACONDO:

Stolen childhood



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I. ABSTRACT

This research is focused on the case of the study of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) to girls between 8-12 years old in the context of a Centro American island. Through this, I pretend to assume the women and girls' s voices, who had participated in this study and whom I had the opportunity to meet during my fieldwork in the island. For that reason, my purpose is to make the violence against the girls and the situations in which they have to coexist visible. All of it from the view of a patriarchal society ruled by a masculine system of domination. For that purpose, I have focused the theoretical framework that supports the construction of my study from a gender perspective. In this way, on the one hand, my study looks to question the adult-centered and patriarchal view that is imposed on childhood, and children, as passive and dependent subjects. On the other hand, it looks to recognize child sexual violence as a form of domination and abuse of male power, so that this reality can be changed.

Consequently, in this study I try to respond how and in what way I have accomplished the research, referring to various issues; the first is related to **field access** and, in this sense I address how this field access has been in Macondo. Secondly, I have focused on the anthropological **ethnographic approach** through the interpretation of the information captured during the investigative process through the field diary. Finally, I have focused on the **investigation techniques** used during the course of the research, which are: the participant observation, the interview, the group discussion and the photographic technique.

Therefore, based on the information retrieved through different methodological techniques used, and taking into account the objective of my research, I have presented **five sections** according to the main themes to be analyzed, that make up the research. These five sections are: the **stigmas** – researching how they revert on the girls, their families and on the association responsible of these cases-, the **impact of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)** – considering how it relapses on the “cuerpas” (female bodies), the role that the desire plays, the power and violation as a sexualized act, and at the same, the intersectionality as the main fact that predetermine this violence- the **intervention in light of CSA's cases** – on the part

of the government, and on the part of the victims' families and the society- the **pre-maternity** – considering the affective cross-generational relationships, the health care and medical attention, the lack of responsibility on the part of the boys (“chavalos”¹), the abortion and the pregnancies provoked by CSA- and finally, the **intercourse**– looking at the initiation knowledge and contraceptive methods. Thereupon, I reveal a series of conclusive statements that are the result of the process of analysis of the research.

Finally, I have considered the Research Ethics in my study, where human beings are involved. In this manner, honesty and truth have been of vital character. To this effect, I have supported in the principles of the Belmont report (1979): the principle of Respect, the principle of Benefit and the principle of Justice. Thus, due to this study is focused on childhood, I have opted to apply these ethical principles incorporated to the ERIC project (Research Involving Children).

Passwords: Childhood, Gender Violence, Child Sexual Abuse, Gender, Race, “cuerpas” (female bodies), power, society and pain.

¹ Chavalo: noun that allude to a young boy

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III. SUMMARY OF EACH CHAPTER

Introduction

Throughout this Master's thesis my **intention** has been to give importance to the voices of the women and girls who I have had the opportunity of getting to know during my field work on the Central American island, where I worked on the International Cooperation for Development program with an association of island women. Through these children's voices, I have tried to **make visible the violence against the girls**, their **way of understanding** their comprehension of the violence, **their experience** with it, their **coexisting** with it and **facing it**. In this way, the main subject of my research has been Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) towards girls, carried out within a society governed by a system of male dominance that leads to misogyny. Accordingly, based on the MICRO case where there is a high level of violence against women and girls, an analysis has been conducted on the **situations of power** in a cultural system that protects the power of men over the women and girls.

To this end, I have opted to use the **autoethnographic approach**, which is reflected in the first chapter of this work and where multiple themes and situations are presented that refer to the girls. This introspective exercise of looking at one's self, observing one's self, doubting and feeling emotions has led me to define my object of study and contributed to the point of view that stance to analyze this reality. Subsequently, the second chapter corresponds to the **theoretical framework** that supports the construction of my object of study. My intention is to deconstruct what appears as evident, from gender violence, the interpretations of child sexual abuse, as well as childhood sexuality and childhood as a social category.

Next, the third chapter includes **methodological research** section. In it, I try to answer how and in what way I have done the research, referring to various issues related to field access on the island, the methodological approach used during the approach to the central study theme, showing its purpose, and finally the investigative techniques used during the course of the research, such as: participant observation, the interview, investigative groups and photographic resources. This last technique takes up a fourth section following this chapter and prior to the analysis, in order to examine the photographs before presenting

the investigation analysis. Then, in the fifth chapter, from information recovered through different methodological techniques used and taking into account the object of my research, five sections are presented according to the **main topics analyzed** based on the recorded research information. These sections or central topics are the following: stigmas, the girls-bodies, action, pre-maternity and sexual intercourse. From this analysis, in the next chapter, I have carried out the **progress of the results**, through which I intend to reach a few final conclusions, such as conclusive findings from the research process. The next chapter is reserved for dealing with the **ethics of research**, where I propose, basing it on the three fundamental ethical principles, the complications and difficulties that have emerged in the course of this investigation. Finally, the last chapter includes a **personal reflection** on my experience during the process of the research process.

CHAPTER 1: Reflective process. The auto-ethnography as a methodological strategy

Throughout this first part I have described the process that has guided me toward my object of study, showing my point of view and reflecting on those experiences that for me, have been crucial in relation to my experience on the island of Macondo²- located in Central America – focused on violence against women and girls.

To develop my investigation, I have used an autoethnographic focus stemming from a reflective analysis. Keeping with the definition given by the feminist anthropologist Teresa del Valle, the **autobiography** is a creative strategy whose aim is to convert the person who is writing it into the protagonist; therefore, the way in which the person thinks about their life, their decision to do it and the act of transmission is also part of that autobiography (1995: 241). That is why my intention as an investigator is to show, in this chapter, a *present “I”, participant and reflective* who is able to present the personal within a specific social context.

² The name of the island is fictitious in order to protect the people involved in the investigation. I have opted to refer to the island with the name of *Macondo*, influenced by Gabriel García Márquez in his novel *100 Años de Soledad*, where he refers to a Colombian village with the fictitious name of Macondo.

Another aspect to keep in mind is that my research lies in gender. Nonetheless, my ethnography is focused towards a **feminist perspective**, in which the emotional and personal form two transcendental pillars within my field of research. On this basis, the feminist anthropologists, Judith Okely and Hellen Callaway report that: “the emotional and personal cannot be easily separated from intellectual endeavor” (2005: 9). Equally, other authors such as Teresa del Valle (1995), argue that the *feminist critique* should retrieve autobiography and its content of personal experience as a path, considering “the personal as theoretical”.

In this way, my intention through this feminist critique, is also to reveal the importance of the “*feminine identity*” of the researcher during the process of fieldwork, positioning myself from a *situated knowledge*, as the historian and feminist philosopher Donna Haraway points out: “partiality, and not universality, is the condition for the claims of achieving a rational knowledge to be heard; claims on the lives of people, the vision of a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuralizing and structured body, against the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity” (Haraway, 1995: 335).

My story begins in early July, specifically on 7 July 2016, when I embarked on an experience in Central America, an opportunity that was offered to me thanks to the program of International Cooperation for Development that the University of Granada offers, through the organism CICODE. After an arduous search process, I was accepted in the NPO *Amigos de la Tierra (Friends of the Earth)* and, who put me in contact with ALMI³ (Latin American Association of Island Women). ALMI is a social community movement of island women organizationally joined from a common stance on thought and joint action. Its main objective is to defend the rights of island women and girls, and demand their visibility of their contributions to the social, economic and cultural development of the town and of the country; besides shedding light on the very real situation of oppression and discrimination against women and girls typical of a *patriarchal society*.

During my stay, I had the privilege of being hosted by ALMI women, which facilitated my getting to know them within the same intimate space that is their home. My

³ The name *ALMI* is also fictitious for the same reason, my main priority being that the information reflected in the autoethnography not affect the women’s association nor that they can be negatively affected by it. Similarly, the name of the places mentioned, such as towns, villages and even the hostel where the women of the association work, and the people involved, are fictitious.

identity of being a woman working with women also facilitated my access to them. Thus, expresses the feminist social worker Ana Alcázar (2010): “This fact facilitated my access to them, not so much for creating a channel of communication “of women”, something that makes essential the category of “woman” (p.96) Thus, during the first half a month, I stayed at Hilda’s house, and her family, in the Aima⁴ community (located very close to the center of the island, but closer to the municipality of Aiko), while I stayed with several of the women the last three weeks, in the *Hostal Ligüali Suna*⁵ community (located in the heart of the island).⁶

From my arrival in Macondo we worked on various **cases of gender violence**, and used a lot of our time in designing upcoming community events. Despite the diversity and extent of each case, in regards to the focus of the work, only a few cases will be highlighted given their significance to the research. However, due to the high number of Child Sexual Abuse’s cases, I decided to focus my research on childhood and violence against girls. Therefore, my premise would be to demonstrate from this experience and from a feminist perspective that the sexual abuse of girls arises as a form of masculine power, learned and instilled from childhood. All of this, making visible the violence that had been perceived on the island and to which the girls of Macondo are exposed to, on a daily basis.

Throughout my stay, an opportunity to participate teaching a **workshop geared toward girls** was provided. This idea raised because the urgency to carry out this reality. Therefore, I participate in the first four **workshops with the girls between the ages of 8 and 12 years** old, who were living through very complicated situations, and for whom the workshops could be very helpful. Approximately, thirteen girls join in each session. The main themes in which the workshops were based have been: sexuality, bodies and emotions, nutrition and health, and roles and gender stereotypes. Within these pillars that have shaped the workshops, the following points have been worked on: self-esteem and self-concept through activities related to how they saw themselves, and activities related to conduct, among others.

⁴ In náhuatl *aima* means corn

⁵ In náhuatl *suna* means pumpkin

⁶ Consult PHOTOGRAPHS, section 1

Moreover, I contributed in a **workshop on methods of sexual prevention taught by girls and boys** between the ages of 13 and 17 years old. This workshop took place in two different communities on the island. On the one hand, the first workshop was attended by thirteen boys and girls, of which four were women, and two of them were pregnant. On the other hand, the second workshop was attended by twenty-five boys and girls, in which despite their being a greater number of boys, there was a large percentage of girls. The central topics in both workshops have been sexuality, reproductive health and sexual prevention methods.

In August, I shared in several **events planned by ALMI**. One of them was a feminist march organized with another association, in the municipality of Aiko⁷: “A *marimba*⁸ of women and girls joined the march, buses were packed, and the women knew what they were coming to, well-prepared with signs that read “we all have rights”, “no machismo”, “men also iron”, etc.” (Field Diary, 9 August 2016)

For my farewell, we had planned **a talk between us, the ALMI women**, that I myself would lead. This workshop was aimed at the members of the association, with a duration of four hours. The main topics addressed were: feminisms, gender roles and stereotypes, *micro-machismos*⁹ and sexuality. What was going to be a talk ended up becoming a group discussion, where the debates were very interesting. Their comments reflected not only the cultural topics of that place, but also many personal topics from a critical thought that they were able to convey to me.

My experience this past summer of 2016 in Macondo came to an end, and with it I take new knowledge, all that I have learned from those people that I have had the great privilege of meeting, Friends, and additionally, experiences converted into an infinite number of memories and emotions that I am unable to describe. One last time, I look back from the ferry towards the beautiful island with its two impressive volcanoes.

⁷ Consult PHOTOGRAPHS, section 5

⁸ many

⁹ Micro-chauvinism

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

In this second chapter, my purpose is to deconstruct what seems to be evident, from gender violence, the interpretations of childhood sexual abuses, as well as childhood sexuality and childhood as a social category. Moreover, my aim is to shed light on the importance of the relationship that exists between the diverse topics in order to create my study. In this way, on the one hand, my study looks to question the adult-centered and patriarchal view that is imposed on childhood, and children, as passive and dependent subjects. On the other hand, it looks to recognize child sexual violence as a form of domination and abuse of male power, so that this reality can be changed.

For that purpose, I have focused on the theoretical framework that supports the construction of my study, from a theoretical perspective with a focus on gender. To this end, first I have discussed the concept of **Gender Violence** and, in this way, question it. Therefore, I have no other intention but to denature it from a point of view towards the study of emotions and investigate how gender violence is constructed from childhood. Assuming that gender violence is a social construct, the questions I ask are: *how is violence learned? how is it instilled?* As time has gone by, the conclusion has been reached that gender violence is instilled as an effect of the hate towards women simply because they are women.

Secondly, I have addressed the main topic of the investigation, **Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)**. I have placed special attention on sexual violence stemming from “power” as the main artery of the violence, where “the other gender” is subjugated, being left at the mercy of the strength of universal reason. Consequently, I have reflected on sexuality in childhood, since this has been denied for centuries and the persistent idea still exists of children as sexually “passive beings,” in order to reformulate sexuality in children as subjects that are sexually gifted. Thus, Philosopher Michel Foucault (2016) gives a critique of the traditional view of sexuality as a natural impulse. In this way, he suggests a *desexualization* based on the search for pleasure which revolves around the whole body, arguing that “wishes are not pre-existing biological entities, but, rather, are constituted in the course of historically determined social practices” (Rubin, 2014: 14). Therefore, sexuality incorporates many aspects of what we are as a person: “it not only has to do with have a sexed body or with the

ability to reproduce, but how each person feels about that sexed” (Hernández, 2007: 51). Thus, society foresees a model of sexuality that is “a cultural manifestation of what is sexual, that demands for the socialized acceptance and practice of the interaction” (Mansilla, 2015: 1). In light of this situation, the empowerment of women begins not only with the institutions, but also in daily life (“*the personal is political*”): “the power that is of interest is that which allows women to build their own ability to change the social limits that define what is possible for them” (Mosedale, 2003; in Murguialday, 2013:12). The sexuality during Childhood has been denied for centuries up to the present time. Nonetheless, sexuality in children is still spoken about as “passive beings that can be the impulse objects of other older individuals” (Ballester y Gil, 2006: 25). Hence why the majority of studies focus on sexuality in childhood as a result of childhood sexual abuse (Ballester y Gil, 2006). The pioneer Sigmund Freud (s XIX- XX) considers that “the natural instincts, sexuality as such, are antagonists of reason” (Quiroga, 2013: 3). At the same time, he also criticizes the belief at that time that “children are asexual beings until the arrival of puberty” (González, 2009: 7). Besides, as Rafael Huertas (2007) expresses: “childhood sexuality is not a simple product of biology or physiology, but a historically determined social construct” (p. 125).

Lastly, I have briefly presented the dichotomy of victim-survivor as two terms used to define the woman/girl who has suffered sexual abuse. The discourse on sexual abuse is impregnated with the feminist struggle. The pedagogue Agustín Malón (2004) points out that: “the image of the victims as survivors of abuse is a key element in the evolution of the social perception of the problem from its beginnings” (p. 96). Nonetheless, feminine pain is revalued, in this way “honoring the heroic of its past, present and future experience” (Malón, 2004: 27)

To conclude, I have discussed the **topic of Childhood**, as this is intrinsically related to gender violence and child sexual abuse by the mere fact that the subjects are girls. The idea is to review Childhood via diverse forms of imagining it, from a historic perspective, and through a reflection of Childhood as a socially natured category, and then deconstructing it in order to change it. To end, I have focused on the social representations that are projected against girls, especially about credibility issues, as this is taken away from them. Education on learned violence is established from childhood, from when we begin to acquire behaviors

and certain conducts pertaining to our environment, in such a way that the society in which we develop has a great influence on us and on our growth process. Analyzing the concept of childhood means reflecting on a naturalized social construct that is in constant redefinition; consequently, to understand this social category we must, according to the feminist anthropologist María Espinosa (2010): “deconstruct childhood, to discuss the problematics of childhood and the universal, homogeneous and masculine discourse which currently supports and excludes many minors” (p.12)

In addition, this section states that children have their own way of thinking, questioning the view of childhood as dependent and passive, a fact supported by the *adult-centered* category, from which the boy/girl or youth is made invisible in the present and “*pending to be*” (Poggi, Serra y Carreras, 2009: 61) in the future. In this sense, this form of *symbolic violence* mainly affects the feminine Group, as far as it contributes to “its denial, marginalization and reduction to a place of subordination of the “other” versus the universal, legitimate, and therefore, hegemonic” (Gregorio, 2006: 21). In this way, I understand the *devaluation of girls’ words*, following Carmen Gregorio (2006), as a form of symbolic violence based on the assignment of a different social value on the messages conveyed by boys, versus those conveyed by girls. Thus, the act of including representations of non-credibility is held up in a context of childhood where there is no agency nor specific form of representing childhood. And so, the need emerges for creating a social agency that recognizes children as main characters in their own development and that can transform the social concepts that exist in relation to children.

CHAPTER 3. Methodology

In this third section, I have tried and respond how and in what way I have carried out the research, referring to various issues, the first is related to **field access** and, in this sense I have first addressed how this field access has been in Macondo. Secondly, I have focused on the **methodological approach** used during the advancement with the central study topic, showing the purpose of it. Finally, I have focused on the **investigation techniques** used during the course of the research.

First, I have briefly presented some of the difficulties and easy aspects in the **field access**, which responds to the way in which I have approached the place and the people that have been my aides in this research. One of the difficulties found when focusing on *this topic* was that it is deeply silenced on the part of society, and consequently, this has caused there to be difficulty in obtaining information. At the same time, another one of the limitations has been the *age of the girls*, since at first my idea was to carry out interviews. Finally, and due to administrative problems, *a second stay in the spring of 2017 in Macondo was impossible*, and this had been planned for from the beginning. Once I was back in Spain, in order to delve deeper into some of the topics that emerged during the time of the research, I decided to have one last interview via Skype with one of the ALMI women.

On the other hand, in relation to the positive realities and easy aspects that have become apparent I point out that from the beginning I position myself from a *horizontal place*, mainly caused by being recognized on the island as “Hilda’s cousin” or as one of the ALMI women or, perhaps because of my physical similarity; factors that influenced that I could maintain horizontal relationships where I “passed undetected” or was “less different”. Another of the factors has been *the fact of “being a woman”* since I was dealing with “the others” – the ALMI women and girls of Macondo that participated in the research- therefore creating a relationship of horizontal partners. Lastly, *the fact of belonging to the ALMI association* - living with the women and working with them in cases of gender violence and sexual abuse of girls, and having contact with their families and neighbors – was a great opportunity for field access and for establishing the necessary trust to address a reality that is silenced by the community.

For the implementation of the methodology, I have used the anthropological **ethnographic approach**. In this way, I was able to interpret the information captured during the investigative process – through the field diary – giving priority to the methodological approach through which I could shed light on the reality of the girls of Macondo, and whose methodology would respond to a process of reflection caused by the interaction between the researcher and “the others”.

Finally, the **methodological techniques used** have been: participative observation, group discussions, interviews and photographic media. In the first place, within the

ethnography, **observation** has been the central axis of it. While this technique was carried out in diverse and various places on the island, I think it is necessary to give special mention to three spaces that have provided me with the greatest information. These were the places where the most relevant conversations, workshops, activities and the day to day, took place, and which have led me to learn about the reality in which the girls of Macondo are immersed:

- Hilda's house. It is the home of one of the ALMI members and her family, in which I was welcomed. In this way, I was able to become close to them, and learn about their culture and traditions, while also getting involved in the daily life on the island from the standpoint of belonging to a Macondo family.
- The Health Center. There, I was able to observe actual cases of pregnant girls and others who had recently given birth, and learn the reasons for their requests of assistance, as well as the family and cultural context in which they live and the relationships between family-boyfriend-girl.
- The association's hostel. It is the place where I stayed the last few weeks of my stay in Macondo. Within the hostel, I was able to get closer to four of the ALMI women through friendship and companionship, and by doing so, learning about their realities and that of the people in their surroundings, their worries and concerns.

Another of the techniques used has been **Group discussion**, carried out through the *workshops* in which I have participated and led during my stay in Macondo. During the workshops, the group and the individual have been studied when they exchanged opinions, with the intention of learning about their points of view about the central topic of research, in order to later draw conclusions and study them.

During my stay, three types of workshops were carried out. Firstly, the Sexuality workshop with girls between 8 and 12 years old; secondly, the Sexuality workshop with girls and boys between 13 and 16 years old; finally, the Sexuality workshop with the ALMI women.

The third technique used has been the **interview**, semi-structured, in-depth and non-directive. This interview, of a qualitative character, was performed on Doña María

Alejandra¹⁰, one of the main characters of my research. As I mention on numerous occasions in the first chapter, Doña María Alejandra is a woman close to forty years old, who belongs to the ALMI association, which made it easy for me to approach her. She is the mother of two daughters, of ages between 13 and 16, who have been victims of sexual abuse. The reason for my interest in interviewing Doña María Alejandra has mainly been due to my close involvement in the case of her youngest daughter, and because she is a mother who has experienced very closely, the attempted rapes of both daughters.

In this way, the interview has been organized around the following topics:

- Knowledge about the sexual abuse of girls on the island
- Her personal experience related to the sexual abuse of her two daughters
- Stigmas that fall upon the girls – specifically on their own daughters – and on their families
- Perception and reaction of the island population towards ASI and premature pregnancies
- The complaint: difficulties experience and the actions of the government

Finally, I have used the **photographic technique**, which suggests a reflection that ties the knowledge acquired in my fieldwork and the images produced. In this section you can observe photographs that are relevant to the investigation: first, the photographs of some of the ALMI women's homes, especially of the home where I lived during the first half of my stay in Macondo; in second place, there are photographs that were taken in the association's hostel during some of the projects; in third place, there are photographs of the four workshops that were carried out for girls between the ages of 8 and 12; in fourth place, photographs of the two workshops carried out for boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 16; finally, in the fifth section, there are several images that are of special relevance to the investigation.

¹⁰ Fictitious name with the aim of protecting the privacy of the person interviewed

CHAPTER 4. Analysis

In this fourth chapter, based on the information retrieved through different methodological techniques used, and taking into account the objective of my research, **five sections** are presented according to the main themes to be analyzed, that make up the research. Nonetheless, firstly, I think it is necessary to stress that the information recovered cannot be extrapolated to all the cases of sexual abuse to girls of the general Central American population, but from my experience on the island of Macondo and my unity to their culture and, more specifically, within the context of the island girls I try to analyze the recovered information in relation to my own experience.

To carry out this process of analysis and reflection one of the ALMI association women has been interviewed. In this analysis, aside from the information collected from the contributions of this interview, together with the observation process *in situ* carried out on the island and in the workshops planned as *discussion groups* - with girls between 8 and 12 years old, with boys and girls between 13 and 17 and with the women members of the ALMI association – during my stay in Macondo, the idea is to recall and give exposure to the reality of the girls of Macondo who have been victims of sexual abuse and/or unwanted pregnancies. The main themes of the object of analysis have be explained below:

1. STIGMAS IN CASES OF CSA

1.1. Stigmas that fall upon the girls

On the basis of several cases of sexual abuse witnessed to children between 8 and 12 years of age, they all reflect the pain that these girls suffer after having been sexually abused, the depression, the silence, and even thoughts of suicide. My conversation with Doña María Alejandra is recorded in the following way in my field diary, when she discusses her youngest daughter's situation, aged 12:

“One-day Magali arrived home, took a shower and immediately locked herself in her bedroom. Worried, I continued asking her what was happening to her, until, on the second

day, Magali confessed: *the same thing has happened to me that happened to Isita*". (Field Diary, 17 July 2016)

Also, the same woman, during the interview related how her two young daughters experienced this situation, Magali¹¹ and Isita¹². The following is recorded from the interview with Doña María Alejandra, which was carried out six months after my return from Macondo, who reveals that her young daughter had been raped again and was pregnant this time:

"Everything is very difficult, because my young girl who was impregnated by the teacher, when it was confirmed that she was pregnant did not even want to live; the same is happening to my little girl now, who does not go out, and who is not doing very well. She does not want to talk to anyone, and she does not want to say who it was or anything. I don't know. The pregnancy is very advanced now. She is due in September. She is always sleepy, and she does not want anything." (interview)

On the other hand, during the workshops carried out for girls between the ages of 8 and 12, many feelings came to light that reflected their emotional state. Especially in the session in which I designed the activity inspired by the Drawing of the Human Figure (DHF) created by Karen Machover in 1949¹³. In this way, applying it to the workshops, I find it relevant to point out the drawing created by one of the participants, María Elena. The results were interpreted by me in this way, as I recorded in my field diary:

"She had painted her head the color that she had chosen to represent sadness and anger, her arms were covered by the color of 'fear', her hands were colored in the color of 'guilt', she had drawn a big heart in the chest the color of 'happiness' and of 'love'; there

¹¹ Magali is Doña María Alejandra's younger daughter, now 13 years old. She was the victim of sexual abuse last June 2016, had to have an abortion in the neighboring country as it was the only alternative to prevent the pregnancy caused by the abuser. In January 2016, she was raped for a second time, by another man on the island. On this occasion, the pregnancy could not be avoided because it was too late when the truth came to light. She is currently pregnant, and is due in September 2017.

¹² María Isabel, known as Isita, Doña María Alejandra's other daughter, now 16 years old. She was forced and manipulated by her school headmaster, from the age of 14, to have sexual relations with him in secret, tricking her into thinking they had a romantic relationship. At 15 years old, she became pregnant by the headmaster. He is currently in prison and she has a baby, almost one-year old.

¹³ Through this technique, the girls associated personality aspects in relation to a self-image of themselves and of their bodies, understanding that "the drawing of a person, incorporating the projection of one's body image, offers a natural medium of expression of the needs and conflicts of each of our bodies" (Goodenough, 1951 in: Opazo and Rivera, 2010: 86)

was also a large border that reached from the waist to a bit above the knees the color of ‘evil’ and, going down, she had chosen the color of ‘fear’ and ‘anger’ for her legs and her feet; finally, the rest of her torso was the color of ‘sadness’”(Field diary, 6 August 2016)

1.2. Stigmas that fall on the families

During the interview, Doña María Alejandra relates on various occasions her difficult experience after having accused the headmaster of her daughter Isita’s school of having sexually abused the girl. Doña María Alejandra’s case reflects how society and even her own family, rejected her for having made a complaint about what had transpired. All of this is once again related to the fact that it is a topic that is silenced and does not leave the private environment. This is how Doña María Alejandra explains her own experience:

“The community came down on me when I placed the complaint. But look, I just want to say not to mention the people in town, let’s talk about my family. Of my own family, that this...they were against me having made the complaint. Not my children, but my mother’s family, my brothers and sisters, who no longer speak to me. It was really terrible, Alba, for me, really terrible.” (interview)

“I made the complaint, and now I hardly have any Friends that aren’t women, and my family on my mother’s side doesn’t speak to me or anything” (interview)

Also during the interview, Doña María Alejandra makes sure the guilt also falls upon her daughter. Some of the experiences that she recalls during the interview are:

“In my case, when the teacher got her pregnant, one of my sons said that she was the guilty one, and I don’t know what else. And even now, we hear things like that it has been an act of rudeness, that now the man is a prisoner and that she is completely calm about it.” (interview)

While the headmaster was sentenced to prison, there were so many negative repercussions, that when another man abused her youngest daughter, she decided not to go through that again and, thinking of Magali, decided not to report it. As I record it in my field

diary: “there are many consequences that can fall upon Magali, as they did on María Isabel; she had to make a decision thinking about her daughter and taking into account that it would lead to social rejection once again.” (Field diary, 19 July 2016)

1.1. Stigmas that fall on ALMI and its members

Throughout my experience, in the day to day, I have been able to observe how the ALMI women are rejected by a large part of the island community, and how their work is questioned in the majority of their cases. The main reason for which this rejection existed on the part of the island community was the fact that making the rapes public involved many people, since it is a small place, so there was always a familial or friendly relationship with the supposed abusers/aggressors. I record it in the following way in my field diary:

“It was evening and we had just finished having dinner. Suddenly, shouts were heard that came from outside the house; next, someone very *enchilado*¹⁴, as they would say here, began throwing stones at one of the windows in Hilda’s house, shouting “mind your own business, Doña Hilda”. We were unable to see who it was in the darkness, but we assumed it was someone related to one of the cases that ALMI had handled or was handling” (Field diary, 10 July 2016)

Similarly, the day before my departure, a man appeared dead at the ALMI hostel doorstep. I do not know what the cause of death was, but the ALMI women were convinced that the body had been placed at the doorstep on purpose in order to “dirty” the association’s name. Of course, on the television news that weekend, the headline was: Macondo neighbor found dead at the ALMI hostel”.

2. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA)´S IMPACT

Throughout the process of observation, I was able to see the high number of cases of sexual abuse to young girls (8-13 years) on the island. In that month and a half of my stay, at least four girls of the most nearby communities had been raped by adult men, as far as we knew.

¹⁴ Angered, ired

Also, I was able to get close to some of the girls who had been rape victims prior to my arrival, in a period from one or two years ago until a few months before my arrival. The female protagonists of my research, because of my closeness with them and with their mothers, have been Magali and Isita – Doña María Alejandra’s daughters - and María Elena – the first girl that I met having just arrived on the island, who had been a recent victim of sexual abuse. Without forgetting of course, that four girls who participated each Saturday to the workshop for girls between 8 and 12 years old, had suffered sexual abuse, one of them recently.

2.1.Bodies “cuerpas”

- Desire eroticization of the child’s body

The anthropologist Thomas Csordas found the highlight of the social theory of the body in his *embodiment* concept, which seeks to "overcome the idea that the social is part of the body, to talk about the body as a real field of culture, as 'a material process of social interaction'" (Esteban, 2004: 21). Based on the concept of embodiment, the anthropologist Mari Luz Esteban, aims to recover the corporal and social experience of the agents, their resistances and responses within body enculturation, resorting to the notion of *corporal itineraries*, understood as "individual life processes [...] that always refer us to a collective, that occur within specific social structures and in which we give all centrality to the social actions of the subjects, understood as corporal practices" (Esteban, 2004: 54). In other words, the concept of *corporal itineraries* addresses the “incarnated subjects” (Esteban, 2004: 80), that resist and respond to the culture, at the same time that they participate in social change.

On the other hand, "desire" is associated as a feature of the body, which is not seen as fundamentally problematic or as something that "requires an explanation at the interpersonal level" (MacKinnon, 1987: 5).

Therefore, the “eroticized domain” defines the imperatives of masculinity, while the eroticized submission defines femininity.

- Power: appropriation of the body and male domination

My greatest concern throughout my research has been the why of the sexual abuses, the why of the girls – *child bodies* – and the why in this specific context. After a wide theoretical search and the compilation of testimonies revealed during my field work and during the interview, I have reached a common point that violence against women and girls is intrinsically related to the misogynist, sexist and chauvinist culture of the place. In this way, Doña María Alejandra comments in the interview that it has to do with a cultural fact: “*I don’t know, it must be part of culture, because the men like the young girls and in other parts, no. I don’t know why there are so many cases, you know?*” (interview)

To understand the reason of these events in Macondo, it has been necessary to contextualize the specific way in which *their bodies* and their culture place their life experiences. Therefore, as the psychologist Deborah Tolman (2012) expresses “female sexuality is always constituted by both pleasure and danger, as inclusive of but limited to bodily sensation embroiled in and produced by an array of relational and cultural context and society’s structural asymmetries contingent upon race and socioeconomic status” (p.6).

I begin from the idea that *male dominance is sexual*. Apparently, male dominance exists in all cultures, in different and specific ways. In this approach, I propose following Catherine MacKinnon (1987), that “male power adopts the social form that men, as a gender, desire sexually, which focuses on the power itself, as it is socially defined” (p.7)

- Rape: a sexualized act

Based on the ruling factor in the male system is pleasure, rape-sexual abuse or sexual assault- is "the defining paradigm of sexuality", where "the boys opt for virility" (MacKinnon, 1987: 22)

The act of rape, included within male domination, “excites, sexually affirms and supports the masculinity of the one who commits it” (MacKinnon, 1987: 28-29); in other words, the men rape the *bodies* because they want to do it and because they enjoy it. In this way, the women who have been raped are viewed as “if they had asked to be raped: if a man wanted her, she must have wanted it” (MacKinnon, 1987: 23). This chauvinist, sexist and misogynist argument, was witnessed by me several times in Macondo. I would like to point out one in particular that is recorded in the first autoethnographic chapter. On that occasion, some of the ALMI women, including Doña María Alejandra, having the knowledge of who

had been the man who had abused Magali, went to visit him at this house. As I mention in this first chapter, I wasn't able to accompany them due to the danger of the situation, but as it was recorded on video, I was able to see and listen to the entire conversation. This is how I record it in my field diary:

“It was a man of an older age, leaning on a cane – I would say he was about sixty or seventy years old – very nasty. As a defense, he didn't stop repeating: “*she was provoking me when she washed the clothes in the lake*” (Field diary, 19 July 2016)

On the other hand, the intimidating and dominant visual reification is also a form of violence against women; “this sexuality of observation, the visual intrusion and access, of entertainment, turns sex into a spectator sport for participants” (MacKinnon, 1987: 20-21) During my stay, I was able to witness, on several occasions, this *sexual violence in observation*, reflected in the harassment along the paths through the “compliments”, rude and humiliating, and I was even able to experience the male idea of “women as objects” that are acquired. Among them, I highlight the situations that happened to me for the mere sake of being a woman. I record it in this way in my field diary:

“While a man was moving his cows from one field to another, he addressed me as one of his cows, and not happy with that, he signaled at me from afar with a stick.” (Field diary, 10 July 2016)

“Today the baker in the área, a man of forty, already a grandfather, came to the hostel asking for me. He showed up riding a motorbike, chewing gum which by his breath when he spoke, seemed to be chlorophyll gum, wearing a shirt, with hair hard as a rock due to the amount of gel he had used, and he gave off a strong smell of “male perfume” that was intoxicating. All of that was to ask me out on a date. He literally did not care that I was not interested in him. He said: “*Yes, but I like you*”, putting his hand on his chest. In short, my opinion had no validity, what mattered is that I liked he liked me. Situations such as this one, made it so that each time everything was more surreal. (Field diary, 22 July 2016)

On the other hand, I have witnessed that when a woman is considered “Doña” (Lady), as in the case of Hilda or María Alejandra, there is a certain “respect” on the part of the men towards them; however, the younger the women were, the more situations of violence increased noticeably. Therefore, this fact shows that male dominance over the female body

is not only related to sex, race, and social class, but the hierarchy of age is also another factor that influences this. I record it in the following way in my field diary:

“Before beginning the workshop with the ALMI women, led by me, Magali and I were on the porch drinking lemonade. Suddenly, Magali lowers her head. She looked ahead, and there was a man of about 40 years old – holding a bottle of alcohol in his hands and “stumbling” – making violent, aggressive, degrading and obscene gestures at the girl. For example: sticking out his tongue, making unpleasant pelvic movements, among others. I was surprised that he was not trying to call my attention, because I am older, but exclusively the girl’s attention.” (Field diary, 12 August 2016)

Since this sexist situation is suffered by the girls in Macondo on a daily basis, in the last of the workshops with the girls between 8 and 12 years of age, we worked on feelings and body language, in order to know how to identify “the limits” and not allow what we don’t like. I reflect it in my field diary in this way:

“When we were all seated in a circle, I addressed them and I asked them a question: “Do we like to be touched?” “Do we like to be caressed?” And they said yes. I continued asking questions: “Do we like any person to caress us? And then, a clear and loud **NO!** sounded” (Field diary, 9 August 2016)

At this moment, I felt an *empowerment* of the girls, a key concept to changing this reality, which, according to Mari Luz Esteban (2004), "is always about the body" (p.60). Thus, following the contributions of Teresa del Valle (1999) understanding empowerment as "a process by which oppressed people gain control over their own lives taking" part, with others, in transforming activities of daily life and of the structures, therefore increasing their ability to affect in everything that affects them” (Esteban, 2004: 61)

2.2. Intersectionality: Sex, race, class, age and gender patterns

Reflecting on who have been the survivors of sexual abuse, all of them have things in common: being minors, being indigenous, being girls and one of them being considered “masculine”. This common image is related to discrimination based on sex, race, class, age and sexuality. In this way, these girls are considered as “the others” because they do not belong to the *heteronormative ideals* imposed in this culture.

This situation of violence against women increases when it involves girls or women that belong to a *minority group* defined on the basis of ethnicity, sex, age, sexuality and other social divisions that fall upon them. Therefore, different from “white women”, these indigenous girls experience a double discrimination marked by “race”; however, as I have observed in my field work, this discrimination is also produced within the same indigenous Community. The writer and feminist activist Audre Lorde (1984) reflects this idea in the following way: “Black women are oppressed not only by white community, also within the Black community” (p.120).

During the interview with Doña María Alejandra, she shares her perception of what has happened to both of her daughters, reflecting that – differently from other girls on the island that have suffered sexual abuse – the fact that her daughters are indigenous and of a lower social class is intrinsically related to the girls being undervalued and taken for granted even more. She explains it as follows in the interview:

“I know of cases of some of my neighbor’s families, but as they do not become pregnant, the abuse is not made public. There are many girls who were raped, but not many pregnancies have come about. One knows who to get pregnant and who not to. That is why they got my little girl pregnant.” (Interview)

The American academic Kimberlé Crenshaw, defender of the Critical Theory of Race, related this situation of oppression against women with the term “*intersectionality*”. This author, who coins this term in 1989, uses the metaphor of traffic to explain intersectionality. She explains it in her work in the following way:

“Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. [...] To bring this back to a non-metaphorical level, I am suggesting that Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men. Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination-the

combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex”. (p. 149)

Thus, the American philosopher Cornel West, in his work “Race Matters” (1993) focuses on the importance of “race” social relationships of contemporary society. He reflects it as follows in his book: “Actually, class, gender and race matter, and they matter because they structure interactions, opportunities, consciousness, ideology and the forms of resistance that characterize American life...They matter in shaping the social location of different groups in contemporary society.” (Brah y Phoenix, 2004: 80)

On the other hand, Magali, being identified by Society as a “*masculine girl*”, as a result of her strong body, her interest in football and for being “not very feminine” when dressing, as well as her way of being, influences in repudiation and male homophobic hatred. In the second of the workshops with girls between 8 and 12 years old, the girls had to do a drawing where they placed themselves in a place where they would like to be and doing something that they like; Magali did not want to show her drawing in class. After the workshop ended, she shared her image and dream privately with me, as I record it in my field diary:

“In the drawing, a happy girl was visible, playing football and being a professional football player for the country’s national team. It was a very happy drawing that transmitted a great hope. I asked her why she didn’t want to show it to the rest of the group, as it was beautiful. She says to me: “*if they saw it, they would think the same as the rest, that I am machorra¹⁵*”. (Field diary, 30 July 2016)

This oppression and discrimination surrounding sexuality, is reflected by Audre Lorde (1984) in her experience as a black lesbian woman:

“Women-identified Black women who are no longer dependent upon men for their self-definition may well reorder our whole concept of social relationships. [...] Black women who once insisted that lesbianism was a white woman’s problem now insist that Black lesbians are a threat to Black nationhood, are consorting with the enemy, are basically un-Black” (p.121)

¹⁵ Lesbian woman in a derogatory manner

3. ACTION IN A CASE OF CSA

3.1. Action on the part of the government

Throughout my research there have been numerous criticisms, and discontentment expressed by different women, coming to the premise that, despite the existence of a law against gender violence, and specifically against gender violence in childhood, Act 779 (Integral Law Against Violence Towards Women), justice hardly participated, even the action of government institutions, such as the police were null. It is recorded in my field diary as follows:

“The first gender violence case in which I participated, was of a woman who had been threatened by her husband with a machete. After having made the complaint at the police station with the support of her young boy, the police office clarified that *“these delicate issues are resolved between the couple”* (the woman, who had come to ALMI in search of help, relates this story), making less of the situation without intervening in the conflict. Personally, I cannot stop thinking about how terrified she had to feel when she spent the next night sharing a bed with him.” (Field diary, 14 July 2016)

On another occasion, at the beginning of my stay, while some ALMI women were on the porch of the association’s hostel talking about numerous cases of sexual abuse of girls on the island, one of them, Yessenia, hinting at her discontentment with the lack of responsibility and involvement in these cases on the part of the authorities, commented that the only responsibility fell upon the women themselves: I record it in my field diary:

“Yessenia says: *sexual abuse cases are not given priority, and the way in which something can be done to this respect is by getting the abuser’s confession or doing a DNA test on the baby. If there is no baby, in the majority of cases, nothing is resolved”* (Field diary, 17 July 2016)

Also, during the interview with Doña María Alejandra, she herself shared how difficult it was to have placed the complaint, despite the number of cases that exist where the

families do not make the complaint, and if they do, they do not have support on the part of government authorities. It is recorded in the following manner in the interview:

“No, they are never reported. I wanted there to be justice, that is why I did it. Look, the authorities didn’t do anything, not the police or anyone. The association¹⁶ spent money, a lot of money, on the case, and if it were up to the authorities they wouldn’t do anything.”
(interview)

3.2. Action on the part of society and the families

Through the testimony of several women on the island, including ALMI women, I can say that the crimes committed against women, such as sexual abuse of girls, is a taboo subject in the society of Macondo, and is completely silenced. An example is that Doña María Alejandra was the only mother that I met who decided not to keep quiet and make an official complaint in the case of her daughter Isita; on the other hand, of the four girls at the workshop who had been sexually assaulted in recent years, none of the families reported the aggression, very few people had any knowledge of what had happened, being kept within the family environment and that of the ALMI women, who they went to at some point, searching for advice. This fact, according to Catherine MacKinon (1987) increases the male desire to commit these crimes, resulting in them being more erotic and desirable. She reflects it with the following metaphor: “taboo and crime can be used to eroticize what, on the contrary, would be as dominant as taking candy from a baby.” (p. 10)

Some of the testimonies that I record in my field diary, corroborating this reality, are:

“Hilda says: The topic of the girls is very concerning, and no one does anything. The rapes were seen as something terrible that had to be kept secret as much for the girl as for the family, and the unwanted pregnancies were seen as something inevitable”. (Field diary, 19 July 2016)

“Yaoska says: Here, everyone shuts up about it, it stays a secret between mother-daughter or the father of the family clarifies their affairs with the abuser, and if the daughter

¹⁶ I omit the name of the real association in order to protect the ALMI women and the interviewer

gets pregnant, which occurs in the majority of cases, that is another matter”. (Field diary, 17 July 2016)

During the interview with Doña María Alejandra, she also reflects on the silence and omission that are experienced on the island in the cases of sexual abuse of girls. She expresses it in the following manner:

“There are many cases on the island, but not all of them are this...not all of them come to light. At least that teacher that got my daughter pregnant, also abused other girls, but you saw that no one made a complaint [...] They are kept in silence, but at the same time, when they break their silence, everyone is against them.” (interview)

Additionally, it should be noted that, on some occasions, the ALMI women and Doña Alejandra María commented that mostly, it is a topic that is hidden from the man of the house, or the girl’s father. Thus, I reflect it in my field journal, and the interviewer says:

“Yaoska comments: I think it is seen as a women’s problem that stays between women, or perhaps out of fear that the father can get into trouble defending his daughter, I am not sure, really” (Field diary, 17 July 2016).

“The mothers know, the fathers do too, but it is something that you tell mothers or older sisters, really.” (interview)

4. PRE-MATERNITY IN THE GIRLS OF MACONDO

4.1. Intergenerational relationships of attachment: Grandmothers- mothers- girls

Both in the sphere of Hilda’s family’s *home*, during my stay with them, as in other observations made on diverse occasions of other families on the island, I was able to observe that grandmothers took care of raising and educating their grandchildren taking on the roles of mother and father, and creating a *system of intergenerational care* passed down from mother to daughter. I reflect it in the following manner in my field diary:

“Hilda had Rosibel when she was very young and her grandparents took care of her; Rosibel also had her son Engel at an early age, who currently lives with his grandparents and is educated by them, while she continues her studies and works in the country capital.” (Field diary, 8 July 2016)

“This afternoon, seated on a bench in the center square of the town of Aiko, I had the opportunity to see children leave the school, which was opposite the square. I saw several women waiting at the school exit, imagining that they were the mothers of some of the children, who were coming to pick them up. However, after a while, [...] I could hear how a woman congratulated one of the young girls, saying: “How beautiful, God bless him!”; then, the young girl thanked her. Also, [...] another young girl was holding a baby in her arms, kissing its hand and whispering: “Oh, mommy is here now”. [...] Introspectively, what at first, I thought were adult women with their babies picking up their children from school, were actually many of them, grandmothers of the babies, picking up their mothers from school.” (Field diary, 8 August 2016)

4.2. Assistance and medical attention.

During my experience at the Health Center in Aiko, I was able to observe eight young girls – pregnant or who had given birth recently – who were there looking for medical attention. I drew several conclusions from this experience:

- The reason for visiting. The majority of the young girls who had already given birth were there as a result of mastitis infections from breastfeeding, and they also asked for powdered milk to feed their babies. At that moment, Yolidia explained the situation to me; I express it in the following way in my field diary: “many girls suffered from stong pains in their breasts as a result of having been pregnant at such a young age, because their breasts were not yet fully developed” (Field diary, 26 July 2016). I was also able to observe that the young girls who were pregnant were there asking for an anesthetic for pregnancy pains; they explained that they could not get out of bed, that they had very strong pains in the breasts, legs, abdomen, and even, "one of them said that she could not stand up because her feet hurt so much from the weight” (Field diary, 26 July 2016).

- Obstetric violence. During that day, I was also able to witness, on several occasions, situations that should be considered as *obstetric violence* by health personnel towards the young girls, who had no voice, even when clearly, they were not completely right, ignoring what they thought or felt. Some examples are reflected in my field diary: “the mother of one of the girls who had a baby, was asking questions related with her daughter’s health issues. Thus, the doctor said to the girl: “*your mother, more than helping, is a bother*” “. In another occasion, one of the pregnant girls was crying when the doctor said to her: “*stop crying, it’s not such a big deal*” (Field diary, 26 July 2016)

The health risks that those girls faced were very high, even at times resulting in death. On one occasion, the day after my arrival to the island, Hilda told me that a girl had recently died while giving birth. I record it in my field diary as follows:

“Two weeks before my arrival, a thirteen-year-old girl from the *Yulo Community* had died while giving birth, she was very young and her body was not prepared to carry a baby, and even less, to give birth” (Field diary, 9 July 2016)

4.3. Responsibility of the boys-fathers “chavalos”

On several occasions during my stay, I was able to observe the lack of responsibility on the part of the father – if the young boy is a minor – it falls on the boy’s family or the girl’s mother.

In a conversation with Hilda, when she was telling me that a girl from the nearest community had died weeks before my arrival, she added, as I recorded in my field diary: “*the boy’s family, also a minor, will always be in debt with that family*, explains Hilda.” (Field diary, 9 July 2016)

Also, during my stay at the Aiko Health Center I saw that some of the young girls came accompanied by the father of the baby or the future baby, when the male was an adult; however, if they were young kids, the mother also accompanied them. This last situation is reflected in my field diary in this way:

“Of the five young girls that had recently given birth, three of them were accompanied by their mothers; however, the other two were there with the baby’s fathers, much older than them [...] There were also three young pregnant girls that were at the Health Center with their mothers and with three young boys, minors, who seemed to be the future fathers” (Field diary, 26 July 2016)

“I was struck that the mothers were the ones who addressed the doctor directly and the ones who spoke with him, while the young girls hardly “opened their mouth”; it gave the impression that the mothers were the ones expecting a baby. On the other hand, the three young boys seemed to have come to an agreement in playing the role of simply “being there” (Field diary, 26 July 2016)

Finally, during my stay at the hostel, I was able to witness how Jimena and the father of the boy who got her daughter Verónica pregnant, came to an agreement, and he ensured that he would take care of everything that the baby needed. I recorded it as follows in my field diary:

“This afternoon, a man arrived at the hostel asking for Jimena [...] The next day, he came back, and this time, Jimena was at the hostel. I knew that the conversation was about Verónica’s baby, so I assumed that he was the father [...] To my surprise, it turned out that he was the father of the boy who got Verónica pregnant. The man seemed to be very frightened because his son was twenty-five years old and she was a minor, and that was a rape crime in the country. He said that he would pay and he would buy everything that the baby needed, if they didn’t report his son. Specifically, the man’s words were: “*I will personally take care of everything, the baby will want for nothing*”. I was disturbed by the fact that at not momento, was the boy present during the conversation, and the father takes on all of the responsibility” (Field diary, 7 August 2016)

4.4. Abortion

The number of pregnant girls and babies at such a young age was very high in Macondo. Abortion was sanctioned in the country - even referred therapeutic abortion, for example, to sexual abuse cases – which meant that taking the risk to make this decision

implied doing it clandestinely with insufficient sanitary measures and without any guarantee that things would go well.

Through various women, I learned about the most frequent methods of abortion on the island. On the one hand, and the most frequent method, was the alternative of having an abortion in a neighboring country, clandestinely; and, on the other hand, there was an abortive plant called viborana, that some women resorted to.

During my stay, Magali became pregnant after having been raped a few days prior to my arrival. As a result of this act, her mother and Hilda took her to have an abortion in a neighboring country. I narrate this event in my field diary as follows:

“After three weeks Magali still had not had her menstruation so we bought a pregnancy test with the hope that Magali was not pregnant, but the test gave a positive result. Magali could not stop crying, it was a difficult situation; her mother hugged her disconsolately. A few days after she found out, Hilda, Magali and her mother left for the neighboring country. Both were aware that a clandestine abortion was not the safest method and the risk that something could go wrong was present at all times, but sadly, the reality was that this was the only feasible option. Fortunately, everything turned out well, and Magali was in good condition after the surgery.” (Field diary, 28 July 2016)

4.5. Pregnancies due to rape

Since *therapeutic abortion* is forbidden in this country, if a girl became pregnant from the man who had abused her, she would have no choice of whether to have the baby or not. Faced with this situation, I wondered how the society of Macondo would view this reality. Therefore, on several occasions, I was able to perceive what the opinion was that a girl was pregnant and that she had her abuser’s baby. In my field diary and below, I cite some of the comments related to this situation:

“We were discussing our concern about the high number of pregnant girls. Meanwhile, Hilda intervened: “*even in cases of sexual abuse of girls, unwanted pregnancies are seen as something unavoidable*”. (Field diary, 19 July 2016)

“Before the market closed, Lourdes and I headed to Aiko to buy food. Lourdes knew all of the neighbors, so we got into the van of one of them. The man, knowing that I

belonged to ALMI, addressed me and asked: *Are you also in favor of abortion like all “those” women from the hostel?*”. I answered that of course I was; and then I asked him: You aren’t? And in the case of a rape? The man answered me with words I will never forget: *“What fault is it of the baby’s!”* Stunned, I asked him: And if it were your daughter? He did not know how to answer me. (Field diary, 3 August 2016).

5. INTERCOURSE

5.1. Initiation

In several conversations, my close ALMI colleagues told me that in their culture the first sexual intercourse is had beginning at 12 years of age for girls and for boys it can be a few years later. Also, some women such as Hilda, Doña María Alejandra and Jimena, told me that they became pregnant with their first child from their first sexual intercourse. Specifically, they tell me that they lost their virginity between 13 and 14 years of age. Currently, the three of them are between the ages of 30 and 40, and their oldest children are between 16 and 25 years old.

5.2. Knowledge and methods of contraception

During the two workshops that were carried out with boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 16 in two indigenous communities of the island, I was able to observe the way of thinking of the young boys towards sex, pregnancy and sexual abuse; but, above all, we worked on the topic of methods of contraception. Throughout the workshops, I was struck by the fact that protection and sexual prevention are seen as things that are the responsibility of the young boys. It is reflected as follows in my field diary:

“When asked if they bought the *“calcetín”* they answered that that was *a task for men*. On the one hand, I was pleasantly surprised that some of the young boys “carried one on them”, but, on the other hand, I was frustrated that none of the young girls had one, or at least didn’t admit to it, perhaps out of embarrassment. I was also surprised that none of the young people present, knew of the existence of condoms for women, without it being the pill. When the workshop ended, in the final reflections, several of the young girls said that

they would stop by the pharmacy: *although I may die of embarrassment and even if people think I am an “hoyuda”, and that they would be safer always carrying a condom with them*”.
(Field Diary, 10 August 2016)

CHAPTER 5. Research Ethics

All research influences, directly or indirectly, on rights, wellbeing and even in the private lives of human beings. Nonetheless, in this research, honesty and truth have been of vital character. Throughout my research there were many issues that I have reformulated: What is the value of carrying out research with human beings? What is correct or incorrect? Am I showing what these girls and women would really want to say? What are the possible positive effects that my study group and the rest of the island society would benefit from after finalizing this research? Does it cause some type of risk for the girls and women to get involved in the research? among others.

I have supported this section with the Belmont report (1979), where the three most relevant principles are collected, which should be considered and taken into account in the process of a study where human beings are involved: the principle of Respect, the principle of Benefit and the principle of Justice. Therefore, as it is a study focused on childhood, I have opted to apply these ethical principles from the Belmont Report (1979) in the field of study of childhood, following a project presented by UNICEF (2013) called ERIC (Ethical Research Involving Children), which was created for the purpose of “providing support to all researchers, people and organizations that participate in the research carried out with children, or that can have an impact on children” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 2). In this way, basing my work on these ethical principles, I bring up the complications and difficulties that have arisen throughout my research, which also affect the person who is bringing up these issues and that refer to his/her own action and to his/her relationships with others.

1. Respect:

In my research, I assume that, to respect girls who have participated in the study, it is necessary to know, following the ERIC project: "who the child is, in what cultural context

the child lives, and how the culture configures its experiences, skills and perspectives” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 15). Therefore, I have kept in mind into account the relationships of the girls within their communities and within their families, based on the knowledge for their social structures.

Also, the fact that I, as a researcher, come from a different culture, has required a reflection on the position of the girls in the social-cultural context of Macondo. As shown in the ERIC project (2013): "respectful research involves the recognition and careful consideration of the societal importance that is given to the rights of groups and individuals in the negotiations of the research process.” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 15).

2. Benefit:

During my research, I have prioritized avoiding doing harm to the girls, as contained in the *principle of No Maleficence* of the Belmont Report (1979). Thus, as it is expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), “this principle has special resonance in the research that is being carried out with children due to disparities of power that exist between adults and children, and the responsibility of the researchers to ensure the respect of the rights of the child to protection” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 16).

As a researcher, it has had value for me, as the philosopher Hallvard Fossheim indicates, that “the researchers have the obligation to ensure that the protection of the children is an integral part of the planning, implementation and dissemination of all of the research” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 16) For this reason, I have taken into account the possible negative effects and risks of the research on the subjects and in their everyday life, by determining as a priority that the participating subjects will be the beneficiaries, and arriving to the conclusion that if my research could cause harm to the girls, I would not continue with it.

On the other hand, I have had the principle of Beneficence present at all times since it refers to "any action that promotes the welfare of children [...] and the obligation of the researcher to do everything possible so that their research improves the situation, the rights

and/or the well-being of children” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 17). This research has been carried out by and for the girls of Macondo; basing my work on this fact and finding value in the results of my research, I believe that it aims to provide positive benefits that facilitate change in the reality of the lives of the girls.

3. Justice

In my research, the principle of Justice has been present from the beginning, since “a just and equal treatment of the children, which includes paying attention to the imbalances of power and the distribution of the benefits and burdens, as well as the inclusion and exclusion” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 17) was intended to be ensured.

Therefore, the feminist approach to research is intrinsically linked to the principle of Justice, since the rights of women have always been justified through the values of fairness and equality. Thus, following Judith Preissle (2006), feminist ethics “do not resolve moral dilemmas in research. Women studying women, about women or with women, for the purpose of relieving women’s oppression and reconfiguring androcentric knowledge into a more inclusive understanding of “huwomany,” complicates the research process” (p.527). In this way, I have considered the girls as subjects with their own rights to have a voice in the research and be heard, thus promoting the validity of the girls’ testimony, and defending that the participation of the girls in the research is vital for learning about the issues that affect them and, at the same time, increase the validity of the results.

Following the ERIC compendium, the *International Charter for the Ethical Research of Childhood* arises, which consists of a statement of seven fundamental commitments and which aims in:

“enhancing the status, rights and the welfare of every child who participates in a research study [...], written with and for researchers and other interested parties committed to the protection of children and who have decided to assume the responsibility to follow ethical principles in any investigation undertaken, independent of the context in which it is carried out” (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 21).

In this statement, the following commitments are presented that are to be kept in mind by the researcher, reflected within the ERIC project (Graham, Powell, Taylor et al., 2013: 23-24). Below, are the seven commitments related to my experiences and problems that have arisen throughout the research:

- *Ethics in research with children is the responsibility of everyone.* During my research, that ethical principles are met, has had special relevance, regardless of the focus or context, both from my part – as researcher – and on behalf of the participants – the girls and women of Macondo.
- *Respect for the children's dignity is fundamental for ethical research.* In this way, I have pondered and considered the importance of my responsibility, as a researcher, at the moment of recognizing the situation of the girls and assessing the evolution of their abilities and the diversity of their contributions.
- *The research on children should be just and equal.* Throughout the research, I have made sure that a treatment between equals existed, therefore erasing any and all discriminatory obstacle to their participation.
- *The research must benefit the children.* One of my main objectives has been for the girls to get the maximum number of benefits possible, from the research, as an individual, as well as someone who forms part of a social group.
- *Participation in the research must never cause harm to the girls.* From the beginning of the research, I have decided to use anonymity, protecting participants by using fictitious names, where it has also been necessary to hide the name of the island and the name of the association of island women. All of this has been necessary in order to avoid any potential risk that could hurt the girls and the women of the association, who have participated in the research.
- *The research should always obtain the informed and continued consent of the girls.* From the volunteerism provided by the participants I have respected all the

information that they have given me, omitting any contribution at the request of the participants. They have also been previously informed that the investigation would be carried out from anonymity, even the respondent has been able to choose the name that would be used in her interview.

- *Ethical research requires continued reflection.* From the proposal of the study, I have found myself immersed in an arduous and constant process of reflection, where the assumptions, values, beliefs and impact have been the reason for many of my ethical and moral dilemmas, always trying to give priority to any of the information provided by the participants not affecting them negatively. Thus, reflecting on the approach of my research and how I have carried it out from a feminist perspective, I believe that feminisms make up an area where ethics and morals are always present, as we are working with values related to the experiences of women in different parts of the world. On the other hand, focusing my research towards gender has been a crucial point for glimpsing this reality; as the anthropologist Judith Preissle expresses: “making gender a basic category of analysis, of course, also revalues women in relationship to men and leads to interrogating the categories of sex and gender themselves (Butler, 1990)”. (Preissle, 2006: 515)

CHAPTER 6. Final Reflections

In this last section, my intention is to reflect on the trajectory that my final Master’s project has taken. There have been many positive and enriching experiences throughout the research process. Nonetheless, there have also been several limitations that have also been an impediment to my project, which at the same time have served as a personal learning experience as well as for future researches.

Considering an ethnographic approach has led me to experience an interpretation of the girls’ reality that has proven to be very successful. On the other hand, thanks to the knowledge acquired throughout these last two years at Universidad de Granada and Utrecht University, I have been able to rely on theoretical and methodological resources that have guided my study topic. Similarly, the variety and diversity of themes that make up the

Gemma Gender Studies Master's, have provided me with the opportunity to learn about and study many perspectives and nuances that would later serve as the theoretical basis of my work.

The process of TFM has been complex while enriching, where effort and perseverance have been the bases for achieving results that made this work visible. From the start of my research which took place during my field work in Central American in July 2016, there were various complications and doubts that caused uncertainty and insecurity, and that led me to question my research on several occasions. First of all, the research topic is a severe issue as much as it is a delicate one, that has affected me emotionally and still, after a year, I am still grieving and distressed. Therefore, when narrating violence, the sociologist Paula Helena Mateos (2015), recounts that it entails: "a difficult exercise, that involves recalling moments, situations, painful passages, that gave and perpetuate sadness, and that have, as a protagonist, a subject that remembers, feels, thinks, accepts, expresses and names" (p. 5).

Immediately upon returning from the trip, I started my studies at the University of Utrecht, where I have been able to rely on the support of attending a course focused on carrying out a thesis, where we shared our concerns and perspectives; in the course, all of us began to establish the roots of our research. The first months of the academic course, in autumn 2016, were very frustrating for me in terms of how to approach my work, a process that would take me several months in determining my research subject. In this way, and with the objective of making the girls' voice visible, there have been many emotional dilemmas in which I experienced painful moments of reflection, as I could not determine the best approach for my idea of giving the girls a voice. Added to this, were the numerous contributions and support that I received on this subject, from Professor Jamila Mascot as well as my colleagues, and which months later, I would appreciate much more than I did at that time. On the other hand, in February 2017, with the deadline approaching of presenting my research proposal and not having defined my research, I found myself in a stressful situation, blocked in trying to find the best way to transmit this hard reality faced by the girls in Macondo. At the same time, this sense of stress and anxiety increased when, due to administrative problems, it was not possible to have a second stay in June 2017 in Macondo, as had been planned from the beginning. Then, after my arrival in Granada, - the place from

where I carried out the research process, reading and writing that would give shape to my thesis-, I felt supported and encouraged by my faculty advisor, Maria Espinosa Spinola, who contributed to helping me with the thesis. The following months consisted of a persistent effort and study of the work, the moment in which I started to see the results of all of those ideas that had not taken shape thus far. Therefore, the fact that my advisor had focused her thesis on children in Latin America also provided me with a learning model and, of course, the advantage of being able to share with her all of the knowledge and experiences, as well as the painful situations, doubts and insecurities in which I had seen myself immersed, both academically and personally. All of this inspired a great self-confidence, as a result of facing situations similar to those she had faced at some point during her profession. In the last months, everything was flowing as I had hoped, until the moment when I had the Skype interview with one of the members of the association with which I had worked on the island. Because of my personal closeness with her and her family, our conversation before the interview was a horizontal relationship based on trust and friendship that united us. It was then that, sunken and destroyed, she told me that her young daughter, with whom I had a very close relationship, had for the second time, been sexually abused by another man, an event that was discovered shortly before we spoke, as the pregnancy could not be covered up. That conversation caused a deep pain in me, which made me stop my research and question many controversies of life, and of course, about how I was relaying that reality and if this would be the way in which those girls and women would like me to do so. This approach, as Espinosa (2017) expresses has to do with “subjectivity”, the way in which to articulate “the presence of the ethnographer in the field”, “the relationship with the others” and “how to deal with the emotions that we experience in the field” (p.4). Although aware of it, to understand that “the personal and emotional also form part of the research process” (Gregory, 2006 in: Espinosa, 2017: 5) has been a reality that has taken me time accept and admit. Thus, after resuming the research, doing a reading from a gender perspective and taking into account the contributions of Del Valle (2010) when she explains that this approach contributes to: “a view of said reality that would be unthinkable from another theoretical perspective” (p. 311), little by little, my attitude began to transform and evolve towards a more positive outlook; therefore, at that moment and more than ever, I wanted to do something for them. All of this led me to rethink my attitude; thus, being aware that there

was no way to go back in time and prevent anything from happening to that little girl, I began to see all of that differently, paying attention to all of those other girls who were younger, and who must not go through the same experience. In this way, this work is the grain of sand that I contribute to making it possible for the girls of Macondo to have a better life.

IV. CONCLUSIONS: RESULTS PREVIEW

In this section, - based on the central topics discussed in this research related to Child Sexual Abuse (CSA): stigmas, girls – bodies, action, pre-maternity and sexual relations – my aim is to reveal a series of conclusive statements that are the result of the process of analysis of the research.

❖ Stigmas

First, referring to *stigmas that fall upon girls* who have suffered CSA, and who have participated in the research, I have observed during the workshops carried out for girls between 8 and 12 years of age – through stories in which they deposited their confidence in me and through the various activities, painful feelings and sensations came to light originated after the rape. Some of the consequences that I have been able to observe in the girls have been: the **deep depression** in which they fall, **the silence** that keeps them from talking about the aggressions, and even **thoughts of suicide**; additionally, a sense of **guilt** and **shame**, that also came to light during the activities. In this way, the testimonies of mothers and members of the island association claim that by making the rape public, there is a **strong social blame towards the girls**.

Secondly, after studying the *stigmas that fall upon the girls' families* who have suffered CSA, and supporting my study on the interview with Doña María Alejandra, it is stated that, if you decide to report the crime, as happened on this occasion, the responsibility lies with the mothers. Therefore, **a mother who makes a claim is threatened and rejected by a large part of society** and by her own family. This is one more fact that corroborates that CSA is a topic that is silenced and does not transcend the private environment.

Thirdly, I have also been able to witness the existence of *stigmas that fall upon the association responsible of CSA and of its female members*. In this way, it can be stated that the **ALMI women are rejected by a large part of the island population** by making the rapes public. This situation of rejection leads to **violent acts and threats** to which these women are subjected on a daily basis.

❖ **Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)´s impact: “cuerpas” and intersectionality fact**

After this experience in Macondo, I was able to take note of the **high number of cases of sexual abuse to young girls** (8-13 years old). Just during my stay, and to my knowledge, at least four girls from the most nearby communities had been raped.

In the same way, all offenders or abusers were **adult men**, ranging from 40 to 60 years of age; a fact that leads me to interpret that the **female child body is very desired and eroticized** by the men of this place, since the age range of the girls was always the same (8-13). This sexual dominance defines and aggravates the imperatives of the masculinity of the rapists, who find in the girls, vulnerable subjects.

Similarly, these events are intrinsically related with **male domination as a form of hegemonic power**. Thus, as is reflected in various testimonies by different women, these crimes are justified by means of a **naturalization of rape** derived from the cultural behavior of the place. Therefore, the rapists defend themselves accusing the girls of being guilty and the instigators of the act, using terms such as “seduce”.

I was also able to observe other forms of violence that did not necessarily involve sexual intercourse, such as **sexual violence in observation**. También pude observar otras formas de violencia que no implicasen el acto sexual necesariamente como es la **violencia sexual en la observación**. The streets were the main setting where the men declared their power and dominance in the public sphere. In this way, I was able to specifically observe that the women who most often suffered situations of harassment and verbal aggression, were the youngest.

Another relevant aspect in the designation of the raped subjects has been the presence of an **intersectionality** based on: **sex** (for the mere fact of being girls), **social class** (for belonging to low social classes), **race** (for being indigenous), and **gender** (one of them was identified as a lesbian). In this way, the rapists left those girls included within those parameters, pregnant.

❖ **Intervention in light of CSA**

After analyzing how the government and society act in a case of CSA, the following conclusions have been reached: On the one hand, the impression related to the action taken by the government in cases of gender violence and sexual abuse of girls has been that the **institutions and State organisms do not take responsibility for these acts**. This fact was confirmed in the cases of gender-based violence on which I worked, where **the victims had no right to shelter or protection**, the outcome being to return home with their husbands. However, this forces women to take responsibility into their own hands in order to protect their lives. Moreover, through the various testimonies of women on the island in the reported cases of CSA, **procedure was usually not carried out**, unless there was a confession by the rapist, or in case of a pregnancy, the baby's DNA test considered with the accused.

On the other hand, I was able to see that, being **an issue considered socially taboo**, the CSA cases went unreported. Silence is the socially established rule that makes it impossible to "curb" these misogynistic crimes. Therefore, the only event that was known was that of the interviewee Doña María Alejandra, who had made the decision to report it. Another noteworthy aspect is that, as some women confided in me, within the families, it is a topic that is discussed among women mothers-daughters-sisters, while the men of the house are kept in the dark about the event.

❖ **Pre-maternity**

First, after having analyzed pre-maternity as a factor of life of the girls, in my research, the existence of **intergenerational relationships of attachment** was evident in all families that I had the opportunity of meeting. Therefore, due to the early age of the mothers, the grandmothers are in charge of raising the grandchildren, independently of whether or not they all live in the same house. Even so, the mother is still the maternal figure for the boy/girl.

Secondly, I can provide a series of impressions of the events that took place during my stay at the health center. On the one hand, in just one day, during the hours that I was awake, eight young girls came to the center, being a fact that shows the **high number of young girls are are prematurely pregnant at a young age**. On the other othand, **the reasons for the visits** for those girls who had given birth or were mothers were: mastitis infections from breast feeding and at the same time, for requesting powdered milk to feed their babies; there were also pregnant girls who were there due to severe pains, either in the breasts, the abdominal area or even some that could not stand up because they did not have the strength to hold their own body weight. I also witnessed comments and aggressive behavior that were totally inappropriate on the part of the medical personnel towards their patients, translated as **obstetric violence**. Lastly, I point out that the health risks that these girls faced were very high, and on the island, it was not surprising for a girl to die during labor.

Third, I can corroborate that the young mother and her family take responsibility for raising the child. It should be added that, while **being a young father means an absence of responsibility with the baby**, it is the boy's family who takes care of the costs and baby care, assuming full responsibility. Nonetheless, if something happens to the baby or child, it would be the boy's family who would be indebted to the girl and her family. However, I was able to observe in the health center that, during the pregnancy, the young boys accompany the young girls to the medical visits, along with the girls' mothers.

Fourthly, the fact that abortion is legally prohibited in this country and that girls cannot choose whether or not to have the baby, it is a factor that increases cases of pre-maternity. As a result, some girls have **clandestine abortions**, taking a great risk for their

health. Also, I have been able to get a sense for the society of Macondo's stance on the idea of abortion after a pregnancy having been the result of a rape, and many **anti-abortion opinions**, claiming that it could not be avoided or that it was not the baby's fault; an opinion influenced by the Church, since it is a country where Catholicism is very intrinsic in the daily life of the inhabitants.

❖ **Intercourse**

After studying the issues related to sex, it is estimated that the age of initiation for women tends to be from 12 years of age on; thus, several of the women involved in the research say they lost their virginity between thirteen and fourteen years of age.

Additionally, during the workshops for girls and boys between 13 and 16 years old, the boys are the ones in charge of buying and using methods of contraception, claiming that it is the sole responsibility of men.