

Stories of 'Born-Again' Women in Uganda:
Epistemic Violence,
Visceral Faith,
and
Subversive Performances of Subjectivity

By

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Abstract

Between 1986 and 1991, missionaries “pioneered” the Hope Land Base of the international missions organization of Youth With A Mission (YWAM). Situated just outside of Jinja, Uganda, the Hope Land base’s vision is “to be a training center, running schools accredited by YWAM’s University of the Nations,” and to be “committed to discipling men and women, while equipping them with the professional skills necessary to serve and reach the world for Christ” (YWAM 2017). Run by a small group of leaders, the British directors of the Hope Land base oversee a community of international and national students and staff, who live “To Know God and Make God Known” (YWAM 2017).

Using data collected in qualitative interactive interviews with Ugandan women, I discuss the lives of a diverse group of ‘born-again’ Christian women whose lives have been influenced, in some way, by the work of YWAM in Uganda. Using a discussion of global coloniality, with particular attention given to the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Quijano, Mignolo), I consider the ways that hegemonic epistemic violence has worked to produce the ‘born-again’ conversion experiences among the women. I use Foucault’s Modes of Subjectivation and Techniques of the Self to examine the ways that ‘born-again’ women continually work towards their own Christian discipleship, through actively transforming their own moral and ethical selves. Finally, using Bhaba’s concept of Colonial Mimicry (1994), first, I present evidence that argues that the YWAM missionaries use strategic ambivalence to perpetuate their work in Uganda. Second, I argue Ugandan women resist the

missionaries metonymizing gaze, and engage in subversive behaviors with these missionaries, as a means of perpetuating their access to the material benefits provided by YWAM.

This project relies on women's stories as articulations of unique knowledges. It acknowledges that in a neocolonized postcolonial world, asymmetries of power result in violent epistemic interventions that produce subjects and subjectivities marked by hegemonic ways of knowing. Despite this, this thesis finds that those subjectivities actively experience their own visceral responses to the Christian God, and as such, produce their own conceptions of God and their own ways of knowing about the world.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Acknowledgements..... | iii |
| Table of Contents..... | iv |
| Chapter 1: Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapter 2: Methods..... | 7 |
| Chapter 3: Global Coloniality as a Conceptual Framework..... | 18 |
| Chapter 4: Case Studies: Coloniality in Action?..... | 29 |
| Chapter 5: The Processes Behind Becoming A Moral and Ethical ‘Born-Again’ | 57 |
| Chapter 6: The Ambivalence of Colonial Mimicry & The Missionary Gaze..... | 66 |
| Chapter 7: Stories of Affect in Action, Subverting the Missionary Gaze..... | 78 |
| Chapter 8: Summary..... | 99 |
| Bibliography..... | 102 |
| Appendices..... | 104 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

Developing the Project

This project attempts to create space for contemplation and dialogue around issues highlighted by a dynamic community of women who offered to share detailed life narratives with me, based on their own assessment and presentation of their lived experiences and struggles. Prior to entering the field, I wanted to investigate whether or not the rhetoric and political discourse emphasized in Kampala by the Ugandan government through an official commitment to pursue a culture of zero tolerance for gender-based violence (GBV) was realistically having an impact on the day-to-day lives of women throughout the country. Specifically, I wanted to consider if the present day born-again Christian religious teaching intersects with this political rhetoric in a manner that positively affects the experiences of born-again Christian women in connection to their intimate relationships, the household division of labour connected to local cultural ideas about gender, issues of bodily autonomy and GBV. I wanted to investigate how Christian norms relating to these parts of life are constructed, taught, interpreted and then lived out, while assessing whether or not the mandate of the government had impacted the mission of born-again Christian churches and ministries and resulted in a perceivable shift towards a culture of zero tolerance for GBV.

However, over the 4 months of my fieldwork in Kakira, Jinja and Buwage-Budondo, I consistently observed a profound collective sense of distance at the grassroots level from the political machine in Kampala. None of my participants were aware of the

political rhetoric pertaining to a fight against GBV. Further, not a single participant, regardless of their tribal roots, felt anything positive about Museveni's government. Neither did they have any knowledge of, or access to, any related government funded programming or outreach. In fact, when the government was discussed, it was frequently accused of corruption, theft of land, murders of rural land owners, suppression of journalists, and tribal supremacy resulting in the marginalization of other tribes, among other things. At times, as women shared their stories, the government was briefly referenced in terms of what it ought to do, but in those cases, it was dismissed as being unable and unwilling to take on the more powerful machine— that is, “the culture, here in Uganda.” As such, my project's initial aim to analyze the impact and rural reach of the political discourse around GBV became an irrelevant investigation.

When discussing their lives, the participants found the influence of the faith-based teachings and personal encounters with the Christian God to be what saved them from the violence and difficulties that they felt surrounded by earlier on in life. It became evident that through identifying as ‘born-again’ Christian women, and for many, choosing to enter into some form of Christian education, training, and ministry work, provided them with a sense of family, community and status in their lives. Women who were seen as the most successful at connecting with the Christian God and living in obedience to a ‘Biblical Worldview’ were perceived of as operating under a certain “spiritual anointing,” and for many of my participants, this resulted in long-term inclusion into the exclusive community of Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

General Overview

This paper is interested in discussing the lived experiences of a diverse group of Christian women in Uganda, with particular attention given to understanding the effects of general (coloniality) and specific (YWAM) contexts on their experiences of conversion and their daily lives. At the behest of the participants, I engaged with them as storytellers of their own lives, which meant that I listened to and collected a series of ‘born-again’ testimonies and detailed chronological life narratives. Several storytellers followed their narratives with stories addressing a range of different daily experiences. These life stories provided me the opportunity to understand the pain, emotional trauma, and abandonment that the women experienced early on in their lives. As teenagers, many of them were expelled from their own families and kin groups, and as a result, lived lives that were marginalized in their local communities. But, hearing these stories of pain also enabled me the opportunity to consider the visceral experiences of healing and empowerment these women had after becoming ‘born-again.’ As new Christian believers, the women were granted opportunities to connect into their local supportive ‘Family of Christ’ and found ways to access respect, influence, and authority in their communities. For many of the women, a self-identified “transformational encounter with God” allowed them to achieve forms of security and safety; housing security; food security; and a sense of emotional security where visceral joy culminated in the capacity to forgive a variety of social injustices.

These stories reflect the ways that Ugandan women interact with the world they live in as they use their unique ‘born-again’ worldviews. Giving space in the pages that follow to the declarative and contemplative voices of the storytellers enables us to engage

with these ‘born-again’ worldviews as expressions of a unique form of knowledge.

Global Coloniality

To move beyond a simple re-telling of the women’s stories, I work to apply their knowledges to their unique Ugandan geopolitical context and the broader context of the African “postcolonial neocolonized world” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:13). Inspired by Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2013) critical analysis of African history and politics as being continually produced by ‘global coloniality’, with particular attention given to the concepts of the ‘coloniality of power’, and the ‘coloniality of knowledge,’ I seek to identify some of the individual, local level impacts of global coloniality. Arguing that knowledge is produced by processes of dialogical socialization often marked by asymmetries of power, I examine the constructive influence of global coloniality as a modality of power that enables the spread of the socializing force of Western Christian forms of knowledge. Specifically, I argue that the born-again Christian subjectivities we encounter in the stories shared have been produced by the epistemic violence that undergirds a system ordered by global coloniality. This epistemic violence inscribes women’s stories with moments of internalization of Western knowledge and beliefs. While the women embrace, interpret, perform, and subsequently, benefit from ‘born-again’ subjectivities at the local level, this conceptual framework enables the critical analysis and reflections of parts of the stories making up the case studies in Chapter 4.

Modes of Subjectivation and Techniques of the Self

Moving beyond the discussion of global coloniality, part of my analysis requires that I introduce Foucault's concept of the modes of subjectivation, as a way of analyzing why the storytellers chose to perform/present the specific testimonies, narratives, and subjectivities during our interviews. How are the storytellers "incited to recognize their moral obligations" (Mahmood 2005:30)? What experiences with what Christian authorities work to provoke the storytellers to interpret and internalize the 'born-again' Christian worldview as truth? Many of the storytellers actively note that their behaviours, their decisions, their struggles and their successes are the result of being internally awakened to an understanding of the moral obligations of 'born-again' Christian belief and culture. After examining the local level effects of global coloniality as enabling the spread of Western knowledge forms and beliefs, Chapter 5 shifts to consider the modes of subjectivation and the techniques of the self involved in developing those knowledge forms and beliefs among the participants. This chapter contemplates ways that the ongoing adoption of these knowledge forms and beliefs are uniquely personal (produced and reproduced by the techniques of the self) and communal (produced and reproduced by the Ugandan women's interactions with others).

Affect, Mimetic Communication, and (Neo)Colonial Mimicry

Finally, I introduce the concepts of mimetic communication and affect, as a means of considering the complexity that marks each moment of relationship between the storyteller subjects and myself. In this chapter, I argue that, on a broader scale, each subject desires to be heard and to be understood, in some way and for some purpose, by

whomever they engage with, and I turn to the concept of mimicry to understand the complexity of the pursuit of this desire. Understanding mimetic communication allows for the storytelling subject to actively interpret her audience and, subsequently, adjust her performance of herself in whatever ways she conceives of as necessary for achieving the outcome she desires. Therefore, the subject's affective and then visceral elements of her own (re)presented subjectivity become intertwined with her perception of the other. In many contexts, asymmetries of power are often embedded in the relational dynamic of the mimetic process. The colonial/neocolonial history of power intervenes on the relationships that develop between the women sharing their stories and myself. A discussion of Bhaba's conceptualization of colonial mimicry, metonymies of presence, and the use of a "ruse of desire" to produce performances of (subversive) subjectivities enables a decolonizing, praxical analysis of the interactive, subject-subject produced life narratives gathered during the course of my fieldwork.

Chapter 2:

Methods

Rather than engage in extractive research practices and associated neocolonizing analytical practices, this project used methodologies inspired by a personal/political commitment to engage in decolonizing academic work. For the entirety of this project, I worked “to embrace the messiness— the undoing and rebuilding— related to decoloniality” (Falcon 2016: 181), to reflexively contemplate my own positionality and decenter any related biases, forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that I held. As this chapter shows, embracing this “messiness” was an essential and active component in establishing the methodologies undertaken during my fieldwork. I have done so in hopes of producing analysis that my participants would consider as providing (re)presentations of their particular and collective lived experiences, with the potential for contributing to the unlearning of an imperialist/colonizing gaze — using theory in action— praxis, as a method to “dismantle the existing hierarchies of knowledge” (Nagar 2014: 185).

Participant Observation + Recruitment

Given my connections to Uganda and prior living experience there, I was offered several locations to live for the course of my fieldwork. I chose to stay on the YWAM Hope Land base in Kakira and close to Jinja, to benefit from a network of familiar individuals in the region. This network provided me with access to YWAM staff, workers, and students, as well as Kakira based women who frequented various ministries, like the weekly Women of Hope community gathering. One key community leader,

Charles, had been a colleague of mine previously. He reintroduced me to the location, connected me to the community, and provided me with a public platform to introduce and frame my presence in the community as a graduate student and researcher (as opposed to a Christian missionary). In some ways, he acted as an “informal gatekeeper” (Seidman 2006: 45) who provided character references as needed and granted implicit permission to some of the curious potential participants who had remained uncertain as to whether my secular research project was an appropriate use of their time. Charles arranged for me to be sharing a room in a small home with Judith, a young woman who was the director and staff of two YWAM ministries and who served as a worship leader at some of the YWAM worship and prayer gatherings. She became a key supporter of and collaborator in my project, and I found that being identified as “Judith’s roommate” provided me a space in the social fabric that made up the local element of the YWAM community. In this sense, she could also be considered a gatekeeper, whose favor towards me encouraged other women to welcome me into their social circles and group activities, as well as visit and meet me in their private space and time.

Living on the Hope Land base allowed me to become a participant observer of the day-to-day lives of devoutly Christian women, while they worked and/or studied in an ‘official’ YWAM capacity, and as they lived in a less official, personal capacity, as parts of their community. Participant observation in the official capacity included: the preparation and sharing of meals for the entire ~300 people in the community, daily community gathering times of worship and prayer and work duties, visitations to the neighbors and prayers for the sick, planning of local evangelism, community collaboration times held by the School of Sustainable Agriculture (SSAg), Christian

training of young people concerning godly gender roles and sexuality in the Discipleship Training School (DTS), and working with the weekly Women of Hope group gathering. In the non-official capacity, this included attending churches with friends, sharing meals, washing clothes, attending parties, taking trips into town, visiting friends of friends, eating in town, shopping, playing football, drinking tea, and a number of other daily activities. Ultimately, participant observation allowed me to gain inductive understanding of the population in whom I was interested. As well, it helped as I relied on the snowball sampling for recruitment, by giving me deepening relationships and increasing opportunities to meet people who were friends of friends of friends. Given that I relied entirely on the snowballing technique for recruitment, the initial network that I cultivated during my initial phase of participant observation was essential to successfully gaining access to a diverse group of women.

I was able to observe and gain insight into not only ideals and beliefs that women talked about having, but the applied meanings that these beliefs resulted in. I was also able to observe the ways certain taught and expressed ideals did not always overcome certain social hierarchies, particularly those stemming from tribal differences. Overall, participant observation was a crucial indirect method through which I was able to strategize my recruitment by learning how to navigate through the social/relational power dynamics/politics in the community, and further ensuring that I could supplement my interviews with key information that could only be accessed by being consistently immersed in the theology and teaching of the religion by leaders of the local community, in the local community, for the local community.

Project Design + In-depth interactive interviews

I used an emergent design for this project for ethical and practical reasons. It should be noted, and I will pause here to discuss this briefly, as it lends to refusal to use my other design, that this choice was not without its challenges from the university ethics board. During the process of applying for GREB, I had to produce a research script providing examples of questions I would ask women during my indepth interviews. The list of potential questions was necessary to gain ethical approval from the university for the project. However, having lived in Uganda previously, I had a prior experience with the social nuances and culturally appropriate patterns for social relations, and knew that a research script consisting of pre-conceived questions had the potential to hinder my ability to develop any kind of rapport and engage with the people I was interested in connecting with, particularly given the intimate and private nature of the issues I wanted to investigate. I was also aware of how arriving with a pre-conceived of interview script would result in a power dynamic between a white researcher and graduate student from Canada, and the project's participants, to yield an uncomfortable, unsafe, ethically questionable environment for imperialistic, extractive data collection to occur. Without allowing for emergent design, I would risk framing particular (re)presentations of the participants lives within my own positionality and as such, allowing my outsider status to inflict itself on the women's responses.

During the initial phase of my participant observation, three (3) women offered to look over this script and provide feedback concerning the questions asked. Each woman provided me with the same feedback— some was about specific language used (ie. Did I know that the word “women” would cause people to think I was only interested in those

who have children? Was I not interested in those who do not have children as well?); but generally, I noted a serious disconnect between the script and what these women felt women would want to discuss. Through these initial conversations, we brainstormed several different questions, and I looked for marked enthusiasm as a marker for what might be most relevant to the (complex and dynamic but) collective community of women I would seek to recruit. It was through these conversations that I realized the ease with which these women shared their opinions, views, experiences and knowledge was a direct result of my willing de-centering of my own ideas. While my area of interest was relevant in that it provided a distinct overarching topical guide to encourage this particular brainstorming, these women's superior understanding of the sociality of their community members highlighted to me that trying to navigate through this research project through trying to pose the right questions would be a difficult and cumbersome process. Yet, the richness of these times of interactive collaboration inspired me to conceptualize interviews designed in a similar format. Given the sensitive nature of my research topic, and the short three (3) month scope of my fieldwork, interactive conversational interviews were the only method I could use to develop the depth of rapport necessary to complete my investigations. Rather than impose, I would introduce my topic of interest and allow women to present and represent themselves and their understandings and their knowledges in whatever terms they wished to do so.

Given this key shift in research design and methodology, the complete trust given to participants to direct the format of their interviews resulted in quality rapport being established between us. My questions were interjected just to clarify meanings and better understand what they were saying, rather than to direct the conversation. Because of the

conversational dynamic, participants were able to ask me questions about anything they wanted to, and as such, interviews maintained a sense of being a social interaction.

Over the course of my fieldwork, the primary method used for data collection was in-depth “interactive interviews” with 15 women. Falcon introduces the notion of interactive interviewing as a crucial methodology for negotiating imperial privilege, arguing that structuring interviews so that they are conducted “as a conversation” where dialogue takes the place of “preconceived script[s]” works to develop a sense of collaboration and connection between the academic researcher and the non-academic people, while “disrupt[ing] the monotony” of a “one-way...interview” (Falcon 2016: 183). She notes that for some, this interactive design has resulted in modification of interview questions and even research questions.

This interview format meant that my ability to establish quality rapport took place early on and resulted in what follows here: an articulation of a complex collection of narratives that are produced by my participants, as the performers of story/tellers of their life narratives, and myself as an intimate, active perceiver/hearer of their stories. I followed up nine (9) of these interviews with further visitations where we revisited the topics and stories discussed, and women used these times of social connection to continue to talk about the things they shared initially. These times of follow up engagement provided a crucial space for women to evolve, retract and/or provide further description of things they felt they did not adequately portray during the initial interview. Often during these times, I was treated even more like I was a familiar friend and the dynamic of the social connection enabled further dialogue and sharing of personal story than ever.

Through the analysis that follows, I highlight the ways that these stories weave

together to produce a collective voice describing (a) collective and shared experience(s). Rather than claim to be an essentialized understanding of this group of participants, it claims only to present a voice that describes the messy and nuanced overlap of the (re)presentations of the lived experiences, life narratives and testimonies of women who chose to connect and perform these in a collaborative, and interactive setting with me.

Interview Settings/Use of Tech:

On the days of each ‘interview’ I found myself consistently chided by the participants for being late, despite the fact that we would make very tentative plans for meeting. In Buwage-Budondo, we had two (2) groups of women who were eager to participate, but the first group wanted to coopt the day, and still, the second group of ~60 women filled a church, and waited for several hours in hopes of sharing their stories. In Kakira, as the weeks carried on, each woman selected the meeting place for our day together, and in each instance, I found myself welcomed into an intimate setting. Rosslyn and I sat beside her window, enjoying the breeze in an otherwise hot room, while sitting on her bed. Happy and I began our interview on a couch, but then entered the kitchen and began preparing the family dinner once we entered the early afternoon. And Evelyn and I sat in her living room next to a small TV that was blaring commercials and white noise, as she fed her toddler on her breast. Others chose to show me their personal place of prayer (a garden), their places of work, the corner of their field, the floor of their rooms. In these spaces, and on their terms, I was welcomed to partake in performances of the narrative of their life stories.

These interviews lasted from 2 hours to 9 hours long, and were each recorded

with a digital handheld recorder. This was important for several reasons; firstly, because I was particularly interested in comparing the exact phrases and words used in all interviews with each other, and with the theological teachings I was actively immersed in as a participant observer living at the YWAM base. Secondly, the open-ended, interactive design of the interview encounters meant that there would be limited direction by me during the interview process, and no restraint shown by me over how long or how detailed the participants' interview ended up being. If I didn't record the interviews, I risked losing the ability to observe participants' facial expressions, eye contact, and body language as well as their unique interactions with space and objects, and also, key details in their narratives. Taking notes would not be as efficient and would potentially hinder my ability to develop rapport by highlighting our differences in literacy and education levels, among other things.

This was a brief point of discomfort or uneasy curiosity at the beginning of most of my interviews, particular with many of the women living in Buwage-Budondo. I could see this in the nervous gazes directed at the recorder and as such, I wasn't satisfied that their consent to be recorded was fully informed. To mitigate the discomfort, I wanted to make sure that the women felt confident that they could work the recorder themselves, as well as understand what we would sound like once recorded. As one means of ensuring active informed consent, I hoped to show the participants that they could turn on and off the recorder freely and note to me if they wished certain elements of their narratives to be confidential. In order to show my participants that this technology was accessible and easy to use, I took a few Lugandan songs learned during my participant observation, and would smile and laugh and press the record button and sing into the recorder. There are

commonly sung “call back” songs, where a leader sings one line, and others respond singing another line. I would sing one of these, and each participant laughingly would join in singing with me. We would back up the recording together, listen, laugh, and then the woman would take a turn using it in the same manner. After establishing a confident capacity to use the recorder, they would take it, and place it somewhere between us, or on two occasions hold it, and the interviews were then successfully recorded, with women turning it on or off to indicate varying levels of anonymity to be associated with certain stories.

Positionality:

In 2001-2002, I spent 12 months living and working in Uganda, with Youth With A Mission (YWAM). YWAM Hope Land is a school and ministry community base in Kakira, and close to Jinja. Ugandan nationals come from many districts of Uganda, to study, work and “staff” (that is, pay fees to work and live there) the base. Students and staff from any other country in the world are also welcome to come to study, work or staff the base. When I lived there, I was 18 and 19 years old, and was part of a Year For God (YFG) British-based YWAM gap year program. I attended the Discipleship Training School (DTS) offered at Hope Land, which included a three (3) month lecture based course addressing how to be a follower of God and live a Christian Bible based life, and a three (3) month period of volunteer work in rural Mbale district, on a team made up of mostly Ugandan women and men, a Sudanese man, and two British youth. Following this school, I worked as a YWAM staff member at the Soroti YWAM base for three (3) months, and later worked as part of a Ugandan dance team called CXT during an

African-wide evangelistic operation called Operation Sunrise Africa. Ultimately, many of the friendships that I made during this time remained for the next many years, and then, with the proliferation of social media both in Canada and in Uganda, even many of the peripheral connections made during this time period were re-established in some form.

I took part in this year because, at the time, I held a genuine faith in the Judeo-Christian God, and had undergone a profound religious conversion experience in 1999. During the course of this year, I grew in my devotion to the faith, felt an increasing and intimate connection to what I had learned was a loving and gracious God, and enjoyed the experience of relating to God in the context of a robust and passionate community of believers. At the time, I felt I had learned the ability to hear God's voice, and had learned that obedience to His will, so clearly expressed through His ever speaking and directing voice, was an essential and necessary part of living my most vibrant life.

For the next 8 years, my life was driven by the faith that I possessed and a devotion to God that was persistently developing. I was motivated to live my life as if I was a "living testimony" to God's goodness and love, and found the energy to rise to this challenge through hours of daily prayer, meditation and worship, as well as Christian community membership, and ministry. My transition to disbelief, skepticism and secular humanism, occurred abruptly and completely altered my person.

Ultimately, my own loss of faith and transition from such an intense life of devotion also gave rise to the curiosity that drove this project, as well as a distinct capacity to appreciate how genuine the experience of connecting with, hearing from and living for a god-figure can be. Returning to a familiar space, and investigating some of the ways that faith life is derived in this specific community was something I could do

precisely because of a profound familiarity not only with the people involved in this space (as well as some of their familiarity with me) and our shared knowledge of the semantics and language (sometimes internally referred to as ‘Christian-ese’) required to discuss the faith, but with the manner in which a commonly referenced ‘Biblical Worldview’ ought to be interpreted and applied to day-to-day life. In other words, I entered the field equipped with highly specialized training in and experience with the theology and semantics of the religion, and a personal background that equipped me with the specific skill set and network required: to gain live-in access to a private organization; to develop a mutual sense of rapport, trust, and understanding between myself, my participants, and the organization; to avoid being targeted for evangelism despite my positionality as a secular researcher; to engage in interactive interviews while broadly understanding the colloquialisms, ‘Christian-ese’, and Biblical semantics expressed as truth by the participants; to engage empathetically with the spirituality and faith life of my participants as a robust form of knowledge that produces many interpretations and interesting ways of knowing. Throughout my participant observation, I was also able to relate with Western Christian missionaries, teachers and evangelists, and later, was able to sit with some of them and interview them to better understand the mandate undergirding their work in Uganda. Despite the axis of difference that exists due to my own positionality as a secularist, I was able to patiently engage with the ‘born-again’ form of knowledge and knowing due to my own prior personal history of passionate ‘born-again’ belief.

Chapter 3:

Global Coloniality As A Conceptual Framework

Global Coloniality

Rather than provide another re-telling of the Uganda's history of colonization and 'de-colonization', I consider Uganda through the lens of 'coloniality' as a means of providing historical context to this project.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni defines coloniality as "the longstanding patterns of power that emerged from colonialism and continue to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production, long after the end of direct colonialism" (2013:16), arguing that "Africans have breathed and lived coloniality since their colonial encounters and it continues to shape their everyday life" (2013:16). These structures and patterns of power define global relations—they continue to invoke a right to dominate in those in the West, and to insist on the subordination of those in the global south. Neocolonizing relationships of domination and subordination are perpetuated through subjective and normative assessments of peoples' culture, race, and epistemologies.

Coloniality of Power

One of the tools used to perpetuate global coloniality is the coloniality of power. Ndlovu-Gatsheni highlights the role of the coloniality of power in discursively constructing "the idea[s] of Africa and African identities...[as] political projects" (2013: 102). The racist codifying and categorization of 'Africans' are driven by a political need to justify continuing relationships of domination in the global capitalist system. There

are “colonial mentalities, psychologies and worldviews” that are carried into the postcolonial era and continue to colonize “Africans” through the subalternizing ‘Africans’ by perpetuating racial and cultural hierarchies, thereby accepting the ‘continuities of coloniality’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:14). Specifically, the coloniality of power subalternizes the non-metonymized, nuanced lives and complex identities of Africans.

Western and ‘African’ relations are “mediated by inferior-superior, irrational-rational, primitive-civilized and traditional-modern dichotomies imposed by Western and colonial modernity” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 100), and these relations are based on the “‘racial’ social classification of the world population” (Quijano 2007, 171). This racial social classification is interconnected with the cultural complex of European modernity/rationality, in that what is actually a racist rhetoric that defines ‘Africans’ as less than has been made culturally palatable through “the rhetoric of ‘modernity’”(Quijano 2007: 171). The legacy of colonization is then this coloniality that continues to produce the subjective normative assessment of ‘Africans’ as culturally, racially and epistemologically ‘less than’ those with Euro-American roots. This rhetoric of modernity is a tool of the coloniality power. It works to operationalize ‘Africans’ as requiring (neo)colonizing interventions, justifying the continued suppression of those cultural, racial and epistemological norms that result in ‘African’ bodies being metonymically ‘African’.

To understand some of the ways the coloniality of power works, and how it is relevant to this project, I will apply Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and Grosfoguel’s (2007) discussions of the “contours”, or particularities, to the coloniality of power that make it

effective in perpetuating the patterns of power that produce global coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 18-19). While he describes several of these “contours”, two of the ‘contours of coloniality’ are especially relevant to my analysis. One contour of the coloniality of power is seen through the “privileging [of] Christianity over all other non-Christian/non-Western spiritualities” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:19). Another contour is “an epistemic hegemony that privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 19).

While Grosfoguel identifies these as separate contours, I consider them to be inextricably linked and mutually inclusive. I argue that they could only exist as distinct from each other if we elevate rational-secular conceptions of knowledge over religious-spiritual conceptions of knowledge—that is, if we accept the same rhetoric of modernity that I critique as undergirding (neocolonial) patterns of coloniality. Together, these contours provide a starting point for considering Christianity as the substance of the epistemic hegemony that continues to influence how Ugandans know what they know about their traditional forms of knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that, “despite the celebration of decolonization as a milestone in African history of liberation, Africa has not managed to free itself from epistemological colonization inscribed on the continent and its people by mission and secular schools, religious denominations, and other institutions that carried western cultural imperialism” (2013: 32). The Western missionaries who privilege their Christian conceptions of spirituality and their Biblical worldview as a Western (universal) form of knowledge engage in epistemic violence under the guise of achieving the goals of modernity and progress through the Christian transformation of ‘African’ spirits and minds. While privileging of their own conceptions

of Christian spirituality and ‘Biblical’ forms of knowledge, the mandate of the missionaries’ Christian epistemology requires that the Western missionaries perceive of non-Christian ‘Africans’ as lost souls, as ‘living in darkness’, as ‘sinners’ who inherently lack what is required to be a good moral citizens. These sinners must convert from their ‘evil’ traditional spiritualities, and become ‘disciples’ of the Christian God.

Coloniality of Knowledge

The coloniality of knowledge is closely interconnected to the coloniality of power and both are extremely relevant to my discussions of global coloniality and to the presence of Christianity, among other spiritual forms of knowledge, in my participants’ worldviews. Ndlovu-Gatsheni instrumentalizes Quijano’s discussion of cultural colonization as a way to define another part of global coloniality, that is, the coloniality of knowledge;

“Coloniality of knowledge directly addresses the crucial question of how Western modernity spread through displacing other cultures, subordinating others, and colonizing the imagination of the colonized peoples. This took the form of repression of existing African beliefs, ideas, images, symbols and forms of knowledge that were found to be repugnant to global colonial domination” (2013: 20).

The kinds of ideas the Western Christian evangelizing missionaries have about the economic needs and the cultural needs of Ugandans affect the everyday lives of Ugandans—shaping their ideas about morality, their conceptions of what a good life is, their expectations in relationships, and their beliefs about their local spiritual traditions. Reifying the Bible as absolute truth, teaching the threat of the flames of hell and the apocalyptic return of Jesus, promising God’s tangible blessings and ability to heal, these missionaries use epistemic violence to transform Ugandans perceptions about Ugandan

truths and Ugandan cultural norms. They seek to overcome “the stronghold” of traditional Ugandan forms of knowledge and ways of knowing, by convincingly operationalizing those epistemologies as being “evil” and “of the devil,” and as responsible for the poverty, abandonment, violence, and abuse that many Ugandan individuals have experienced. In this sense, the coloniality of knowledge relies on successful integration of Western knowledge into the worldviews and imaginations of Ugandans.

Coloniality Observed: Why Africa Needs God

In Uganda, local ‘born-again’ Christian culture should be considered a space in which both the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of power intervene together to (re)produce and (re)construct African identities according to the interests of a global imperial project. Both forms of coloniality work together— the one enabling a privileging of Western spiritualities and knowledges, the other enforcing repression, displacement, and erasure of African beliefs and forms of knowledge. Both tools of global coloniality work to produce subordinated Ugandan bodies and minds, and work to subalternize those who fail to conform.

Was epistemic violence embodied in the work of YWAM and inflicted by Western missionary workers among the communities of Kakira, Jinja and Buwage-Budondo? Do the stories shared by the Ugandan participants in this project reveal effects of coloniality? Both the imposition of ‘racial social categorizations’ and of hierarchies of cultures and forms of knowledge were, indeed, evident. Using the observable presence of forms of coloniality of power and knowledge to reveal neocolonizing patterns of

global coloniality, I argue the Ugandan participants have continued to be targeted in for (neo)colonial domination.

Cloaked in the rhetoric of “helping those who have less”, and rooted in a belief system that theologizes the ‘othering’ of ‘the world’, neocolonial relationships of power are uncritically perpetuated by even missionaries who appear to have generous intentions. Epistemic violence occurs as they present Euro-American-centric ‘universal’ ‘Christian’ ‘truths’ to Ugandan individuals, and becomes especially violent when they use the threat of hell and eternal consequences to convince vulnerable Ugandans to conform with their Christian notions of morality in an apocalyptic ‘end-of-days’ worldview.

In the analysis that follows, I examine data that reveals some of the ways that the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge are used by missionaries to perpetuate their presence in Uganda, and some of the ways that coloniality has affected how participants themselves think about what they know about their own culture.

I spent several days having conversations with some of the Western staff and school leaders responsible for teaching a variety of the ‘schools’ or courses offered on the YWAM Hope Land base. During my stay there, two courses related to community development—a Foundations in Community Development (FCD), and a School of Sustainable Agriculture (SSAg). The courses had both staff and students from around East Africa, and America.

One of the School’s leaders sat with me to help me understand the YWAM perspective on ‘development’. He argued that some Christians possess a Christian Cultural Worldview, but that this asks us to “shut our minds down and limits our pursuit of God to some ‘spiritual thing’ or some spiritual realm,” and “removes us from the real

world...the actual needs in the world” forcing us to have “a spiritual response to physical and tangible needs.” For this leader, doing true “transformative development” meant “responding to tangible needs through tangible action,” and that the Christian missions mandate required that this kind of outreach should be done, in regions of the world where ‘underdevelopment’ and a failure to progress inhibits their lives. He explained that serving others by working towards both spiritual *and* practical ‘development’ is living out the Biblical Worldview. For him, living in Uganda, teaching community development, farming and agricultural skills to a diverse group of students was the “tangible action” required of him, as a Christian leader. At first, this leader’s personal mission was observably rooted in a well-motivated desire to provide a tangible response to tangible needs, and his well established critique of the Christian Cultural Worldview revealed that he felt practical, social justice oriented missions was an essential part of the Christian mandate. YWAM’s motto: “To know God, and make God known” (YWAM 2017) was, in his view, only adequately served through engaging in tangible, practical, social justice oriented work. He felt that people would be less likely to convert if they were hungry, homeless, or physically hurting, and pointed to Jesus’ ministry as per the Bible, noting that Jesus would often take care of real physical needs prior to converting individuals into his disciples.

As our relationship developed, he provided me with a copy of an article from The Times entitled “As An Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God,” by Matthew Parris (2008). This article is used as a teaching resource by leaders and staff at YWAM’s School of Sustainable Agriculture and School of Foundations in Community Development, and was described to me as being representative of part of the foundation

of the missional mandate of his schools. The fact that an atheist would believe in and understand the value of Western Christian missions mixed a sense of pride into this leader's belief that the work he does "making God known" at YWAM is absolutely necessary.

Yet, an analysis of the article provided reveals that YWAM's leaders believe the culturally palatable rhetoric of modernity identified above, without realizing that the production of 'Africans' in these terms is racist and imperialistic. The YWAM leader's missionary rhetoric of social justice through transformative development is rooted in the neocolonizing, Euro-American-centric, racial social classification that is at the foundation of the YWAM Christian missionary gaze.

In the article, Parris argues that Christian evangelism makes:

"an enormous contribution in Africa... It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good. The [African] Christians were always different... There was liveliness, a curiosity, and engagement with the world...that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall"(2008).

Despite his atheist status, Parris (2008) argues that converted Christian Africans have been able to overcome the restrictive "rural-traditional mindset" that "grinds down the individual spirit," and that their conversion empowers "those anxious to cast off a crushing tribal groupthink." He dismisses "the whole structure of rural African thought," arguing that unless the "whole belief system [is]...supplanted", Africans will continue to have "the (literal) inability to understand" [parentheses are his] how to oppose corrupt politicians, to take any initiative to do challenging or meaningful work, and will certainly fail to metaphorically "climb[any]mountain" (Parris 2008). Their "literal" incapacities to do so are deeply connected to "their" traditional African belief system, and as such, Christian evangelism and forceful acculturation are the only ways for Africa to "change"

so that they might eventually “develop”(Parris 2008).

The YWAM school leader and teacher shared that this described exactly why he had moved to Uganda to teach development in a Christian capacity, arguing along with the article that no ‘development’ could successfully occur, unless Ugandans were willing to overthrow their ‘tribal value systems.’

Both Western and African students were told to read and study this article. I argue that using this article as a required reading in the Schools meant that both Schools engaged in a basic example of the colonality of power and of knowledge— this literature “deprive[s] Africans of legitimacy and recognition in the global cultural order dominated by European patterns” (Quijano 2007: 170), reifies Western culture, privileges Western Christian beliefs, and relies on an uncritical assessment of Ugandans as ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘literally’ incapable of ‘development’ without Western intervention.

Because this literature was used under the guise of helping Ugandans, in courses that spent a lot of time teaching them to do ‘Transformative Development’ based on a ‘Biblical Worldview’, I argue that these courses are a place where epistemic violence is inflicted on Ugandan students, and where both Ugandan students and staff face racist socialization, as ‘the contours of colonality’ demand that they assess their own Ugandan culture as ‘less than’ Western culture. During the course of my observation of the SSAg and the FCD, the readings, literature and handouts, the community collaboration group projects and classroom lecture times were littered with simple examples of this kind of epistemic violence. Even seeming well-intentioned acts of community service were rooted in this kind of thinking.

Beyond the epistemic violence observed in how the Schools taught students to ‘do

transformative development’, I observed and interacted with people who had embraced ‘born-again’ Christian culture, and who insisted on Christianity as the only way to be saved from sin and achieve the promise of eternal life. Several missionaries had GoFundMe accounts to fundraise for their work in the mission field of “Africa,” a “dark place” that is “desperately needing salvation” for the “lost souls” living there. They perpetuated the Western ‘born-again’ culture that views ‘African’ forms of spiritual knowledge as categorically evil, or “from the devil”, and as missionary interventions as mandated by “the Great Commission” of Jesus Christ.

The Western missionaries in Uganda worked hard at producing Christian converts willing to accept, internalize and perform ‘born-again’ Christian subjectivities. They targeted people who seemed injured, victims and/or spiritually lost, and who they could appeal to accept and self-identify as such. These people could become converts if they accepted their need for the Christian God, and could gain status in the community if they were willing to identify as and perform subjectivities of healed, survivors who were now spiritually found. In identifying and performing these ‘born-again’ subjectivities, individuals who convert have an opportunity to begin to engage with the Western missionaries and workers in their midst—as spiritual equals in the ‘Family of God’ or the ‘Body of Christ’. For many of the participants in this project, women were able to leave lives of subalterneity, isolation and economic hardship, and were now able to partake in ‘fellowship’ and ‘ministry’ in the transnational community of YWAM. In this sense, born-again Christian transformations were experienced as powerful and life-changing events, where those whose previous life narratives have been predominately marked by experiences of exclusion, silent and unseen suffering, loneliness and abandonment, and

lack of upward social mobility, the women's willingness to accept the effects of epistemic violence and the coloniality of power and knowledge resulted in their daily lives becoming completely altered.

Chapter 4:

Case Studies—Coloniality in Action?

Throughout my interviews, it became evident that embracing ‘born-again’ culture and Western based Christian knowledge about spiritual things required that Ugandans displace, decenter and resist their traditional culture and knowledges. The participants in my project all had stories about their pre-conversion relationships with their local “doctors”, “daddies”, “grannies”, describing them as figures to be respectfully feared but relied upon, because of their spiritual connections to the ancestors and spirits. Yet, having become ‘born-again’ Christian believers, the women speak about these spiritual leaders and would assess local spiritual practices as ‘evil,’ ‘dangerous,’ ‘cursed,’ ‘harmful,’ and “repugnant”(Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 20). The ‘born-again’ Christian women consistently internalized the Western Christian teachings that associating with these forms of Ugandan spirituality will result in both eternal punishment, and a life outside of the economic, social, and spiritual “blessings” of the God. In this way, coloniality of power and of knowledge works persuasively to result in the demolition of “African modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectified expression, intellectual or visual” (Quijano 2007: 169).

Case Study: Happy’s Story

The following case study introduces Happy, and highlights some of her pre-conversion experiences and relationships with traditional doctors and the spirits of Bugembe. Using her first person narration of some of her encounters with the doctors

and spirits, we gain understanding as to why she turns to them, what she hopes to achieve from them, and how she interacts with them. She also interrupts the narrative of her choices and encounters by actively filling out her story with her post-conversion born-again reflections. In this way, we learn how the Christian worldview has adjusted and filled out her memories of the past, and I argue that we can see how traditional Ugandan epistemologies become questioned, challenged, decentered, and sometimes dismissed, all as a result of her conversion.

Happy is a young mother, who lives in Jinja, in a large house paid for by an American missionary named Nicole. She runs the household there, acting as an ‘aunty’ and caring for her son, and 4 other young children, as part of the American missionaries’ vision to provide family style care to ‘orphans’¹ in the area. I met Happy after a Sunday morning church service at the vibrantly energetic Worship Harvest Church in Jinja, when we were both drinking sodas as part of the community building time held after the sermon and prayers. She asked me why I was in Jinja, and after hearing about the research project, she asked if she could participate declaring: “I have a life you need to hear, I have a story to tell.” Her resounding eagerness meant that we would meet the next day, and our recorded interactive interview lasted just over 8 hours. During this time, while she articulated her story, we shared tea, made dinner together, and then shared dinner by the light of a paraffin lamp.

She begins her story with what happened to her at the age 14. Happy was raped by an older boy after sneaking out to go dancing with a group of her secondary school

¹ Happy explains that the children in her care all have parents in the village, but are considered orphans because their families do not have the financial means to support them. The children still see their parents and extended families on a semi-regular basis, but live in her care, as ‘orphans’, funded by American sponsors.

friends. Realizing she was pregnant, she was asked to leave her mother's family and was given just enough money to travel to Soroti, to be with her father's family. There, Happy was pressured by her stepmother to get an abortion, remembering her words: "your father, he will kill you. If your father knows this, he will just kill you." This resulted in her first experience with "a traditional doctor", where "a doctor, these traditional doctors, they use herbs so you just chew [to have the abortion]." She tried chewing the abortion causing herbs, but reflects on this memory, quickly dismissing it as a failure, saying "But I don't know, I think it was not God's plan, because it would have worked, and it didn't." This is her first brief encounter with traditional doctors, and in her life narrative, it also is the first time she applies her 'born-again' understanding to a memory, acknowledging that the Christian God has the power to do whatever He wants. In this case, He wanted her abortion to fail, and so He wanted her to have her son.

Within weeks of arriving to her father's home, her father's family left Soroti, due to the violence of Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army. She was abandoned there, pregnant, and describes the horror and hopelessness she felt facing her pregnancy alone, during such dangerous times.

"They had lost their children. 'My kid is gone...', 'My son was taken..' Others, their ears were cut off. You would see really, really bad things. In the evening people would go to mosques and churches to sleep there. During the day it would be fine, but sometimes you would see bullets passing among peoples houses... For me, I was like "uuuuuh", for me, I would sleep in the house, because I didn't have any hope, I didn't care whether I would die, or what. People would pack their things and sleep in the churches, and me, I would stay and sleep in the house, because I was abandoned. What is the point of going to town every evening? I was just like—"I don't care." I just didn't care about what would happen tomorrow, you know?"

During this time, Happy began her descent into what she sees as the beginning of a long time of deep depression. She eventually returned to Jinja, gave birth to her son,

and then was told to leave her son in the village with family, and go out to find herself a job to support him. After difficulty finding employment, she met “this Greek Man” who hired her to work as a cleaner and cook, only to dismiss her after a month, unsatisfied by her work. Later, he would engage with her in a long-term relationship as a sex-worker.

Depressed and unemployed, she turned to one of only two friends she had, and had a conversation that worked to introduce her to idea of using a traditional Ugandan doctor to alter her circumstances:

“Look at my life now... this Greek guy, he doesn’t also want to give me some money anymore, he doesn’t want to help me.”

But this guy was like, “Eh, you need to use science to do these things.”

Ugandans, they call it science, you know.

So he told me—“Happy, these things you need to think more clearly about. You think people are going to give you money like that, without using science, chemistry? We have to put your needs to science.”

I was like—“Okay. How?”

He was like “You wait. I have a doctor.”

A traditional doctor, you know, witchdoctors.

“Yeah, he is very cheap. So if you have some money, we go there, and you tell your problem.”

I was like “As simple as that?”

“Yes, you will just see things changing.”

So we went to this doctor, and we reached there and this doctor said “so my grandchildren...”

So I told the doctor “Yes there is this white man, you know, he used to help me but now he doesn’t, he is not interested in helping me anymore, but I don’t know why. I really need help, and I believe you people, you can really help.”

They were like “You will take this, these herbs that they give you, and you will chew it, while this man is talking to you, and to him, the words you are talking will taste so sweet in his ears, he will be willing to help you.”

And they gave me some herbs, you put them on the charcoal and they smell.”

At this point, Happy interrupts her story about using the traditional doctor to inform me that: *“these things, they are things that people used to do, you know, back then, in the Old Testament of the Bible, when they used incense and, what, now today the devil has gotten into it, the devil just changes it and uses it in his own way.”* In her view,

the traditional doctors actually appropriate and use techniques that possess a real power. This power is so real that it was once used by rulers in Biblical times, and can be read about in her converted self's source of truth, the Bible. Her present perspective still sees the power of the doctors as real, but judges their use of these techniques as servicing "the work of the devil." In this sense, Happy's 'born-again' perspective mimics the Western missionary views that Ugandan "witchdoctors" are actually powerful, because they use "demonic powers."

When this doctor's herbs only results in a minor influx of financial support, her friend takes her to a more powerful doctor, "an old lady, who only asks 1000 shillings."² This old lady doctor lives out in the Bugembe area, and Happy tells me,

"the King of Busoga, the Kyabazinga lives there, and so all the spirits of Busoga stay there close to him."

Based on Happy's understanding, because of the saturation of the spirits around the Kyabazinga, the old lady doctor has more access to power and more ability to help those seeking support. Despite her born-again and converted worldview, Happy still understands that the proximity to the Kyabazinga yields access to more ancestral spirits and their power. Yet now, she interrupts her story to describe the spirits in terms that better reflect her internalization of the hegemonic epistemology of 'born-again' Christian beliefs—they are "the devil's agents—they work so that you are just trapped." She laughs and describes how this old woman "was so tricky... you put the money in the basket for the spirits and then she was asking *"so my daughter, tell me your problem."*

As she continues to laugh, it seems she feels in disbelief about the ignorance she sees in

² 1000 UGS is equivalent to approximately .35 CDN; this was considered very inexpensive compared to the going rate of 5000 UGS for similar services provided by the first traditional doctor they visited together.

her younger self. She reflects on her interaction, and remembers feeling doubtful about the woman's connection to the spirits,

“even as I am telling you this story, I am remembering it all, and I am thinking it is funny—she asks the spirits of old, “ahhh, but I thought you were the spirits, how is it that you want me to tell you my problem? Don't you know why I am here?”

She finds humor in her present day revelation that while this woman is honored in Bugembe as possessing power, she could not assess the need Happy had.

She focuses back on narrating the interaction she had with the old lady, who ends up revealing to her that she is cursed, works to bathe her with herbs, incense, and white and red cloth, and then prescribes her to use incense, smoke and “confessions, to get what you want to come.” Happy returned home from the meeting with the doctor, and immediately began experimenting with the smoke and the prescribed incantations, but only finds that they work to make the Greek man give her small amounts of food and the low amount of 10000 shillings at a time.

Interjecting again, with her ‘born-again’ Christian worldview activated, she analyzes her interactions with the doctors, her limited success with their prescribed help, and works to make sense of it all, now that she has a mind that is rooted in “Christian revelations” about the truth. One reflection reveals that she considers her interactions with the doctors as inhibiting the presence of God's blessings in her life. She realizes that:

“I didn't end up going there for blessings. Instead, I went there to have the devil take away from me what God says is mine. Maybe even what this Greek man would have given to me was actually going to the spirits. I was not getting it. I would get the money but I would give it to the doctors.”

With her hindsight in action, her present perspective is that the traditional

Ugandan modes of belief were ineffective because they were coopted by the devil and that the devil's desire was to trap her in a life of both economic and spiritual reliance on the doctors and therefore, on him. In this sense, she looks at the Ugandan idea about "the science" of the traditional doctors, the power of the ancestral spirits of Busoga, and the doctors' knowledge about overthrowing curses and gaining blessing, and she believes that they are evil, that they are rooted in the devil, and they are counterfeit versions of the true and good power of God. In this sense, her post-conversion 'born-again' self wholeheartedly has accepted the Christian worldview propagated via the coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge. She has completely re-formed her understanding of existing Ugandan beliefs, ideas, traditional healing practices and forms of knowledge, and later, expresses that her life has improved since this transformation. Her memories of engaging with the traditional doctors and their spiritual knowledges have been co-opted into the hegemonic epistemology that is the Western 'born-again' Christian worldview, and as such, her life story must be understood as a performance of a subjectivity that has internalized the need to turn away from Ugandan spirituality and associated cultural norms.

After these first experiences with the traditional doctors, Happy turned to sex work to try to earn money to send support to her son back in the village. During this time, she began living at the local shrine. She describes her experience there saying:

"I would wake up in the morning, and say "Spirits, please bless my day"... just like I would now wake up and say "GOD, please bless this day." I would sleep there and you'll never imagine how many spirits used me because they make you their wife. They can make you their wife. And so I used to stay there, and sleep there. So, I was theirs."

At this point, Happy describes herself as desperately needing money and says she

turned to the spirits (embodied in the doctors in the shrine) and told them clearly, “for me, I am not going to die in poverty, I really need money.” She speaks of her desperation, laughing in a way that seems to convey a mix of disbelief and pride, noting

“I had that heart of getting money—in a good or bad way—if it was to kill, I would kill. If it was to kill someone, I would kill.”

The doctors arranged for a particular sacrifice for her to give—a black female goat, to be sacrificed at the river, for the spirit of Bujagali, the spirit that controls the Nile River. A ceremony of offering took place over the course of several days and, during this time, she also decided with a friend that she wanted to “go underground, to get riches, riches that are not of God.” They discuss that “instead of suffering here, we should do this thing, and we should go underground”. She takes time to tell me what this means, by describing the technique that the doctor offers to them.

“So, we told the doctor that we wish to be rich, and want to go underground. The doctor said, “yes, we can do this. You will need an egg, and these eggs you will throw on the water, and it will clear a way for those riches.”

She interjects this story with a reflection, saying,

“I don’t really know how they do it. But they do. But to be rich, you have to give a human sacrifice. And the thing is, you don’t get to choose the sacrifice that you want to give to the spirit. He tells you what he wants from you, not you telling him.”

At this point, she tells me, she decides that even her pre-conversion self could not move forward with the human sacrifice because, while willing to offer one, she feared that the spirit would demand her son from her, and she loved him too much to sacrifice him. Facing this option to offer the human sacrifice, she felt that she did not know what to do, and found herself turning to her neighbor, who begins to tell her about Jesus.

“I was tired, and I don’t know how it happened, but I told my neighbor—“okay, you know, I will meet that pastor that you are telling me about.” I don’t know

how God softened my heart, but He always does.”

She meets with the pastor and lets him pray for a blessing on her life. According to the chronology of her life story, at this point, Happy’s life began to become totally transformed—she found a paying job working on building the Iganga highway, her challenge to find adequate and reliable transportation to the job site was miraculously guaranteed by the boss, and her living situation changes. She tells me about her immediate reflections on these transformations, juxtaposing them with reflections of her experience with traditional doctors—

“I was very excited, but I didn’t want to admit it. But then I quietly thought, “Jesus, I think this Jesus guy works. And he didn’t ask me for money. In the shrine, you have to take money, chicken, blood, sacrificial relations, you know, it never ends. But this guy, this pastor, didn’t ask me for money, didn’t ask me for anything, and it all worked. I think I will go back there again. These other guys they are too costly.”

Now exposed to the benefits and effectiveness of the Christian God, Happy starts to embrace the idea that Jesus will bless her immensely, for free, while the doctors and spirits will bless her in a limited fashion, for a cost. Happy eventually embraces the ‘born-again’ lifestyle completely, and looks back at her conversion saying that she transitioned without thinking from a life of reliance upon the doctors and the spirits:

“At first, God just kept me too busy... I was working all the time. I was travelling to work. I didn’t need the Greek guy to be convinced to give me money. I didn’t need the doctors. I think it was now between God and the devil, fighting—I’m taking her. No she’s mine. It was a battle between God and the devil. Then one day, all of a sudden, I just stood up and professed, and I did it because I wanted to confess. I was like “No I really think this guy [Jesus] works.” So, I got saved because of miracles I saw in my life. That is how I got saved.... Automatically, I think these spirits knew that they had lost where they could eat from. She’s gone. She knows God.”

After her confession and profession of faith in Jesus, one of the doctors from the shrine called her to give her the money earned from the sacrifice to Bujagali. She refuses

it and tells him that she is ‘born again’. His response included a threat:

“You can’t be born again. You are going to die.”

Nevertheless, she committed and stayed born-again, and she says:

“So, this is how I started my journey with Jesus. It has not been an easy one, even when you get saved, and have that burning fire at the beginning. You delight to be born again. And then, when you started growing, you start seeing battles, war, spiritually. It was exciting and I started enjoying the changes.”

Reflections on Happy’s Story

Happy’s story of conversion is deeply rooted in the disappointments and hardships she feels she experienced while engaging with traditional Ugandan beliefs and forms of spiritual knowledge. The visceral experiences of homelessness, unemployment, poverty, and familial abandonment cause the younger version of herself to access the help of traditional doctors at the advice of her Ugandan friends. The life that she experiences through living at the shrine, becoming a “spiritual wife” to the spirits, engaging in sacrifices and considering the deepest form of “underground” commitment to the spirits, is assessed by her present ‘born-again’ self as being unsatisfactory in its ability to respond to her sacrifices through providing results that would ensure her the wealth she wanted. Yet, despite the dissatisfaction she felt, she perpetuated her reliance on these doctors and spirits. With great conviction, she reveals to me that she would have killed a human to gain wealth, and in doing so, I argue, this suggests that she genuinely believes abilities of the doctors’ spiritual power and authority. Her story is filled with reflections on how powerful the doctors are, and her commitment to them over a period of years, reflects her pre-conversion understanding of that ‘the science’ these traditional doctors use had some measure of reliability.

Happy's story highlights her view that she needed God to save her from a life of poverty and abandonment, and her view that she needs to continue to rely on God to access the blessings He has for her life. He provided for her the miracles she needed to achieve her dream of a good life, and He continues to provide both financially for her, and socially for her, embedding her into a "spiritual family" of believers. As part of her 'born-again' beliefs, she believes that prior to salvation, she was a victim of the tortuous work of the devil, and that post-salvation, she is (spiritually) held in the protective hands of God. Her 'born-again' Christian testimony allows her access to a personal sense of security and safety from the spirits and the curses that made her life difficult, and sets her free from being economically, spiritually, socially and sexually controlled by the traditional doctors at the shrine. She no longer owes them her money or her body, and does not require them to bless her with her idea of a good life. Instead, she lives in faith that God will bless her according to His conception of what she needs. She defers her original conceptions of a good life to God, and accepts that this Christian God knows what is best for her. She displays her own agency in resisting the threats of the traditional doctors, through accessing the power that her faith provides her.

Despite these years spent seeking out doctors and their help, Happy's post-conversion privileging of Christianity and the power of Jesus, results in the absolute dismissal of the traditional doctors and requires that she dismisses their knowledge forms as being evil and powered by the Devil. This is done without question, and her narration of the many subsequent experiences of freedom, of spiritual independence from her codependence on the spirits, of economic blessing, of Christian friendship and community, of miraculous healing, all reflect that she would positively assess the tangible

and practical effects of embracing the hegemonic epistemological intervention of Christianity and ‘born-again’ spiritual practices. Pointing out that the ‘born-again’ Christian epistemology is a contour of the coloniality of power would not be relevant to Happy, because in her life “this [Jesus] guy really works” to make miracles happen at every turn. In her experience, she really was “saved” from a life that “was hard in all the ways possible,” and she deals with any potential for tensions between her life experiences with traditional spiritual knowledge and Western ‘born-again’ Christianity by looking for stories in the Bible that allow her speak about what she has seen in a way that makes biblical sense to her.

Case Study: Rosslyn’s Story

I argue that the kinds of tensions between local forms of knowledge and Western forms of knowledge observed in Happy’s case, stem from, and are aggravated by, the socialization that has occurred through relationships between the women and the local Western missionaries. The present day, continual use of Christianity to construct ideal moral subjectivities through the diminishing of traditional interpretations of morality, and the suppression of traditional forms of spiritual consciousness is a particularly disturbing neocolonial intervention, because of how it interrupts the consciousness and imagination of a non-Western, non-Christian bodies with a violent psychological, spiritual threat of destruction in the afterlife.

I met Rosslyn at the YWAM Hope Land base, where she lives in a small, shared space next to the dorms. She works at the Discovery Center, doing ministry work and outreaches with pre-, primary, and secondary aged children. She beautifies the space at

the Discovery Center, and also, quietly runs a used clothing shop out of her room. She is not overly interested in having the other YWAM staffers know that she feels like she is an entrepreneur, as she feels she would be judged for thinking too highly of herself. She wanted to participate in the project, because she felt her life had been extremely difficult at first, but that God had powerfully transformed her life and revealed His deep love for her in a real way. This interview took place sitting on her bed, having tea with sugar, and both of us speaking slowly as we were feeling the heat of the day.

Rosslyn begins in her early childhood, situating her story in an understanding of her family and tribal backgrounds. She describes being sent away from her family to live in a Christian school, because she had become addicted to alcohol and ‘bangi’ as a means of coping with her pregnancy from a rape. She had just birthed her daughter, and was breastfeeding while drinking and smoking, and upon finding this out, her uncle drove in from Kampala, packed her up into the back of a car, and drove her far away from “all the bad influences” and she ended up at a school, deep in the forest. Here, she was “abandoned by the family,” and for three years there, she never received a single visitor. She describes the emotional effects she felt as a result of them leaving her there saying, that for her, feeling alone and abandoned meant she was unworthy of family and unworthy of love. She felt that this gave her “bad self-esteem, not knowing that [she] was lovable.”

Eventually, she describes her time at the school there saying:

“It was the school, they helped me to grow up, and to be loved, and to even forget my past life... some days, they used to show us these videos. One day, they showed us one called Heaven’s Gates and Hell’s Flames. When I watched it, I said—“I cannot go to hell. Let me be saved.” Hell would be so painful and I had been working on forgetting pain for so long. So when I saw what Hell’s flames really meant, I accepted Jesus to be my dearest friend. And that day when I

accepted Jesus, I felt him so much, and I was like—“Woooo, this is good”.

Immediately after her conversion, the school called her uncle, who was a pastor, and let him know about what had transpired. A few days later, he came, picked her up, and adopted her into their family. She was welcomed into this uncle’s family, because of her conversion. Now, that she was a “sister in Christ”, they felt compelled to support her. She describes this time at her uncle’s home and his family as being a difficult time of learning that she was worth loving, but that because Jesus was “opening [her] heart to love” she started to grow and have love for others and have successes in her life.

Reflections on Rosslyn’s Story

While her experiences at this Christian missionary school are described by her as positive, I question the ethics of using movies that portray the fires of hell and describe absolute destruction and torment of people who do not become ‘born-again’ through accepting Jesus as their savior. These movies are tools of socialization and I argue that they helped produce a young, “shy”, lonely, abandoned and vulnerable Rosslyn’s moment of conversion. Arguably, her willing conversion illustrates the strategic and effective ways that the missionaries engage in a means of manipulating minds through threatening and violent portrayals of theological teachings about the afterlife. Quijano calls this the “colonization of the imagination of the dominated”(2017: 169); it is a violent subordination and repression of the imaginations of vulnerable people.

Yet, this experience is not experienced or analyzed as violent by Rosslyn, who describes her enjoyment of the immediate physical and emotional sensations she receives as she feels what she describes as “the presence of Jesus”, and who sees her

transformation as a blessing that resulted in her inclusion in a family unit. Rather, she experiences this as a gentle intervention of redemption at the hands of a loving God who “because of his grace” would not wish for her to perish in the flames of hell. She processes her experience with gratitude, with love, and with passionate commitment to “the will of God for [her] life”. In fact, Rosslyn’s interview is full of gratitude and love for God who, “has made himself to be my best friend”. She is wholeheartedly full of belief in her ability to hear God speak to her—vividly and consistently; to bless her with new friends who “really would just enjoy that I could make some comedy in things”, with gifts of makeup, clothes, hair appointments; to instil in her a “spiritual anointing”—promising to “use [her] mightily... to speak through [her]”; and gave her “a calling”—to pray, to preach, to teach, to evangelize.

If my analysis of my participants’ stories result in reflections on the “colonization of the imagination of the dominated” (Quijano 2007: 169) through Christian epistemic violence, I find that I must present those reflections carefully. On one hand, power is exerted through epistemic control including through education, and results in the shaping of subjectivities accordingly to hegemonic epistemology. Mignolo (2007) highlights that the control of subjectivity and knowledge is one of the ways that the coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge work as part of a colonial matrix of power to perpetuate global coloniality. I argue that this is what we see happening in Rosslyn’s story. As a vulnerable teenager, and a survivor of rape, whose narrative includes substance abuse and familial abandonment, Rosslyn’s Christian education became a tool of epistemic control that resulted in the shaping of her belief system and informing her subjectivity. Considering Mignolo’s view that the control of subjectivity and knowledge can occur

through the imposition of Eurocentric epistemic violence, I argue that the interventionist evangelistic schools and YWAM training courses that teach that it is necessary to privilege Western Christian cultural norms and ‘biblical worldview’, become platforms for exerting these kinds of control.

On the other hand, the narratives shared by the storytellers all are rooted in having found joy, love, peace, salvation, and miracles as they commit to the experience of developing a Christian ‘born-again’ life of faith. So, my observation and analysis of the results of Christian epistemic violence as seen in narratives like Rosslyn’s has to reflect the tension in critiquing something described as so powerfully empowering. This tension is particularly relevant given the critique being made. In my analysis, a reification of Western secular forms of knowing ought not occur, so as to avoid delegitimizing the genuine, visceral and substantive spiritual experiences that the storytellers share.

I look to the spirituality and faith lives of the women who have shared their life narratives with me and appreciate the ‘born-again’ spirituality performed to me by the women, as they explain why and how they integrated Christian beliefs into their worldview. I also reflect on the power of sharing salvation testimonies, noticing that once women can by a complex and intimate internal process self-identify as a ‘born-again’ Christian, and as they engage in testifying and telling their stories, the (continual) performances of conversion testimonies (usually described as a linear progression from unsaved and lost sinner to saved child of God) enable them to gain legibility and respect in their families and among their communities. Each woman shared openly about the insecurity they faced prior to becoming engulfed in their Christianity. Each has found

that whatever painful experiences had been so traumatizing to them in the past has been relieved of the authority to cause them pain. They are able to speak openly concerning rape, physical violence, poverty, homelessness, abandonment, addiction, sex work, and find that their past feelings of shame have been eliminated—the more they speak of these experiences, the further into the past they become, the more distance they experience from the pain, and the more they can identify their presents and their futures as worthy of the blessings that come through God’s love.

And so, a tension exists.

Case Study: Evelyn’s Story

In each of the stories collected, women saw that they would be able to access personal power through positive interpretations of the goodness and promises of the God, if they allowed their worldviews to be inscribed with the epistemological violence of the Christian worldview. These inscriptions of epistemological violence on their subject-identities and consciousness’ reflect a perceptive understanding of that they live in a world where the Christian worldview is a privileged forms of knowledge. Where Ndlovu-Gatsheni speaks of the contours of coloniality, these women actually experience what it is like to live in the social order produced by these contours, and their experiences reveal that “epistemic hegemony” has, indeed, altered the way that they experience and then speak about their lives.

Regardless of the authenticity of their own identification as Christian believers, some of the women who shared their stories with me were not void of nuanced understanding about the tensions that exist between the elements of their own born-again

Christian own cultural identity, and experiences with “Ugandan” and “African” culture.

In fact, they spoke candidly about their life experiences contextualizing them in the struggle between traditional social and cultural norms and their born-again Christian culture. The original ease with which they all turn to traditional doctors, particularly in the cases of unwanted pregnancies, sickness, homelessness and severe economic lack exists until they begin to engage with evangelistic born-again ideals, individuals and communities. Instead, once they begin to engage with the born-again worldview, they consider the benefits promised by the all-powerful Christian God, as well as the testimonies of converted friends and family, and realize that there is “a good life... of blessing and abundance” on the other side of conversion. In fact, if they convert in a persuasive and miraculous manner, and embrace absolute convincing belief in the epistemic hegemony of the Western Christian gospel, evidenced through performances of subjectivities that defy and dismiss traditional spiritual beliefs, idea and practices, they feel that they benefit through receiving respect in the church and ministry community; legibility, exposure and equality with Western missionaries in transnational missions organizations; leadership opportunities; and for those incorporated into YWAM, secure, dry, well-built accommodation and three meals a day. The following case study looks at how Evelyn strategically chose to join YWAM’s Discipleship Training School (DTS) out of the necessity, when she was faced with poverty and no other opportunity.

Evelyn and I met back in 2002 and our interview took place in her home on the YWAM base, television blaring while a toothy baby defiantly breastfed as his mother talked. Evelyn’s story is one filled with an enormous amount of shifting emotion. As she tells her story, she eagerly paints the past with some of the darkest descriptive words out

of any of my participants. “Life wasn’t really easy. It was really hard.” She begins her story here, describing her inability to succeed in school as a result of the lack of support, the neglect of her family. She travelled between Kampala and Northern Uganda as a young child, shifting from one caregiver to another. Ultimately, she “didn’t have anything— no clothes, no fees, and really no family...” relying instead on the notion that “from the time [she] gave [her] life to Christ, God has monitored [her] life. Life was hard, but [she] had the grace to go through a certain time in my life.” This sense that God was monitoring her life and giving her the grace to face the hardships and poverty and lack of care that she was living through was challenged when she finished high school. She hadn’t attended good schools, because of her lack of finances. She had worked the fields, and paid for the best that her small earnings could allow her to attend. Regardless, her inability to get the grades she would need to apply for university “frustrated” her immensely. She describes the final year of her high school as:

“This was the year that I wanted to die. I wanted to commit suicide. Of course, I was born again, but I did not really understand what salvation was. So I was so angry with God. I remember saying “God you don’t love me. You hate me. Nobody loves me. My mother doesn’t love me. My father doesn’t love me. Nobody cares about me. Because I had met my dad but he still could not help me. He had the money but he never bothered to help even. So because of that, I was so frustrated. I didn’t understand why God allowed me to go through all these kind of things. To me, God did not love me, God did not care about me. So my life was a total mess. That was in 96. My life was a total mess.”

Her narrative reveals that from a young age, she was socialized by her variety of caretakers to understand her life through the lens of a ‘born-again’ ‘biblical worldview.’ This worldview allowed her to patiently process her struggles and challenges growing up. The entire early portion of her description of growing up shows little to no bitterness about being abandoned by her parents. She describes life as really very hard, but doesn’t

necessarily describe her experience of that hardship with any bitterness or anger or frustration. It was hard, but “[she] had the grace” to move through these struggles without giving up.

Evelyn is one of three participants who state that their desire is to work hard and to overcome poverty was more important to them than entering ‘born-again’ Christian ministry. Evelyn is respected among the community for her work ethic, but she felt that she was robbed of her ability to use her work ethic to create upward mobility in her life. She identifies her strategy for accessing school despite her poverty and seems proud of her own resilience and willingness to do whatever it takes to get educated. She identifies herself as “born again” during this time, and as such, was filled with the Holy Spirit, a guiding force that allowed her to strategize in the face of challenges and do the hard work required to achieve her aims. Rather than take credit for her own work ethic and ability to overcome, she gives God full credit for granting her wisdom to grow a garden and sell produce to be able to pay for her school fees.

It was not until she was forced to face the inadequacy of her garden work, schooling and grades to get her into university that she begins to question the God figure that she had felt guided by. This frustration causes her to question everything that had given her the peace and patience to endure her previously difficulties--she specifically questions, not the reality of God, but the character of God— that is, His love for her. It is the absence of His love and care for her that she becomes suicidal, frustrated to point of feeling that life is meaningless and even worthless, that she’d be better off not alive. It is also in the absence of His love, that bitterness about the lack of love and support from both her mother and her father develop to new levels. She had been able to suppress her

anger towards them as she relied on the knowledge and belief in a God who loved her. When He appears to abandon her, He becomes like them, and the anger she feels towards Him is magnified in the context of her anger towards them. And so, she describes her life as being in a state of disarray— “a total mess.”

It is in this state of messiness that Evelyn was offered the opportunity to attend a DTS, by her pastor. She calls this God coming to her “in his mercy” but describes her resistance to this opportunity.

“The last thing I wanted to do is to serve God. Be a minister or a preacher or what. Because they are poor and I don’t want to be poor. I’ve had enough of poverty. I don’t want to be poor. I want to study. I want to work hard and change my life. That is what I want. I really wanted to study.”

Evelyn readily admits that the idea of serving God in ministry is less than what she dreams of or desires. Originally, she recognized that those who are in ministry live lives of poverty and hardship. Rather than viewing ministry as a value-laden spiritually fulfilling opportunity, she views it as a restrictive non-opportunity that will perpetuate her experiences of poverty. So, the statements she makes around her hopelessness are some of the most provocative statements any woman made—

“I was heartbroken, because I felt like my hopes were gone. I knew how is my life going to be. I was going to continue suffering and yet I was tired of suffering...[I wanted] to put an end to the suffering by studying so hard and getting a good job.”

Ultimately, despite resisting an original offer to attend a DTS at YWAM with full funding support, Evelyn realized that she had little other opportunity and so “committed inside” of herself to pursue this Christian education and training successfully. As she became exposed to the good life offered while living on the YWAM base, ministering at YWAM, she commits even further. She speaks of the benefits—opportunities for further

education, for training, and for travel. She would eventually become a senior staffer, and would be respected as “a pillar in the YWAM community.” In fact, she feels that even despite her tribal identity and her short stature, because of her commitment, her longevity in the face of challenges, her personal excellence and spiritual anointing, she has gained the right to have the respect of every other YWAM leader, staff and student. In this sense, the many provisions that YWAM membership provides, works to ensure that even those women who do not desire to be incorporated into the ‘born-again’ ministry, can understand that it is a good opportunity for them. Like Evelyn, some women may question the reality of the God, but may choose to expose themselves to the epistemic violence of the organization, because of the practical and tangible provisions and opportunities available to them at YWAM. In this sense, they would perform subjectivities viewed as appropriate by those with authority at the YWAM base, often those with Western roots, wielding the tools of coloniality.

Case Study: Annet’s Stories

Despite the visceral benefits experienced by some women upon conversion and despite the strategic use of conversion to gain benefits by other women, the stories shared by Annet provide us with a look at how one woman perceives of the dangerous collateral damages that ‘born-again’ Christian conversion can result in. Annet is in her 30s, and is a wife and a mother of 2 young sons. We met at the YWAM base, during my participant observation. She had observed my presence there, and had noticed that I was neither a student or a staff member, and so approached me in the courtyard, boldly demanding to know: *“What are you doing living here, if you are not a staff or student?”* Smiling, I

responded, telling her about the project. Her response, pointing at herself, “I will become your first interview.” Annet became a collaborator in establishing what form the research project should take, and planning the research trip to Buwage-Budondo.

Her introduction to Christianity came as a teenager, when her aunt, a Ugandan missionary with YWAM began exposing her to “the gospel”-- or the ‘good news’ about Jesus Christ. She slowly embraced the teaching she received, and years later, was now living as a student at the DTS, on the YWAM base. Her stories highlight the complex tension between “the Ugandan culture” and Christian ‘born-again’ culture, particularly concerning ‘born-again’ marital relationships in Uganda. Through her stories, she implies that the transformation of Ugandan culture through ‘born-again’ Christian doctrine has not been adequate in its transformative function.

After telling me a brief version of her ‘born-again’ conversion testimony, Annet was more eager to talk about her experiences within her marriage, and the ways that she is forced to rely on God to make her marriage successful, and to keep safe in the face of a variety of common challenges to the security of herself. She begins by contemplating the difficulty that Ugandan women, including ‘born-again’ Christian women, have in practicing safe sex:

“If you married, how can you tell a man that again we must use condoms? For what? That means that you, the woman, are moving around. Even though you know that this man is moving outside with women, you have no say with him about condoms, because yet you are married with him. You have no say. No say, at all.”

Annet laughs, and exasperated, follows this statement up with “So we women, in Africa, most of the time, we have hard times.” She describes how, even when men have their “side dishes” (sexual partners outside of the marriage), when the women find out, they

simply have to accept that “this cheating thing” is going on. Women can leave, but because the church teaches against divorce, ‘born-again’ women feel that leaving their husbands would bring shame to their Jesus, and their church. She points to a double-standard, saying if a woman were to cheat, they would be beaten, observed, and controlled until they became submissive. She then moves on to describe how ‘born-again’ faith life is very limited in affecting changes in the patterns of the intimate lives of husbands and wives:

“Most of the men in Christian families—they are born again, and sure, they are living Christian lives, but that culture thing, it remains with them. Yes, they are walking with Jesus, but most of these things, of helping women and being good to their woman, it is not happening too much... For me, I’m married, and I am speaking out experience. For African born-again let me tell you, that culture thing is still in them.”

She speaks candidly about what “that culture thing” means when it comes to a born-again marriage commitment, and reveals that faith does not erase the challenges faced by ‘born-again’ women, it just gives them a constant opportunity to rely on God. This is illustrated as she talks about the threat of HIV:

“When your man goes outside and he is cheating, you just pray to God that when he goes outside, you don’t get the virus. That God helps you from not getting AIDS.”

She also reflects about domestic violence against women in the context of ‘born-again’ marriage:

“There are those ones who beat. Not all of them. But most of them. And some of them, they are pastors even. [This happens] because we and they are not changed from our former behaviors and anger. They beat. They are born again, but this born again thing does not make sense when someone is being angered. That born again can go right to church, after he has punched the woman badly.”

Here again, her assessment of the transformative capacity of ‘born-again’ Christian culture is that it has not been powerful enough to change “the culture thing” that defines

the behaviors that she sees make “life for women so challenging”. Overall, she says “the men, they are Christians, but their women are being beaten and being forced into sex.”

Annet then tells me the story of her first son’s birth, and as she details her experience, she would incorporate this story into a consistent critique of how Ugandan culture produces men/husbands who behave in ways that even an experience of conversion cannot alter. She describes her husband’s demands for sex immediately after she gave birth to her first son, and also tells me stories about the experiences of her women friends and neighbors, as they dealt with their born-again husbands demanding sex after giving birth. She describes being surprised when her husband wanted to be intimate with her, and laughs that she was lucky that she could be refusing her own husband:

“For us, we have learned some level of communication. I think he didn’t expect my response, but he just had to be living with it. Even for one year, we did not play at any sex.”

Her friends and her sister in similar positions “were forced, even when they have just been operated on. One had just given birth, and “had some stitches down there, and had to go back because the stitches were broken.” Another friend reported “my husband, he just captures me and closes me even if I am saying no, even if it means tearing the clothes, he will tear it. He will get what he wants.”

Reflecting on these stories, Annet describes benefiting from her faith, because through it, God provides her with techniques, like submission, to get through the difficult parts of her marriage. She feels like she is constantly learning how to rely on God and trust that He will help her through things. She says,

“I think God is teaching us most of the time, that you just have to go before God, and ask God to give you a way out of the struggles. Sometimes you will see no

way out. Sometimes submission is what He asks, and God will give you the knowledge you need about to go about it. We are given the example of the righteous woman in the Bible, the righteous woman who builds her household.”

Then, without taking a breath, Annet admits that these ideas about submission and women’s righteousness are a struggle for her particularly when she reflects on the injustices in husband-wife relationships in the church, and injustices inflicted by church leaders against women—

“You know, we are born again, we accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but most of us, we don’t change. In important things, we don’t change. But when we are born-again I think we supposed to change. To move from gossip and hatred, to move from unforgiveness, to move from jealousy, and things like that. To see people evenly, even if maybe financials are different. Someone like me should not feel bad when I see a fellow woman is putting on well and is ever changing their hair, when I haven’t got money to plait, or have time because I am running with the children.”

In her view, the ‘born-again’ Church is overflowing with gossip, hatred, jealousy, unforgiveness. She says these injustices,

“Just make you feel like you are awful, like you are going to die. So God, he helps you. Relieves you. And takes away that burden so that you move on again, into another day.... Because God is God, the next day you will come, and you will minister, and you just keep on believing and taking on his courage. And that is bold.”

Her very serious, passionate, and visceral description of what it feels like to face both intimate partner violence, and the injustices and experience of punishing social dynamics in the church, ends up being made light of as she describes how God operates to give her (and her friends) the bold faith needed to carry on through all of “these burdens.” She reflects on the failure of ‘born-again’ beliefs to overcome the socially acceptable forms of oppression and violence that women experience, and juxtaposes a reflection on the way those beliefs are used by women to help them to endure those oppressions, in some manner.

As documented in her interview, she feels empowered by the Christian born-again culture because it teaches her a reliance on God, that helps them live through physical beatings, marital rape, and exposure to AIDS, as God teaches them to be stay safe through learning to be “submissive” and “righteous”. Annet appreciates God’s help in these ways, and sees her born-again life as adding “hope in the hopelessness.” She describes participating in the project as “providing some true relief” through giving her a space to describe stressors in her life.

She also compares the treatment of African born-again men to Western missionary men, “there is a way that these Western men, they help their wives. That they help. They are carrying the child who is so young. I was yearning for that, but it was not my life.” In this sense, she seems to be attracted to the Western mode of interpretation of the Christian born-again worldview. She sees differences, especially living at the YWAM base, and so being in constant community with Western missionary men. Throughout her interview, on multiple occasions, Annet wonders whether or not Ugandan and African men will ever let God transform them to become more like the Westerners. With great conviction, she states that the more Ugandan men learn from Western men like those at YWAM, the better the lives of women will be. In this sense, in her view, Western epistemic violence has not gone far enough, because Western ways of treating women have yet to be established in the ‘born-again’ community in Uganda. For her, Ugandan culture has been experienced as violent and difficult, and as such, the decentering of Ugandan beliefs is necessary in women are to experience better lives.

Overall, the born-again Christian subjectivities (re)presented by the women ought to be considered in the context of their broader colonial history and the neocolonial

impetus of the Western Christian missionaries. While women like Happy and Rosslyn express enjoyment of and access to some individual and local level benefits after “confessing” and becoming born-again, these benefits are discovered through exposure to Western epistemic violence, an erasure and/or displacement of traditional Ugandan beliefs, and a (neo)colonizing evangelistic relationship of domination. Their visceral experiences cannot be discounted, but the messy reality is that these experiences are produced in a structure of domination that uses epistemic violence as a tool of socialization to produce them. Married women, like Annet, feel that they are hindered from appreciating the benefits of their ‘born-again’ faith, because their men resist becoming more Westernized in the ways that they would have to treat their wives. Annet imagines seeing an increase in the Westernization of Ugandan men, believing that if “Ugandan culture”-based dynamics of physical and sexual domestic violence could be overthrown. The coloniality of knowledge has appealed to her frustration at the perpetuation of a culture of violence among ‘born-again’ men. In response, she reifies Western norms and practices in marriage imagines ‘Uganda’ achieving tangible, beneficial cultural transformation if it embraced the coloniality of knowledge more wholly, and then actually applied its new Western forms of knowledge. In her view, because of the hardship many of the married women feel, she suggests that more missionaries, working to convert and disciple more men, would result in making life better and easier for more women.

Chapter 5:

The Processes Behind Becoming a Moral & Ethical ‘Born-Again’

In the introduction to her book “Politics of Piety,” Mahmood defines subjectivity in Foucauldian terms as “an effect of a modality of power operationalized through a set of moral codes that summon a subject to constitute herself in accord with its precepts,”(2005: 28) as opposed to being a “private space of self-cultivation” (2005: 28). She draws on Foucault’s Modes of Subjectivation in her own project’s theoretical work, arguing along with him that a mode of subjectivation is the process by which “people are incited or called upon to recognize their moral obligations” (Mahmood 2005: 30) — and that if we are to understand modes of subjectivation, we have to examine “the kind of authority through which a subject comes to recognize the truth about herself, and the relationship she establishes between herself and those who are deemed to hold the truth” (Mahmood 2005, quoting Nikolas Rose 1998: 30).

Mahmood also discusses both the “techniques of the self”, defining them as the “operations one performs on oneself in order to become an ethical person” and the “telos”, defining this as the “mode of being one seeks to achieve within a historically specific authoritative model” (2005: 30).

Drawing from her example, I analyze my participants and consider:

1. the notion that subjects are both “incited” towards morality via relationships with external authorities, precepts and ideas about truth
2. the ways that subjects use ‘techniques of the self’ in their individual production of their own subjectivity

3. the production of a moral and ethical self is affected by way that this relational, dialogical process occurs in a world where asymmetrical power exist. Some subjects engage with ‘truth’, power and privilege in a manner that inflicts transformative subjectivation on them.

I ask, how are these individuals been “incited... to recognize their moral obligations” during their daily lives? What experiences with what authorities have worked/work to provoke the storytellers to interpret and internalize the born-again Christian worldview as truth?

Modes of Subjectivation and Techniques of the Self, in Action

I identify two different forms of Foucault’s mode of subjectivation in action among my participants and those with ‘born-again’ Christian authority. First, the participants life-altering relationships with people who claim to know the truth resulted in my participants engaging with Christianity as a modality of power that compels them to consider how they ought to live. Second, the participants conformity to the notion that a conversion narrative compulsion will become a natural practice if they are to claim that they possess a ‘born-again’ moral subjectivity.

First, and most simply, I consider the parts of these stories that reveal ways that each individual woman has come to realize her moral obligations as a born-again believer. Each story identifies a particular individual or group of individuals who intervened with the ‘truth’ and helped motivate them to experience ‘Christian’ or ‘born-again’ transformation in their worldview. Throughout the stories, they are mature family friends, neighbours, pastors, prophets, teachers, radio DJs and guest speakers, family

members and friendly strangers. They are local Ugandans, and visiting Western missionaries. For others, understanding their Christian moral obligations were more inspired by an interaction with the Christian secondary school they were enrolled in or the Discipleship Training School (DTS) at YWAM that they chose to attend. Regardless, all the women were influenced these outside sources towards 1. developing personal conceptions of morality, 2. choosing to pursue that morality through ‘born-again’ conversion. In this way, women were incited towards understanding morality and conforming to its obligations. Women’s ‘born-again’ morality is expressed through each of their individual Christian subjectivities.

Secondly, I consider the very act of telling the stories as part of the mode of subjectivation, because this act is a response to the narrative compulsion that is actively incited by both the local and Western Christian leaders in Uganda. ‘Born-again’ converts should share their testimonies because the Biblical worldview considers this to be a fundamental part of the Christian culture. In this sense, the very act of telling a conversion testimony further entrenches the subject into her ‘born-again’ Christian experience of becoming, or of “discipleship.” This discipleship process is a foundational part of the production and reproduction of the ‘born-again’ believer’s subjectivity. The techniques of the self may be activated as part of this mode of subjectivation, as new converts may find themselves lacking the ‘boldness’ required to share their testimony. Three of my participants discuss having an initial deep-rooted fear of sharing their ‘born-again’ testimony, partly because they felt shame about some of the circumstances leading up to their conversion, and partly because they felt shy because they had spent so much time struggling through their issues alone. Regardless, challenging themselves through

“deciding to trust in God for the words” and choosing to conform to the narrative compulsion taught by their leaders, ‘born-again’ converts who share their testimonies do so because they understand it is part of their moral obligation. My participants describe knowing that their testimonies and narratives have the power to change the lives of people who have not yet known the ‘truth.’ In this way, they become incorporated in the population of influencers who then work to incite others towards living a moral life.

Case Study: Naomi’s Story

For Naomi, she felt “a very deep inner conviction that stopped her from going [*to visit the traditional doctors*],” despite that she felt like her life would be better “if God were good to her, [and] would allow her to close her eyes and never wake up.” During this time of her life, Naomi had a dream full of symbolism that she interpreted as meaning that hardships in her life would come, would need to be faced, and would need to be fought to overcome. During this time, Naomi was reminded that her family, although not ‘born again’ “do not go to the darkness to deal with their troubles” and so she would bring shame and darkness to the family if she would fall to her temptation to visit the traditional doctors. During this time, Naomi also says that she realized that she did not forgive “that man” (her ex-husband), and a prophet at a born-again Christian conference spoke a prophesy over her “that she had some anger and hurt and bitterness in her life that she needed to address and to leave behind her, so that God could move her forward.” She describes the emotional struggle that ensued, but says that she “faced this Word, and took it, and valued it...and decided to walk it out.” She processed her emotional pain, she faced her anger and “God started to work in her...[and] her life

started to turn around.”

The resistance against traditional doctors and the life-altering experience of learning forgiveness, inspired by dreams and prophetic words, in the context of the loneliness of suffering and even suicidal ideation illustrate a mode of subjectivation in action. While she is incited to take on certain ideals and beliefs about forgiveness and trust in God, the actual process of becoming someone who forgives people and trusts God also requires her active use of techniques of the self. She must choose to use her own psychological and emotional agency, to transition herself over the personal hurdles, to become a better ‘born-again’ subject(ivity).

Ultimately, her own process of contemplating her dreams and drawing meaning from them, as well as choosing to behave in line with the familial norms of socialization enabled her to discipline herself according to what she calls her “deep inner conviction.” Her willingness to not just hear, but to internalize the prophet’s “word” over her life highlights another moment in which her techniques of self were activated. Rather than accepting and conforming to a teaching about forgiveness, Naomi trusts the status of the prophet, hears his words, faces her anger and hurt and bitterness, struggles through “walking out” the teaching/value in the Word. In other words, rather than simply accepting something as truth and applying it easily to her day to day life, Naomi activates her inner person, challenges herself to see the value of a lesson, and chooses to alter the ways that she emotionally responds to thoughts about/experiences with an abusive man. She allows herself to experience forgiveness and then notices that her “life started to turn around; God started to really work in [her]”.

The “Learned” Intercessor’s Story

Among other participants there is an observable collective and shared experience of developing and using techniques of the self to nurture behaviors that conform to the mores of ‘born-again’ Christian culture. Because of the chronological format of a typical life narrative, this is evident in several of the storytellers narrations of self-reflection—they describe the conversations that they had within themselves, during which they have certain revelations occur, in their perceived presence of God. Women living on the YWAM base have developed the daily habit of having “a quiet time”—an alone time with God, where they spend time with Him and hear His Voice speak to them. Spending time each day in this way allows each of them to feel like they are nurturing a positive habit—and staying committed to these prayer times is one way that they can consider themselves as “becom[ing] an ethical person” (Mahmood 2005: 30). Similarly, engaging in weekly ministry activities provided women with another technique of the self. While different ministry activities were done by each different woman, (based on their individual understanding about their personal ministry “calling”), staying committed to serving others (“with the servant heart of Christ”) is another example of a technique of self that works to ensure that each woman is challenging herself to become a more ethical and ‘Christian’ version of herself.

One woman describes her process of being transformed into a more ethical person, and for her, establishing an intercessory prayer life operates as a technique of the self, and pursuing exposure to the precepts of the Bible (‘the Word’) has operated as a mode of her subjectivation.

*“Sometimes I will wake up in the night and pray. I feel the burden and can’t sleep unless I pray, unless I utter out a word and say—“Father forgive us. Father help your children. Father help this.” Unless I do that, I do not rest. Everyday I have to do that. After doing everything in the daytime, then even in the night I have to spend at least 2 hours. I have to speak out. I have to utter the heart of the nations to him and I’m like—“God when will this end?” ...
And God says—“Yes, you will get tired. But you will rest when you die.”
So, that’s what I am doing. And that is what God has been teaching me. To begin to fall on my knees for them, to repent for them. To be there for other people. And this is where the scripture of Nehemiah comes in... He [Nehemiah] doesn’t blame the other ones but he falls down for himself, not for God to forgive him, for the people of Israel. He was not there but he puts himself in the gap. He puts himself in their shoes. So that is what we have to do. I put myself in the gap....to fall on my knees for them.”*

This participant reveals that, at one point in her life, she felt like she had not experienced exposure to the precepts of the Bible that would operate to strengthen her ‘born-again’ subjectivation. She describes opening herself up to a process of subjectivation, and experiences God’s teaching and revelation about the precepts of the Bible as “His Word.”

*“You know like there was a time when I told God—“I have not learned, I have not gone to the university, so how am I going to stand before your people. But what am I going to tell them? Because now, I see, you have called me to the nations, but what am I going to tell the nations?
So He told me, “I am going to teach you the language of the learned”...
So He started opening my eyes to see, to know, what the learned have learned. He started revealing to me the meanings of the secrets in the Word. And I speak more than what the learned in this community can even speak, than what the wise people have spoken here. Because His Word, when you have the Word of God, and when you are walking according to His Word, you are the wisest man in the world. You are the wisest one. And so now, in my life, I have been made wise. Because now everything, His Word, it covers everything. It wraps everything. So now he told me—“When you have my word, you wrap everything in the world.”*

Stories of the Process of ‘Born-Again’ Discipleship

Besides developing ‘born-again’ Christian habits, like daily quiet times, weekly ministry commitments, intercessory prayer lives, and learning the Bible, women apply

the techniques of the self as they continue to learn that their conversion is a process—“a journey of salvation”—reliant on continual ‘born-again’ Christian discipline. For many of the women, being “very tempted to go the witchdoctor and ask for help to solve the problems” was a notable challenge early on in their lives. While for some that struggle began prior to conversion because family members did not approve of using traditional doctors, for others it began after conversion upon internalizing a belief that they should “go to God alone”. For the latter especially, they went through a process of feeling guilty but drawn to the traditional doctors, giving into the temptation and seeing a traditional doctor, feeling convicted about it, spending time in prayer and repentance. This process illustrates the attentiveness to conscience and conviction these individual women have, and the use of prayer and repentance as a technique of the self to learn new behavioral patterns. The more women engaged in this process, the less they came to rely on the traditional doctors. In this way, they learned self-control, and disciplined themselves in order to become better representatives of the ‘born-again’ Christian faith.

Many of the storytellers actively note that their behaviours, their decisions, their struggles and their successes are the result of being internally awakened to an understanding of the moral obligations of born-again Christian belief and culture. However, the women’s continued commitment to life as ‘born-again’ women of Christian faith rely on a willingness to continually discipline themselves accordingly. Engaging with the techniques of the self as a means of self-discipline is an ongoing and sometimes challenging process. As one woman describes:

“Sometimes, I feel like I am going to run away from it all. Because there are some challenges... Sometimes we can crash... One day, I felt I needed to run away, and I did. I ran away [from YWAM] and I went to my friend’s. So when I slept in the night, I got a dream, when I’ve ran away with my 2 children. So my

husband was looking for me everywhere. So my husband got the address in Jinja, and the address is where he was looking for me. And where I went in the house, it was leaking, we didn't have food and the children were crying wanting to go back to their father. "Take us back"... in the dream.

So when I woke up, God told me "I'm your husband and you are running away from me. Where are you taking my children?" And I was like "Who are your children?" Faith and ministry he told me. I was like "okay" ... So I came back that morning from this dream... and I told my friend, and he was like, go back! I don't want to see you here. Go Back...As I was going back, I felt the deep conviction, that he who called me, he still needs me. So when I feel like running away from it all... I let myself hear what He tells me, "I've just started with you. Because I have a purpose why I have brought you in this place."

Chapter 6:

The Ambivalence of Colonial Mimicry & The Missionary Gaze

In his book “The Location of Culture,” Homi Bhaba considers the productive relationality of a process he calls “colonial mimicry”, and highlights that interactions between colonizing subjects and colonial subjects occur because the colonial subjects are viewed as “almost the same, but not white” (1994: 89), and “almost the same, but not quite” (1994: 86). Bhaba defines “colonial mimicry” as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” and “a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (1994: 86). Bhaba argues that the result of perceiving the Other as “not quite” the same is necessary to maintaining a colonial presence, and he addresses the ways that (neo)colonial asymmetries of power define and affect the interactions between subjects. He argues that the nature of these interactions across axes of power are a result of the process of colonial mimicry— wherein the colonizing subjects perceive only the “partial presence” (Bhaba 1994:88) of ‘Others’, arguing that this representation of Others “articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority” (Bhaba 1994:88). In other words, the recognition of a partial presence produces the identities of Others only according to the “authorized versions of otherness” (Bhaba 1994:88) defined by the need for ambivalence among the colonizers. seeks to relate with these Others, in hopes that They become more like themselves.

Given the colonial history of Uganda, and the ways global coloniality continues to reproduces asymmetries of power in a neocolonized postcolonial global order, there are

two manners in which Bhaba's discussion of colonial mimicry are useful here. In this chapter, it works a theoretical framework for considering the ideas that several Western missionaries and American YWAM staff shared with me. Understanding colonial mimicry allows me to position myself, for a moment, within the Western Christian cultural worldview that I observed was prevalent in the YWAM base and community. Bhaba's ideas help create clarity and understanding around why the YWAM missionaries find comfort in thinking what they think, and how they justify why they are there doing what they do.

Colonial Ambivalence

In his discussion of colonial mimicry, Bhaba describes 'the ambivalence' of colonial mimicry as the ways that colonizing subjects work to ensure that their relationship of colonial domination can continue by constructing and maintaining key differences between themselves and the subjects of their domination (1994: 86-87). On one hand, colonizing subjects will justify their interventions with the view that the subjects of their gaze are 'almost the same' as them, and so are worthy of the transformative reforming work of colonization. On the other hand, "the success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure" (Bhaba 1994: 86). This proliferation of the "inappropriate"-ness requires that the "not quite the same[ness]" and the differences of the colonized subjects remain (Bhaba 1994: 86). Complete reformation would inhibit those occupying positions of imperial/(neo)colonial power from maintaining practices of (neo)colonial appropriation, sustained surveillance, and social control.

Given this imperial/(neo)colonial ‘need’ for continual (neo)colonial interventions into the places and spaces occupied by Others, Bhaba argues that this ‘ambivalence’ in the colonial mimicry must remain. The “almost” sameness of the colonial other means that they are potentially capable/worthy of some measure of ‘reform’. In conceiving of them as potentially transformable, but only via colonial intervention, the colonizers are able to justify and promote the interventions of their colonial project as “non-repressive” and, in fact, as essential to the well-being and development of these others. They are able to justify their cross-cultural interactions “through a strategic confusion of the... metonymic ax[is] of the cultural production of meaning”(Bhaba 1994: 90).

Metonymies Of Presence & Strategies of Desire

Bhaba defines “metonymies of presence” as the discriminatory constructions of identities that function to produce the ambivalence of colonial mimicry, and as such, to perpetuate colonial interventions (1994: 89-91). The metonymy of presence is the “strategic objectives” that make up “the desire of colonial mimicry” and are a result of the strategies of desire in discourse that work to discursively enforce understanding the colonized as being a repressed people who would benefit from a colonizing intervention (Bhaba 1994: 89-90).

To illustrate the necessity of ambivalence and use of metonymies of presence to produce the power of the colonizer, I highlight Bhaba’s analysis of Charles Grant’s text “Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain”(1792). In Bhaba’s discussion, he notes that Grant had a dream of establishing “an evangelical system of mission education conducted uncompromisingly in the English

language”(1994: 87) that would both affect “political reform along Christian lines”, and operate as a “system of subject formation—a reform of manners—that would provide the colonial with ‘a sense of personal identity as we know it’” (1994: 87). Bhaba notes that “Grant paradoxically implies that it is the ‘partial’ diffusion of Christianity, and the ‘partial’ influence of moral improvements which will construct a particularly appropriate form of colonial subjectivity” (1994: 90), but in doing so, “inadvertently...produces a knowledge of Christianity as a form of social control which conflicts with the enunciatory assumptions that authorize his discourse” (1994: 87). In other words, Grant’s moral project is based on the view of the almost sameness of the colonial subjects, and as such, Christianity ought to be diffused into their lives. However, at the same time, the lack of sameness—the difference—of the colonial subjects requires them to be targeted for social control and as requiring social transformation, as part of a strategy of desire and reform. Bhaba says:

“This results in the *splitting* of colonial discourse so that two attitudes towards external reality persist; one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates ‘reality’ as mimicry” (1994: 91).

Observing the Ambivalence of Colonial Mimicry

Similar to Grant, the Western missionaries and teachers that I met with, observed and interviewed exemplified how these concepts of ambivalence, metonymies of presence and strategies of desire are still used to justify neocolonial relations. The Western missionaries all feel “called by God” to work in Uganda, and feel their promotion of Christian ideas and Biblical “truths” are inspired by the “Holy Spirit”. They assess Uganda as requiring missionary interventions, because God cares about “the

spiritual needs” of the “lost,” and God wants to transform the poorly educated, spiritually “dark” Ugandan culture. In this sense, they choose to disavow any potential reality beyond their spiritual assessment of the people of Uganda, and produce the people as ‘a product of desire’ with whom they can justify their interventions.

In the analysis that follows, I highlight examples of discursive violence responsible for producing a particular set of metonymic notions about the Ugandan population targeted for reform by a neocolonizing Western missionary population living and working at the YWAM’s Hope Land Base. The following portions of interviews with these Western missionaries reveal what Bhaba describes as “the ambivalence” of colonial mimicry.

I met with an American missionary teacher on the YWAM base, who was teaching a Foundations in Community Development School (FCD). He began his interview about the work of the FCD telling me:

“We introduce Luke 2:52³ at the beginning of this school, and say that Jesus is our model for development, because he grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man... His relationships grew, his physical abilities had to grow, and his mental and emotional capabilities had to grow... The Bible says that we are made in the image of God, so if Jesus had to grow in all of these ways, then each individual can too. So we try to begin to teach by building the picture of the individual at the beginning. We try to form around that God’s picture for the family, God’s picture for the community, God’s picture for the nation— and again, all of that builds around individuals... The mistakes that have hindered development in underdeveloped nations like Uganda can all be traced back in some way, shape, or form to those people not viewing others or themselves through a true biblical worldview, because their cultures didn’t teach it.”

In the above passage, the missionary teacher notes that all people “are made in the image of God” and “each individual” can grow according to the aims of “a true biblical

³ “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (The Holy Bible, New International Version)

worldview”. He puts every individual on the same level with every other individual, and argues that every person has an inherent value and a ‘sameness’ in his or her capacity for personal development (and later, to be used by God to help “underdeveloped” communities develop). Yet, according to him, this base level ‘sameness’ is hindered by a Ugandan cultural failure to possess “a true biblical worldview”. Uganda’s state of “underdevelopment” is caused by their culture’s lack of Biblical understanding and failure to assess the true value of the individual.

Later, the missionary teacher argues that: “*Western people and powers recognize the sacredness and the value of humans in ways that the other cultures just were not able to do,*” and argues that a true biblical worldview is founded on an ability to assess sacred value to the individual. In his understanding, the Biblical worldview concerning issues of “development” is important because it recognizes all peoples’ inherent capacity to ‘develop’ and “be raised up and achieve a better life”. I argue that from this position of power, this missionary teacher believes the metonymy of presence that his uncritical worldview has produced for him about Ugandans. It enables him to grant a subjective assessment of positive normative value to Ugandans based on their view of the other as possessing this ‘almost sameness’, this semi-potential for reformability, this worthiness for Western intervention, while refusing to conceive of or value the actual identities or subjectivities that make up both the nuanced interiority of Ugandans and their communities. He can (morally and practically) justify his work in Uganda, because he believes the narrative about Ugandans, ‘development’, produced through the ‘strategic confusion’ Bhaba argues is at the heart of colonial mimicry.

In this sense, this missionary teacher identifies that Ugandans are “almost the

same” in that God sees them as “sacred” and wants them to experience the levels of development and access to the good life as Westerns have, “but [are] not quite” the same in that they are culturally lacking the capacity to recognize the sacredness and value of humans, and as such, must experience cultural transformation in order to achieve ‘development’. Because they have the same God-given value, they are discursively produced as a desirable reformable population, but because they are culturally Ugandan, they are also discursively produced as not inherently capable of understanding the sacred value of people and therefore, as not possessing a proclivity for development.

Later in his interview, he links the Western inherently people-prioritizing, biblical worldview to a concept he calls “holistic capitalism,” stating that:

“every person needs to be changed into a worker, because God cares about every single person... because humans are sacred, they are worthy of being turned into contributing members of society. Holistic capitalism will enable people to be taken from their lives of nothingness and brought into the life of ‘development’ that is, indeed God’s plan and purpose for every person.”

Here again, he conceptualizes all humans as having the same inherent “sacred” value, but perceives all Ugandan people as needing “to be changed” *because* of his (subjective) understanding of value. In his view, the communities around him are marked by “nothingness,” “failure” and “underdevelopment,” and are repressed as such because of their “non-biblical worldview” and spiritually “dark” associated culture. He justifies his ongoing work as a missionary and teacher of community development techniques in Uganda as necessary to the transformation of the underdeveloped Ugandan community he works in. In his view, he is there to help two simultaneous processes occur:

1. Ugandan Others must learn that God considers each person sacred, and as such, has a plan and a purpose for each one, and

2. Ugandan Others must become “developed” through being incorporated as capitalist workers into a system of ‘holistic capitalism’ and must learn to work and contribute to a capitalist society.

His work is to encourage the peoples’ revelation of their own sacredness and develop their individual sense of God’s purpose for their lives, and to be a teacher of Community Development, specifically teaching them to apply this conception of the sacred in becoming workers in the capitalist superstructure. Focusing on the ways that Ugandans do not seem to be incorporated into the capitalist superstructure, particularly the ways that they aren’t workers, allows him to metonymize “Ugandans” as ‘underdeveloped’, poor people whose communities fail to develop because their “repressive” spiritually “dark” cultural worldview inhibits their capacity for development. They are poor, because they do not have a Biblical worldview. They do not value people, because they do not have a Biblical worldview. They are poor because they do not work. They do not work that benefits them economically because they do not have a Biblical worldview. For the missionary teacher, ‘Ugandans’ need to be saved from the cultural worldview both because it operates to exclude them from a Christian eternal life, but also because it excludes them from becoming workers in the capitalist superstructure.

Interestingly, many of my participants had been heavily involved in both the work of the ‘international’ missions organization of YWAM for years, and so several of the women who collaborated with me have lived on the Hope Land base long term. As such, they have worked, as “equals in the Family of Christ”, alongside an ever-changing small population of Western missionaries. However, despite being metonymically produced as equals in the spiritual realm, the organizational structure of Hope Land means that the

women live as paying volunteer staff. Despite the claim the missionary teacher made, that is, that “God’s plan and purpose for every person” is to incorporate them into a “holistic capitalism” through transforming them into productive workers, the nature of the YWAM’s staff fees means that they are not incorporated into capitalism, as the missionary believes they ought to be. Women in YWAM are volunteer staff who work full time in their volunteer capacities and have little time to partake in the pursuit of paying work. Some women displayed entrepreneurial spirits, but spoke about the resistance, judgment and shaming that they felt concerning their desire to work, particularly because YWAM’s policy around staff fees has been put in place so that all staff can “learn to live by faith”. Depending on a person’s place of origin, staff and student fees are set with the intention of making achieving their payment miraculous. This is considered a way to teach all staff that they can rely and trust that “God would provide” their fees and any extra finances.

The result of this element of YWAM’s organizational culture is that many of the Ugandan staff become reliant on economic support provided to them by Western “friends”— visiting missionaries, evangelists and pastors, who meet them during both short and long term missions trips to Uganda. In fact, the success of Ugandan YWAM staff was largely dependent on their ability to ‘befriend’ and then politely cultivate a relationship that can withstand constant requests for financial support. Among the Ugandans in the community, I observed bullying and shaming techniques between different women, usually when one woman was viewed as becoming too close with too many Westerners too quickly. It appeared that sharing access to fee-paying relationships with the Westerners happened between the Ugandan staff, but this was controlled by

those who possessed the most seniority or ‘spiritual’ favor and giftings or popularity.

This is one way that— despite being “almost the same”—a converted believer and local missionary serving the community as an act of selfless worship to the same God—the Ugandan staff were “not quite” the same, because they were “not white” when it came to their capacity to develop the kind of Western work ethic that would result in the economic means to pay their fees. YWAM’s organizational culture of “living by faith” actively produces and perpetuates the ambivalence of (neo)colonial mimicry—on one hand, the missionary teacher promotes the idea that Ugandans are capable of being incorporated a capitalist working culture; on the other hand, the organization demands high staff fees, promotes “living by faith” and heavy-to-absolute reliance on Western sponsorship. As Ugandans conform to the organization’s fee structure and life of faith, the missionary teachers find themselves with a population whose “lives of nothingness” and “underdevelopment” require more of their intervention.

Finally, this missionary teacher states adamantly that:

“English as a language promotes a working ethic and a working culture... [and other] languages don’t promote the development of the mind, the process of learning or development of social order... so when people in underdeveloped regions begin welcoming the opportunity to prioritize and promote educational and developmental opportunities in the superior [English] language... [they begin to grow in] ...the mental and emotional capabilities exemplified by Jesus,”

and then they will begin to move towards achieving community development.

In this sense, part of the metonymy of presence that he uses to justify his (personal and organization’s) presence in Uganda becomes evident through his fixation on the superiority of the English language— Ugandans are not all English speakers and/or do not speak English as their first language, therefore Ugandans don’t have highly developed minds and emotions, and therefore, do not have a work ethic and are less

likely to help their communities ‘develop’. Being an English language speaker is metonymically synonymous with good work ethic, capitalist success, and ‘community development’, while an inability to speak English is reduced to being metonymically synonymous with poor work ethic, an inability to be gainfully employed, and an incapacity to experience ‘development’. While this missionary teacher describes all humans as having sacred value, and promotes his belief that God views every person as having value, he simultaneously dismisses the potential for any substantive value of all non-English speaking people, describing them as inherently less able to work towards development.

This discussion about the superiority of the English language is simply another way of metonymically categorizing of Ugandans as “underdeveloped,” so as to justify his, YWAM’s, and others’ continual intervening Western Christian missionary presence. The ambivalence that exists in the space between having a sacred God-given value, but having a non-English speaking culture overwhelmed with moral lack, less mental and emotional capabilities, poor work ethic and the inherent tendency to struggle in ‘underdevelopment’, perpetuates this missionary teacher’s ability to ascribe uncritical moral/ethical value to his own work. His mandate will not be successful until Ugandans become an English-speaking culture, or perhaps until they achieve the lofty heights of possessing the mental and emotional capabilities of Jesus, God. Clearly, this is evidence of an observable point of “ambivalence” being used to perpetuate a relationship of (neo)colonial mimicry. Overall, this unattainable goal of overthrowing Ugandan language and culture, and the impossibility of achieving God-like emotional and mental capacities, represent the space of ambivalence used to perpetuate a neocolonial power

dynamic between himself and those he objectifies and fetishizes as the Ugandan Other. This analysis of this missionary's explanation of his mandate and justification for his work illustrates the continuing applications for Bhaba's work on colonial mimicry.

Chapter 7:

Stories of Affect in Action, Subverting the Missionary Gaze

This final chapter incorporates the concepts of affect and of mimetic communication with colonial mimicry as a means of investigating ways that women's stories about their relationships with the Western missionaries at YWAM point to behaviours that actively subvert the neocolonial missionary gaze analyzed in Chapter 6.

First, I define affect, considering what Gibbs calls both its intra-corporeal and inter-corporeal components. Next, I define mimetic communication in connection to both these components of affect. I consider both the visceral, intra-corporeal affective processes, and the momentary inter-corporeal affective factors that influenced to the exchanges between the women and myself. Finally, I root the discussion of affect and mimetic communication into Homi Bhaba's discussion of colonial mimicry. Influenced by Bhaba's discussion, I argue that despite the asymmetries of power that exist in the neocolonized postcolonial context, the Ugandan women who participated as storytellers here, possess a power exclusive to them, specifically connected to the metonymic fetishization of their subject-identities by people like the Western missionaries. The subjectivities that the Ugandan women choose to (re)present, guided by intra-corporeal and inter-corporeal components of affect, through mimetic communication, may be a subversive means of "displacing" "the disciplinary gaze" (Bhaba 1994: 86) of the English-speaking, Western neocolonizing subjects, like the missionary-teacher.

Defining Affect & Mimetic Communication:

Affect may be described as the internal, or ‘intra-corporeal’, process by which a subject-body recognizes itself as a performable “ever-evolving social interface,” that has the capacity to strategically (re)present its own subjectivity, based on internally perceived ideas about what version of the subject-body’s subjectivity might best benefit the subject (Gibbs 2010: 196). Affect is what organizes the interiority of the self, establishes the subject-body’s interpretation of her own agency in a moment, and provokes the momentary performance of one potential self over all other potentials (Gibbs 2010: 196). Closely connected are the ‘inter-corporeal’ effects of affect, whereby affect intervenes in the communication processes and relations between bodies (Gibbs 2010: 196). The subject-body’s intra-corporeal process is what facilitates the production of external knowledge about the self—it is observable when each momentary (re)presentation of a body’s ‘interiority’ is performed while relating with other bodies (who are also performing momentary (re)presentations of their own subjectivities). This process is what produces the substance of social relationships.

For Gibbs, understanding the concept of ‘mimetic communication’, or mimesis, is a necessary component of a discussion of the experiences and functions of affect. The process of mimetic communication, results in: 1. the construction of affect “as an asubjective force” by an individual within their own body, and 2. in the “patterned... [and] organized” affective responses dialogically influenced by system-level categorizations and specifications (Gibbs 2010: 187). Gibbs argues that affect is spread through a “contagious” process, and that mimetic communication is the contagious mode by which affect travels from one body to another (2010: 187).

The starting point for both of the intra- and inter-corporeal affective results of mimetic communication is the body. Gibbs describes each body as “an envelop of possibilities” in which affect is an embedded “energetic dimension or capacity” that becomes emotion when it is “selective[ly] activat[ed] or express[ed]...from a virtual co-presence of potentials on the basis of memory, experience, thought, and habit” (Gibbs 2010: 187). Acknowledging that there is this ‘co-presence of potentials’ held within each body allows us to consider the ways that bodies, each with their own set of co-potentials, selectively draw on some of these potentials when they perform versions of their own subjectivity, in the momentary space of social interaction. The subconscious subject interjects memories of trauma or joy, past mundane or dramatic experiences, thoughts or habits into a temporally specific moment of interaction between bodies, and as such, a version of the subject is performed that can only be described as an affectively produced momentary (re)presentation of one of many potential other presentations of her subjectivity.

Building on this concept of mimetic communication as affective, visceral, and even sometimes habitual or accidental, mimetic communication could also be both productive and strategic. Understanding that memory, experience, thoughts and habits work to produce a palate for preferred forms of engagement, treatment and relationship, I argue that subjects will strategically perform different subjectivities depending on their audience, narrate their lived experiences depending on their desired interpretation of the narration, and produce momentary knowledge about themselves for themselves and for others. Gibbs contemplates whether or not we might consider mimicry as a “form of embodied copying that also serves as a kind of hinge between nature and culture”

(2010:191). Adding a discussion of culture in this way is of particular interest to me, because of the transnational nature of my fieldwork, and the invasive presence of cultural differences during my interactions with Ugandans. Further, thinking about cultural differences in this way, gives me an opportunity to activate my self-reflexivity and positionality in a praxical manner—that is, to consider the influence of my positionality in producing the (re)presentations of the lives behind the testimonies and narratives shared, in a manner that considers the mimetic “complex communicative process” (Gibbs 2010: 202) that occurs when different bodies engage together. It is during the specific moment(s) of subject-subject engagement that each body actively internally partakes in:

1. a discrete, dialogical, simultaneously developing of affective and emotional responses that is connected to the presence of the other subject; and then
2. a performance of self that is an intentional, strategic and agential presentation to the other.

The Ruse of Desire, Embodied Copying and Performing Similarity to Hide Difference

While Gibbs addresses the relationship between affect and mimesis, highlights the sociality/relationality of the process of mimicry, and discusses the ways that mimicry yields useful similarities via subject-subject interaction, Homi Bhaba addresses the ways that (neo)colonial asymmetries of power affect the interactions between subjects.

The discriminatory production, reductive representation, and metonymic categorization of Others as objects needing to be colonized so that they can become the “same” are processes that work to produce the discursive, social, and cultural contexts that enable the suppression these Others. Besides analyzing colonial mimicry through a

lens that perceives the power as extending from the colonizer to the subjects defined by their metonymic subjectivities (as discussed in Chapter 6), metonymized subjects possess complex subjectivities, and possess the capacity to maintain and reproduce their own [personal and/or cultural] differences, often working to subvert the disciplining colonizing gaze.

In this Chapter, I build on Chapter 6's discussion of Bhaba's conceptualization of colonial mimicry and the metonymies of presence, and look to understand his concept of "the ruse of desire," so as to examine the notion that colonial subjects produce performances of subversive subjectivities, and then engage in study of that subversion through analysis of the Ugandan women's stories collected during the course of this project. As noted in Chapter 6, colonial mimicry requires ambivalence in order to justify the interventionist desire for colonial relations with the Other. Yet, it is in the space provided by this ambivalence that Bhaba argues "the ruse of desire" (1994:91) is exposed as the "reality" of the Other; that is, that they are more than just "an object of regulatory power, [but are]... the subject[s] of racial, cultural, national representation" (1994: 90). In other words, there the 'mimics' have a deep racial, cultural, national complexity in them; they do not simply take on the reductive metonymic identities/subjectivities defined for them by the likes of the (neo)colonizing missionary teacher. Bhaba asks what happens when "the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined" (1994: 89), and demands that we consider "how... [Western] desire [is] disciplined, authority displaced" (1994: 89)?

To answer his question, I consider the notion that colonial mimicry allows the one subject (the disciplined subject) to strategically render herself partly in line with the

(neo)colonial metonymic version of herself, by transcribing her body's knowledge about herself as either 'the same, yet different,' or 'different, yet the same.' Among my participants, this would mean that they perform subjectivities that *mostly* conform to the rules, social norms and religious ideals of the Western missionaries with whom they live in community. They become what they perceive these missionaries desire of them, so as to remain in relationships with them, as a means of drawing some particular benefits from the relationship. They may even be willing to perform metonymized subjectivities that are entirely disconnected to the intra-corporeal affective reality that makes up the complexity of the interiority of themselves, if such a subversive performance provides them with some desirable benefit. In this sense, "the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal,"(Bhaba 1994, 91) and the metonymies of presence become "part-objects of presence" (Bhaba 1994, 92) making up the subversive performed subjectivities of Othered subject-identities. In other words, while the metonymies of presence are produced by the missionaries for the purpose of domination and control, here, if the women decide that they can benefit through the performance of those metonymies, they become part of the recipe of affective co-potentials that make up the women's interiority and then become part of their performed subjectivities.

Colonial mimicry, in this sense, can be used by subjects as a mode of subverting hegemonic control of their subject-identities/subject-bodies and as a way of expressing, maintaining and even protecting, at least the parts of their subjectivities made invisible by the metonymic categorization, that is, their unperformed affective co-potentials. They may perform subjectivities that conform to outsiders'/colonizers' reductive and

discriminatory constructions of their identities, but they may do so in strategically subversive ways that allow them to resist hegemonic discursive control and retain a measure of their difference. They identify (and even internalize) elements of the metonymies of presence that might enable them to benefit from a relationship with the colonizer, and then selectively “mottle” themselves, as if camouflaged, with various particularities of this colonial identity (Bhaba 1994: 87). The camouflaging Bhaba compares this use of colonial mimicry to is much like Gibbs’ notion of “embodied copying” (2010:190)—that subjects engage in selective activation of elements of their own subjectivity—but Bhaba’s discussion imagines the effects of (neo)colonial power differences on subjects decision to perform as they do.

Both recognize that the relational dynamic of mimicry does not mean that it is “a representation of the other, but [rather it is] a rendering—a relation between things in which, like a flash, *similarity* appears” (Gibbs 2010:193, quoting Foucault 1973, italics mine). Differences in access to power affect the rendering that occurs during interactions between bodies who have or who lack such access. Similarity might appear when a subject lacking access to power renders herself in a manner that allows her to be seen by subjects entrenched in hegemony. Similarity might also appear when a subject positioned in privilege and power intentionally ‘renders’ herself in a manner that allows her to be seen by a subject outside of the realm of hegemonic culture that she is otherwise embedded in.

Regardless, the similarity that occurs when mimicry renders a representation of one subject in light of a desire for a sort of legibility in the sights of another, even if just for a moment, may be highly desirable for bodies for several reasons. For instance, some

may have been marginalized by global structures of power, and may seek to benefit from experiencing personal legibility through (re)presentation of a 'rendering' of the self as similar to those who seem to have access to power. Others may have lived in the shadows of their own communities, and so the (re)presentation of a new version of the self might allow them to become incorporated from the margins into having some kind of standing as members of their local communities, finally able to begin to access their locally-defined notion of the good life. Ultimately, mimicry is not the exact imitation of the other, but the momentary becoming of a (re)presentation of the self, influenced by a relationship with another subject(ivity), whereby difference molds, momentarily, into a form of similarity.

Another way of looking at mimicry in this way is that it is “an “a-parallel evolution””, an “asymmetrical co-evolution” or a momentarily tangible “becoming” of both subjects (Gibbs 2010: 195). While the one subject-body strategically mimics and performs its own subjectivity to another, the other perceives the curated 'rendered' self/subjectivity and relates with her. In this sense, both subjects “become” through a relationship that is being constantly influenced by the performance of the other's (curated) subjectivity. Mimicry is a discrete, relational, “borrowing of form” (Gibbs 2010: 193) that enables a subject to engage with both her own memories, experiences, feelings, and affective capacities, as well as their ideas about and affective interpretations of another subject. A “second nature” is momentarily embodied in the mimicking subject, as she produces new meanings about herself, as she translates/interprets the other, and as she curates her own body's re-presentation [now performed as a rendition of herself, a momentarily mimicked subjectivity,] *all at once*.

Stories of Subversion through the Ruse of Desire

Bhaba's discussion of colonial mimicry also provides a foundation for thinking about the ways that my participants have learned how to think about/perform representations of themselves, to Westerners, and to each other when in the context of the YWAM base and Western Christian community. It provides a framework with which to consider the implications of how colonial mimicry is instrumentalized by the lives of the women.

Similarly, Gibbs' ideas about affect and embodied copying allow us to consider the acts of subversion by the women, during the course of their relationships with the Western missionaries at YWAM. Affect shapes and organizes of relations between subject-bodies—the bodies of my participants organized in relationship to myself, both as a researcher and as a previous member of YWAM Hope Land; the bodies of my participants organized in relation to each other, as neighbors, friends, wives, students, community leaders, community members; the bodies of my participants in relation to Western missionary bodies and potential sponsors within their communities; the bodies of my participants in relation to religious leaders in their church and in their local communities.

Of particular interest in this chapter are patterns of ongoing, repeat relations between my participants and the Western missionaries on the YWAM Hope Land Base. Observing these repeat relations allows me to identify some clear patterns of processes of affect and mimicry in the daily lives of these individuals, particularly when we analyze the motivations behind them, the benefits achieved through maintaining them, and the

power dynamic at play within them. Participant observation worked in tandem with the interactive interviews to support my examination of the self-(re)presentations of the participants, specifically in connection to their Christian worldview, and specifically in the context of the asymmetries of power that produce their relationships with the Western English-speaking residents of YWAM.

In the discussion that follows, I will:

1. Highlight an observed metonymy of presence articulated by a Western YWAM leaderships and missionaries;
2. Exemplify an observed manner of subversively performing an element of that metonymy of presence as a ruse of desire.
3. Understand the subsequent benefits accessed by those performing their subjectivities as ruses of desire.

Case Study: Josephine

Josephine describes her initial years of experience in YWAM's training schools as causing her a lot of suffering.

I didn't even complete my ECE (Early Childhood Education School)... I had finished my internship and I was left with 3 months to complete. I had to do a field assignment. But I didn't finish. I think there was some kind of misunderstanding. ... Anyways God allows everything to happen for a purpose. Now the 2 ladies who were our staff, I think they were a bit confused. Claudia, the German, she was the one supervising me. Claudia comes to me and tells me, since your internship is done, you can actually do whatever you want to, because we don't have a location ready for you to go and do your field assignment. I was the only one on the Islands, and I was so tired, and I needed a break.

I had trained someone who was working with me to cover me so that and I came back over for a weekend, I didn't go back on the Monday, because I knew somebody is there. Mary, who was the school leader finds me, and she decides that since I was not at the school then, I do not have a calling for kids. So she tells me to quit. She stops me from continuing... I'm like, I'm only left with 3

months. Somebody has paid for me. My fees are already paid. Even for field assignment. I need to finish this school. She refuses to let me finish the school!

So I didn't actually complete the school. That is what happened. And she made people to think that it was my choice not to continue to do the school. So during all those things, I'm like 'God, what is this really? What are you trying to teach me? How can someone who I consider to be very spiritual say this and then do the other? I don't have a debt with the school... actually they owe me money! And I never got it back! So that was a very painful moment and it hurt me so deeply. It was so painful. I just didn't understand. And it made me to hate YWAM. I hated YWAM. I was like I don't understand what kind of organization this is.'

Despite being kicked out of the School for Early Childhood Education (ECE) for taking a weekend off because of a misunderstanding between two leaders, Josephine chooses to return to the Buvuma Island YWAM base, where that School had been taking place, and chooses to continue to staff there. She is able to use her relationships with fellow Ugandan staff to mitigate the leaders' judgments against her, despite being disbarred from the School.

But, on the Islands, even when the leaders stopped me from doing the ECE, the staff there on the island, they really loved me so they asked me to stay there on staff. So I did. So I worked with the school and then I also worked with the base. And so for them, it was amazing because I just stayed there and continued to work there.

Eventually, she decides to leave the Buvuma Islands base, to follow her longstanding dream of pioneering the YWAM base in Sudan.

But then my time was over, I felt like I needed to leave and that God was telling me to leave. So I was going to join the Sudan team, with Charity and Josephine and James, I just really wanted to be part of the pioneering team in Sudan. But somehow, you know YWAM leadership (silently laughs) even when the leader is wrong, they will really defend the leader. So I don't know what this lady from the ECE had shared with them, I just don't know. Because they all started dodging me.

Because the YWAM leadership had marked her as lazy and uncommitted to the training of the organization, her longstanding dream of joining the Sudan team is lost.

After transitioning to the YWAM Soroti base, and running into further trouble with different leadership there, Josephine decides to return to Hope Land, to pursue further training at the School of Biblical Studies (SBS) there and to reconnect with herself and with her God. She describes feeling discouraged by all of the dramatic interactions and misunderstandings, feeling psychologically tortured by their unfounded judgments against her. Despite coming to hate the organization, she knows that the lifestyle available at the YWAM bases are secure—housing security, food security, access to clean water, electricity and wifi—all work in tandem with her pre-YWAM history to ensure that she stays with YWAM, despite feeling that it had been a destructive relationship. She remembers returning to Hope Land:

So I made a decision then. I said—“You know, it looks like I don’t know myself. I want to go back to Hope Land. And do the SBS (School of Biblical Studies). I want to sit at Jesus’ feet. It seems like I don’t know myself or what I want. I don’t even know who I am anymore. Because if someone can get stuck up, and they can put a story on me, and then conclude that that is a true story, when I am telling you what my story is, and you don’t want to believe, then I think I don’t even know myself.” So I chose to come and do the SBS.

So when I came, it was like students were dreaming about me. Every guest speaker that we had was telling me—“You are supposed to stay on staff here” And I was like—“What is happening?” We had 2 speakers from Kings Lodge in the UK, and they just came and they told me, God is telling you that you are supposed to stay here on staff. Students started having dreams where I am sitting in class and helping other students. And I’m like—“What is happening?”

She remembers this transition time fondly. In this period of time, the guest speakers from abroad metonymize her calling, and claiming to be prophetic, they tell her and everyone in leadership that she is meant to remain on staff at the SBS. She wonders about the changes that occur in the relationships between herself and the YWAM leadership, but recognizes that finally she has the ability to “have God’s favor” on her life. She accepts the prophesized, metonymized version of herself, recognizing that after much rejection in

this organization, if she performs a version of herself that acts according to the prophecies of the King's Lodge missionaries, she will be able to put down roots at YWAM, become the person of importance at the base that she has always wanted to become. She recalls:

“And then I remember when I came to YWAM, and I wanted to run away, God told me—“You are not going anywhere, because you are going to be one of the pillars in this place.”

She accepts a role as a teacher and leader of the School of Biblical Studies (SBS):

I chose then to come back and strengthen the work that was going on here... it was a big commitment. But God gave me the grace really, the strength. And the good thing was that I was single, so I spent all my energy in the school. When you are single, you can give your best to God... Because I gave the all of me to the SBS that time, everything, all of me. You know, sometimes, there is nobody at all, and I am alone with the students doing everything... work duties, cooking in the kitchen, doing everything, checking their work, doing everything, every concern that students had, everything was me. So I would get so tired. But you see, God gave me the grace for that time. I had the grace really.

And I always tell people that I am in YWAM because of the SBS. If it were not for the SBS, I would not be here. Because in the SBS, I met a good leader, not like the leaders I had met before, that had made my life miserable, talked about me here and there, I give my best to them and they abused me.

Because of the role she took on at the SBS, she met other American missionaries who saw her leadership capabilities there, saw the respect given to her in her role, and felt that they could invest in her further training. She describes her current educational opportunities, noting that they are sponsored and that they are giving her more authority in her personal outreach that she has had before.

“This year, God has opened such a door for me. God has given me an opportunity to go back to school. Now in God, I am doing my associate degree in Biblical Studies. I'm going to study until I get a doctorate. I am determined to do that. And the amazing thing is that it is with the American Missions Teams, and I am enrolled in the universities in the US, some are enrolled in the universities... I'm graduating with an associate degree next year, and then I am continuing on with a bachelor, and at least with my associate degree, I do not have to look for school fees, at least someone has paid for it for me. I only pay to buy my assignments. And from there, I do not know. God will provide.

One thing I do know is that I am determined to get a doctorate. (Laughs.) Yeah! So that is what I am doing now. I have gone back to school. So I'm still wondering what I am going to pursue with an education, but that is what is happening with me. The people you reach changes each time. If you are a high school drop out, that is the level that you are going to reach. You are not going to minister to someone who has a degree, because you do not have a degree. It actually takes a big anointing to reach someone at that level. Actually you have to study if you are going to reach big people, then you have to make your level to reach them. You have to study. So let nobody to lie to you about some other revelation. You can move in circles that are more than YWAM."

Despite her excitement about this educational opportunity, Josephine asked me not to speak about it with any of the others on the base—international or national. Because of her tribal background, as well as her difficult relationship with YWAM leaders, Josephine feels compelled to keep her academic pursuits to herself. A friend of hers, from the same tribe, who is enrolled in the same courses, also asked me not to keep their secret, saying:

"Some tribes, they would feel uncomfortable to know that we think it is okay to be seeking educations that are higher than theirs. How do we feel a right to do so?"

Josephine feels certain that the news of her education would cause her to lose her position within the leadership team of YWAM Uganda, because she perceives that YWAM prefers that Ugandans only seek training that is certified through the University of the Nations. She sees her social 'favor' as being reliant on her ability to successfully play a specific role, metonymized for her by powerful and respected British missionaries.

But, although she values the esteem of her position at Hope Land's SBS, she also feels compelled to develop her capacity to influence others beyond the reach of YWAM. She benefits from having her daily needs provided for while living with her family at Hope Land. She benefits from accessing the status and power that her role incurs for her and her family. On a psychological and emotional level, she compares her present day

lack of altercations or conflicts with YWAM leaders or staff, and feels “free, finally” from the constant battles she had with them for years prior.

She feels that YWAM leadership have accepted her spiritual authority because it has been established by a prophetic authority. Subsequently, she benefits from the social and community acceptance of her, laughingly describing how they treat her nowadays:

“They see now that God given me such authority, I think sometimes people just fear me, and just respect me. So there is an authority that God has just placed on me that those prophets pointed out, and that has helped me be respected. However skinny I am...

So when I keep quiet, they say—“Oh, what is that one now?...” (implying that they don’t think much of her)

But when I speak, they are like—“Oh, okay.” (implying that the revelation in her words impress them)

I was telling the DTS, when I was teaching on the DTS—“Your first impression of me will be, oh now what does this one have to offer. But when I open my mouth that is when you will know what I can offer you...” (laughter)

Clearly enjoying this social status, she articulates concern about what YWAM leadership would feel about her becoming “more educated than even them,” worrying that the fragile social and community balance that she has been enjoying would collapse if YWAM leadership felt that her pursuits were going to result in positioning her as educationally superior.

In this sense, she accepts their metonymy of ‘Josephine’—their prophetic perception of her as called solely to YWAM, for the purpose of training and teaching at the SBS—and she actively avoids any disruption by hiding behind her “prophetic mantle”. She willingly performs as wholly committed to the organization, recognizes the unspoken social rules that govern the community, and then invisibilizes any of the pursuits and aims that would hinder her from benefiting from having leadership status within YWAM.

Case Study: The Roommates

As addressed in Chapter 6, YWAM's organizational culture around staff fees is part of their training mandate, because they want 'born-again' Christians to learn that God is a faithful provider of everything that his disciples need. As analyzed in Chapter 6, the missionary teacher argues that Ugandans do not have a good work ethic and therefore do not do labour that is valuable in a "holistic" capitalist system. The metonymy of presence at work, that allows this missionary teacher to continue to staff and teach at the Foundations of Community Development school (FCD) is one that produces Ugandans as lazy, as lacking capitalist entrepreneurship and vision. Among my participants, I found that several women performed according to this metonymy of presence, and engaged with the Western leadership and staff in ways that they felt would make those individuals feel comfortable in their leadership and staffing roles at Hope Land. These performances were brought to my attention whenever women asked during our interviews if I could please not speak to "the others" about their goals, aims and aspirations outside of YWAM. Two roommates spoke to me about how they quietly supported each other's entrepreneurial goals, and worked to ensure that word of their successes would not reach the organizations leaders. When pressed about why the secrecy was important to them, they uneasily looked out the windows in the direction of a group of missionaries having a prayer time on a porch, and with lowered voices, said it would change things for them.

One of these women describes God giving her the goals and work ethic she needs to fulfill God's calling in her life:

I started so much to be trusting of Him. Nowadays, everyday I have to be with a program of God. "What do you have for me to do? What do you want me to do? What do you want me to make?"

He told me...He spoke to me very clearly...He told me that he wants me to have a shopping mall in Jinja, and all these places... And I told him "I don't have the money."

And he told me "I am the money. So start with the small things you have, and you will see, I will increase you." And so he told me to buy some coats to start selling. And the first coats I bought, someone bought them, two of them! And people have come in, and they want coats. And everyone comes and tells me, I want a coat! And I'm like "Okay! It's God himself who told me." So people are coming... even at my church, people are saying "So your coats, how much are you selling for?" "So when are you bringing me a coat? You need to bring for me one."

So this is God. Because I am walking according to His plan. Not my own plan and wisdom, but His.

Her vision, work, plan and wisdom are clearly not part of the vision that the missionaries have for their Ugandan staff. Rather than living by faith, and collecting sponsorship and fees through strategic relationships with Westerners, this woman develops a vision with God as her inspiration, and realizes that if she is bold enough to follow through, she will benefit economically. She has learned how to engage in a visceral relationship of faith with God while doing discipleship training at YWAM, and as such, learned to "hear the voice of God" clearly, and with ease. She has also taught herself to be obedient to the requests that she hears God making of her, and prioritizes obedience to that inner guidance over conformity to the expectations of YWAM's leadership. For her "living by faith" does not mean waiting on God to provide for her financially, it means doing the work that God has inspired her to do.

Similarly, her roommate has started a small business where she purchases used wedding dresses, redesigns and decorates them, and then rents them out to brides all around. She provides good deals to brides who are not able to purchase their own dresses, and travels to them on their wedding days to dress them, accessorize them, and

do their hair and make up. She had been working on developing a collection of dresses, and having established a collection of nine (9) dresses, and creating a large bag of accessories, she was starting to think bigger—she wanted to buy the bright coloured fabrics used to decorate the wedding spaces (church and tents). She described her vision to make bright and joyful weddings, where God could find Himself glorified in the beauty of the heavens she would make at weddings for Him.

Both of these women are adamant about following their entrepreneurial pursuits, as a means of finding personal satisfaction, achieving wealth and economic stability, and as a way of “bringing the glory to God” through spending their lives in these ways. Both also recognize that these pursuits do not fit in with the overarching YWAM conceptions about missions, ministry and worship. While in some ways, YWAM leaders and missionaries would likely embrace these kinds of visions as exemplifying the transformative development they are hoping to affect through Hope Land’s work, the women feel they would risk losing the security of life they access to through working and living at YWAM, if their leaders knew that they were not simply living by faith as missionaries to their community. In this sense, they perform certain subjectivities to the YWAM community, as means of projecting a ruse of desire. They perform a mix of mildly lazy and unemployed young women, who want to live by faith and find sponsors so that they can stay on staff at the Discipleship Training School (DTS). As roommates, they both articulate how thankful they are that they can be each other’s confidantes, because they think they would feel lonely and guilty to be pretending to be missionaries alone.

Case Study: Peace

Peace is a final example of the strategic use of the ruse of desire by a woman to fulfill doing the work that she feels God has called her to. Because of her tribal background, this participant describes being loved for her beauty and being able to make people popular simply by associating with them:

One of the things I have realized is that God changed me life. God changed my appearance. God changed how I behave. You see? So I realized that most of the time I get compliments, people telling me “You are beautiful” “I like your skin.” So honestly, I use my appearance to serve this person. Since people think that I am high class and beautiful, and that I put on well, I will go this person, and then people will say “Oh wow, she went to her”. So everyone will be coming to talk to you, because I have talked to you, and you are my friend. So you will find many other friends. I found this accidentally, but I thank God, and I will use it to serve his people. And for me, if I get the opportunity to give to that person, I am telling you, I will give them my best.

She spent a long time talking about where she came from in the village, the poverty that she experienced, the homelessness she experienced having been abandoned by her “demon-possessed” mother, and how she struggled to understand her own value at first.

It’s a very sensitive area. People forget so quickly where they have been. I have told you where I am from and it is not easy. And, honestly I remember this time I had only one black skirt. It was the best thing that I had in my life. Like not torn, not even having any stains. That was the only black skirt I had. And I washed it every time. Every time. Argh... So much washing. And the tops, you get those tiny ones for like 200, 300.. but skirts, it was only that skirt that I had and it made me feel so good to be putting it on every time. Like I had some value. Like I should be respecting myself.

Now, God has given her a dream to find and take girls from deep within the village, who have no hope, and transform them through fashion, makeup. She believes that this will help them realize their own beauty, understand their value, and learn to worship the God who made them beautiful.

And one of things that I am still trusting God for, it is a business thing and a ministry thing. I know if it is God’s will, I want to use it for this vision that I do

have in my mind. At some point, I want to go, because I have some ideas, to get some certificate to study fashion and design, because it is always good to do something that will improve your life like that. So I want that...I want to set up something in which I will train people to show many different fashions. Also in it I want to make sure that we have that makeup thing... That makeup thing, you've ever seen someone put on makeup and you are like "Wow, but I have seen this person before and it's not the same!"

So in that sense, I take it spiritually, that if God transforms peoples' lives, he can do it in this, by making women to love makeup.... I want to get that girl from the deep village, to come and we work together and I build her up, and put on makeup, physical transformation, and help her to put on well, and see in her a God who transforms...

I want to give my testimony at the same time...I have a lot to tell. I want these girls to see that I used to be like them, and now I am like this. I want these girls to see "Oh indeed, there really is a God." That they can say, "Oh there is another person like me."

So I really want to see that happen. I want to have that. Where we can train, where we can release African attires and fashions, however much we can selling it out... but that's my main thing, to transform this girl, and know that indeed, she can learn to look at myself and say "Praise God." To worship God for who he is. Ahh. I want that. I want that. And I've met 2 people that I've shared that with that they should help me to. And so I have written that down and prayed that it will come to pass, and started to work on it.

How I want to beautify that girl and while I'm doing that, to tell her why I am doing what I do... A girl is something precious to me. I want to grow in that area of ministry.

This woman has connected with the latter two roommates and confidantes, and started to brainstorm ways to use fashion, makeup, and a message of self-love to start to transform girls in the villages. Because of their experiences as girls living in the villages, and feeling the visceral pain of their poverty, they have begun to develop a version of 'born-again' Christian outreach that would not be incorporated as a ministry of YWAM. Together, they all continue to work full-time as staff on the YWAM base, but work into the evenings brainstorming and developing their side ministry projects. They rely on the stability of the lifestyle afforded to them as YWAM staff, to pursue outside opportunities, and to be free to quietly design, evolve and begin to implement their visions. They conform to the expectations established for them as Ugandan YWAM staff, while

remaining obedient to the entrepreneurial spirit they believe God has established in them.

Overall, this chapter contributes to my project by layering the analysis of my participants' stories with a messy complexity that I hope hinders any sense that I might fully know and understand the meanings of the stories told to me. Ultimately, no self-reflexivity or contemplation of positionality can fully undo the effects on relationships between bodies whose difference stems from having or lacking access to power in a postcolonial neocolonized system. In the same way that these women engage with YWAM leadership and missionaries as they do, I cannot know how or why they engaged with me as they did. Ultimately, the women who offered up their stories as part of this study are not simply 'knowable' and 'static' subjects produced by a colonial history; rather, they are dynamic and fluid identities, possessing a multi-variance of performable subjectivities rooted in different personal histories and constructed desires. The sharing of a life narrative requires that a storyteller perceive of her audience in some way, and tailor her performance according to whatever outcome she desires. The learning from a life narrative requires that I, as the listener, try to begin to observe the unspoken complexities of each storyteller. In some ways, during the course of the fieldwork, we all existed as self-reflexive subjects, entangled and performing our chosen subjectivities as a means of achieving our own desired outcome(s) from the interactions.

Chapter 8

Summary

This thesis has been produced through qualitative methods, through interactive interviews with ‘born-again’ Christian women. It sought to investigate the complexity of ‘born-again’ Christian subjectivities in Uganda. On one hand, global coloniality has produced a neocolonized postcolonial world, where the coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge has perpetuated epistemic violence that results in a privileging of a Western Christian worldview and its associated forms of knowledge. This results in the continual conversion Ugandans to Christianity, and for those converts, in the continual reframing of their own traditional forms of spirituality and knowledge as “evil” and “of the devil.” Excerpts from transcripts of the stories shared by the women highlight their points of conversion and examine them to understand ‘born again’ conversion as an effect of coloniality. To add to this discussion, I examine Foucault’s modes of subjectivation to understand the role that relationships between the participants and people with spiritual authority have had in inciting the women to choose to become ‘born-again’. I intertwine this discussion with Mahmood’s discussion of the techniques of the self, and investigate the ways that the participants talk about their own internal processes of becoming moral ‘born-again’ believers. Next, I look to Bhaba to examine the relational dynamics revealed between the Ugandan participants and the Western missionaries and YWAM leaders, in the transnational context of the Hope Land YWAM base. I examine the ambivalence of colonial mimicry, as used by the YWAM missionaries to justify their work in Uganda, paying particular attention to the racist and

ethnocentric metonymies of presence articulated by actual YWAM leaders at Hope Land. And finally, I examine how different women perceive of the metonymies of presence put on them by the missionary gaze, and utilize those metonymies as ruses of desire to perpetuate their access to the benefits they gain as YWAM staff. I argue that they choose to perform as ruses of desire, while also developing subjectivities that do not fit with the YWAM expectations of their Ugandan staff. These women acknowledge that the goals they pursue, the visions that they develop and the entrepreneurial spirit they possess are disconnected with the ruses of desire they must continually perform in order to remain part of YWAM. Understanding affect, mimetic communication and colonial mimicry allows for any knowledge produced during my fieldwork to be considered in a broader context of understanding how difficult 'knowing' 'knowledge' is when asymmetries of power affect even subjects consenting to producing knowledge through sharing life narratives, testimonies and stories. To summarize Chapter 6 and 7, as working in tandem, 1. Each subject desires to be understood, in some way and for some purpose, by the person they are engaging with; 2. Mimicry allows for active interpretation of the subject's audience and a subsequent adjusting of the performance of the self in a way that the self conceives of as necessary for achieving the performative outcome she desires. The subject's affective and then visceral elements of her own (re)presented subjectivity are, therefore, intertwined with her perception of the other; 3. Because of the asymmetries of power embedded in and driving the relational dynamic of the mimetic process in transnational contexts, the (neo)colonial history of power governing the specific relationships in observed/analyzed instances of mimicry is necessary; and 4. Western Christian interventions, as observed in the lives of Western missionaries, as well

as in the organizational structure of YWAM, are neocolonial examples of Bhaba's ideas about the ambivalence of colonial mimicry.

Ultimately, this thesis followed the guidance of the women involved in collaborating in the emergent design of the study, and the data collected and presented here tells the stories that they shared that should be contextualized in an understanding of the complexity of trying to know others, especially in transnational spaces, when affect inspires strategic performances of subjectivities in both storytellers and story-hearers. I find that despite the asymmetries of power that reduces some to the status of objects of (neo)colonization and produces others as (neo)colonizing subjects, those discriminated against as objects of (neo)colonization possess a power exclusive to their fetishized subject-identities suppressed under hegemonic authority. Agential expressions of momentary enunciations of subjectivities defined by discriminatory colonial discursive practices, but performed as momentary (re)presentations of subjectivities, with subversive intentions, are what makes mimicry a means of challenge to colonial/hegemonic power while continuing to benefit from it. As the women worked as part of this project, as storytellers they chose to produce knowledge about themselves that does not conform with the Western missionary's constructed metonymy of them as 'Ugandans'. As storytellers, their stories reveal that they each possess their own interpretations of the privileged Western Christian religion; they each experience their own visceral understandings of the God of the 'born-again' religion; and they each describe having constant conversations and interactions with the 'born-again' Christian God-figure.

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Appendices



September 15, 2014

Ms.
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GREB Ref #: GDEVS-034-14

Title: 'GDEVS-034-14 Interpretations of Gender Performativity Among 'Good' Women in Rural Uganda'

Dear Ms. Bauman:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a full board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "**GDEVS-034-14 Interpretations of Gender Performativity Among 'Good' Women in Rural Uganda**" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB; of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementations of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your

research. Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Stevenson".

Joan Stevenson,
Ph.D. Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Villia Jefremovas, Faculty
Supervisor Dr. Susanne
Soderberg, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Barbra Brousseau, Dept.
Admin.