LOOKING BACK, SEEING FORWARD: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF WOMEN AND VIOLENCE IN POST-WAR GUATEMALA CITY

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on 12 months of fieldwork conducted in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area among indigenous and ladina women, this dissertation offers an ethnographic analysis of violence and women's lives in post-war urban Guatemala. First, this dissertation examines the ways in which intersecting processes of violence – political, structural, symbolic, everyday and gender-based – are experienced by women and shape the different dimensions of their everyday lives. Second, I analyze the interplay between collective and individual memories of war and how these are drawn upon by individuals and communities in their reconstructions of daily life in Guatemala City today. Third, this thesis concerns the production of knowledge and circulation of discourses surrounding the phenomenon of gender-based violence in post-war Guatemala. Special attention is given to the gaps between, national and international, institutional responses for addressing violence against women, and women's everyday experiences and agency in carving out spaces to resist distinct forms of violence in their lives, whether within their families and/or on the streets. I argue that there is need to construct more comprehensive analytical frameworks for better understanding the interconnections and intersections of different forms of violence in the lives of women. Moreover, by more readily looking to women's experiences we can reformulate violence as a social process and see its more insidious effects, too often lost in conceptualizations that treat violence as simply an individual "act" or "event" apart from apart from everyday life. Gender-based violence in Guatemala is embedded in enduring legacies of State violence and military power, vast socio-economic inequalities, and political and cultural ideologies that work to justify violence towards certain segments of the population including women.

RÉSUMÉ

Basée sur une année de recherche de terrain, réalisé parmi les femmes indigènes et ladina vivant dans des zones urbaines du Guatemala, cette thèse propose une analyse ethnographique de la violence vécue par ces femmes et de leur vie dans le Guatemala d'après-guerre. Premièrement, ce travail examine comment les divers processus de violence – politique, structurelle, symbolique, quotidienne et genrée – s'entrecroisent, sont vécus par ces femmes et influencent leur vie de multiples façons. Deuxièmement, j'analyserai comment l'interaction entre les souvenirs collectifs et individuels de la guerre sont utilisés par les individus et les communautés dans la reconstitution de leur vie quotidienne à Guatemala City. Troisièmement, cette thèse portera sur la production du savoir et la circulation des discours entourant le phénomène de violence genrée dans le Guatemala d'après-guerre. Une attention particulière sera donnée aux écarts entre, d'une part, la manière dont les institutions, nationales et internationales, répondent à la violence envers les femmes et, d'autre part, l'expérience quotidienne de ces femmes et leur agencéité dans leur tentative de faire émerger des espaces de résistance à la violence quotidienne, que ce soit au sein de leurs familles ou dans l'espace public. J'argumenterai qu'une cadre analytique davantage compréhensif est nécessaire afin de mieux appréhender les interconnections et croisements entre les différentes formes de violence vécues par les femmes. En s'intéressant plus directement à leurs expériences personnelles, nous pouvons redéfinir la violence comme un processus social et ainsi en observer ses effets les plus insidieux, trop souvent occultés par des conceptualisations qui traitent de la violence simplement comme un « acte » ou un « événement » individuel situé en dehors du flot de la vie quotidienne. La violence genrée doit en effet être incorporée au sein d'un long héritage de violence étatique, de pouvoir militaire, de vastes inégalités sociales et d'idéologies politiques et culturelles qui servent à justifier la violence envers certains segments de la population, dont les femmes.

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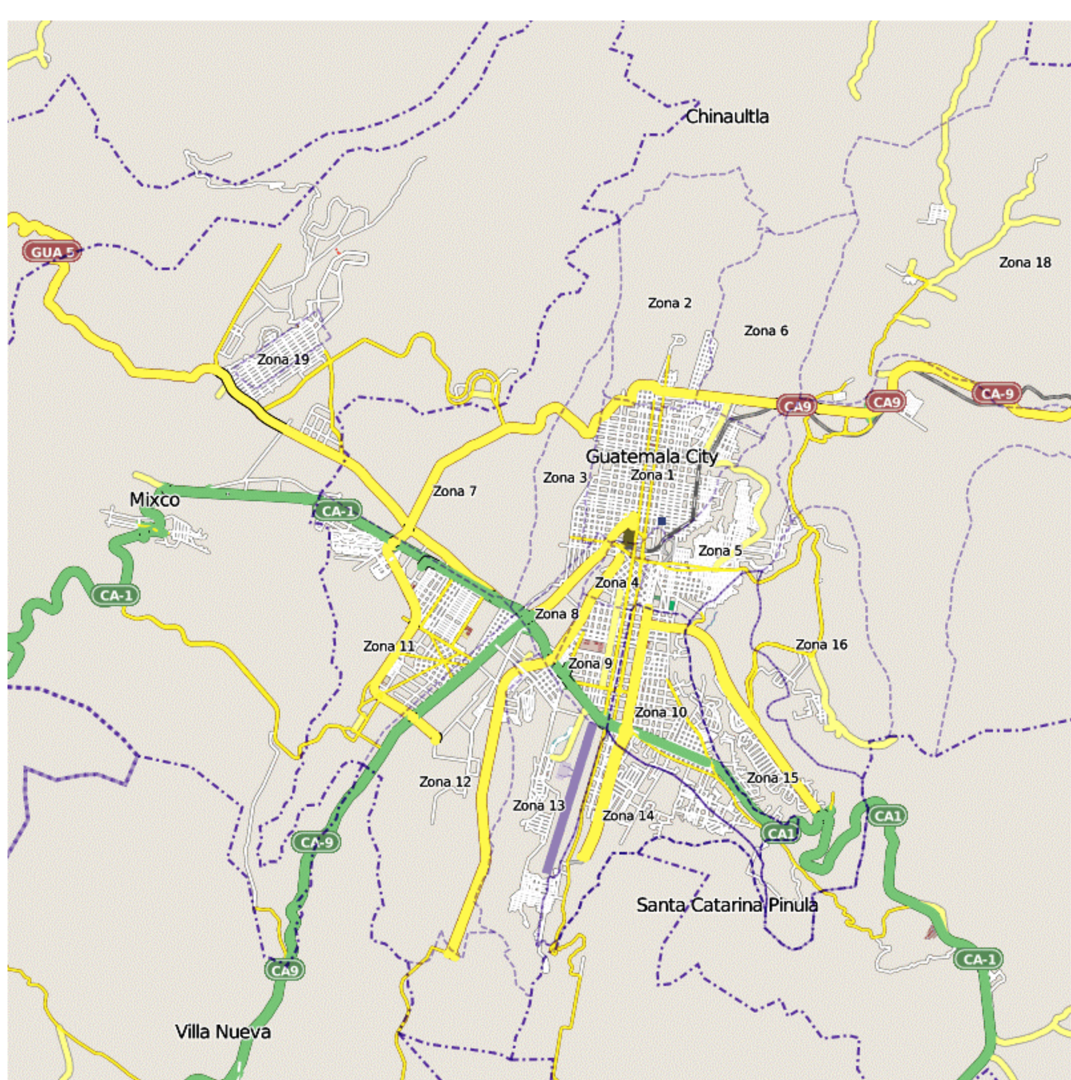
My greatest debt of gratitude is with my parents and siblings, Sandra L. Paiz, Edgar Godoy, Pablo Godoy, and Sandra Godoy. I thank my parents for a lifetime of love and support, and for inspiring me to a path of critical thinking, understanding injustice and working for social change.

Montreal, July 2010

GUATEMALA

Figure 1: Map of Republic of Guatemala.
http://guatemala-city.com/map.html, accessed April 18, 2010

GUATEMALAN METROPOLITTAN AREA



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PART I: THE ISSUES, THE CONTEXT

PREFACE

Twenty years after my own family left Guatemala, migrating to Canada seeking asylum from Guatemala's internal armed conflict, I returned to my country of origin to conduct my PhD dissertation research. I was seven years old in 1987 when my family arrived in Canada, too young to realize the reason behind my family's quick and unplanned migration from Guatemala. I did not realize that my family was among the hundreds of thousands of families displaced by the internal armed conflict in Guatemala. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Canada was among the countries accepting large masses of Central Americans fleeing political violence in their countries. As my parents slowly began to make a life in Ontario, we met other Guatemalan families who had also had to flee, some of them having spent time in Mexico or other countries before arriving in Canada. I grew up hearing the political discussions my parents and their Guatemalan friends would have almost every time they met. As I played with my friends, our parents would be holding meetings of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared in Guatemala (FAMDEGUA) or planning the next Solidarity with Guatemala event. I thus never questioned where I would conduct my field research: I did not "chose" Guatemala as such, but knew I *had* to conduct my doctoral research there. To a great extent, fieldwork was my vehicle for exploring my own history.

Electoral Process 2007—“My arrival to the field”

A drive down the *Periférico,* the broad street running from the University of San Carlos campus in Zona 12 of Guatemala City to the downtown core, confirmed what I had been reading about prior to my arrival in country in the early days of February 2007: a presidential election was looming. While taking public transport or a taxi down the Periférico, what would come to be my regular route to Zona 1 during my research stay in the country, I would often see, at different points, billboards of the contending parties. In particular, I would see the political advertisements of the *Gran Alianza Nacional* (Great National Alliance, GANA), *Partido Patriota* (Patriotic Party, PP), the *Unidad Nacional para la Esperanza* (National Unity of Hope, UNE), and of the *Encuentro por Guatemala* (Union for Guatemala). During my Master’s research in Guatemala in 2003 it had also been an election year. In 2003, there had been great alarm, particularly among human rights organizations, surrounding the candidacy of Efraín Ríos Montt. Ríos Montt, an army general and former president of Guatemala, ruled at the height of *La Violencia,* the period of the armed conflict between 1978 to 1984 that saw the highest rates of human rights violations and acts of genocide carried out against indigenous peoples. As with the 2003 elections, the presidential elections of 2007 were mired in memories of war and tensions surrounding the country’s recent history of political conflict and war, and whether it should be commemorated (“remembered”) or “forgotten”, and left in the past.

Guatemala was ravaged by an internal armed conflict from 1960 to 1996 that claimed the lives of over 200,000 people and displaced 1.5 million. Emerging in a

Cold War context and enduring for nearly four decades, the conflict was one of the bloodiest armed conflicts in Latin America in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Hundreds of massacres and mass sexual violations of women
were carried out by the United States trained-and-supported military, primarily of indigenous communities who were regarded as supporters of the guerillas. Over 600 villages were completely destroyed as genocidal violence and mechanisms of psychological terror were deployed by the State as counterinsurgency strategies. The war, largely propelled by local and international political and economic interest and with outside intervention (e.g. see Schlesinger and Kinzer 1982), was similarly brought to a formal end in December of 1996 with the signing of the official United Nations (UN) brokered Peace Accords, which aimed among other things to create a more 'stable' environment for foreign investment (Jonas 2000). Signed in 1996 by the Guatemalan government and representatives of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the Accords ostensibly would move Guatemala into an era of democracy and respect for human rights.

A vast body of literature on post-conflict societies (e.g., Aretxaga 1997; Jensen 2008; Torres 2008) illustrates that formal 'Peace' after periods of warfare does not necessarily translate into a decrease in violence, and Guatemala, as this thesis will illustrate, is no exception. In the introduction to her book on political violence and subjectivity in Northern Ireland, the late Basque social anthropologist Begoña Aretxaga, writes that, "[p]eace does not necessarily entail the end of violent conflict; indeed, it can often heighten it" (1997:5). As is the case with other societies that have been left in the ashes of war, Guatemala continues to be haunted by the memories and

experiences of its nearly four decade-long armed conflict. Furthermore, soaring crime rates in urban areas, fear of youth gangs, and increasing interpenetration of State structures and organized crime have created a situation of palpable fear for many Guatemalans, arguably similar to the "state of fear" (Green 1999) they experienced during war. The 2007 elections brought to the surface such memories and exposed the contestations over the country's bloody recent past present in post-Peace Agreement Guatemala, and how Guatemalans today might construct a better future in the shadows of war.

The 2007 elections were notable for several reasons. Primary among them was the fact that for the first time in Guatemala's history an indigenous Mayan, K'iche' woman and 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Mechú, ran for president. While indigenous peoples make up approximately half of the population of Guatemala, a country with a total population of approximately 13 million people, they have been targets since the Spanish conquest in the fifteenth century of systematic discrimination and marginalization, as well as the targets of mass political repression, structural violence, social exclusion, hunger and poverty.

The fact that an indigenous woman ran for president in 2007 was remarkable. A testament to the political spaces indigenous peoples and women have carved out in post-war Guatemala, Menchú was one the 14 candidates entering the first round of the presidential elections in September of 2007, representing the *Encuentro por Guatemala* (EG) party. However, her candidacy brought to the surface social attitudes that are both explicit and insidiously embedded in everyday practice and discourse. As Diane Nelson (1999) has pointed out, Rigoberta Menchú, a woman

whose political trajectory challenges stereotypes about indigenous peoples and women has, since receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, been the target of countless jokes. Her bid for the presidency did not change this situation. "How could a woman govern Guatemala?", "How could an *indigenous* woman run for president?", were among the questions her candidacy raised for many Guatemalans. With less than 3% of the vote, Menchú was disqualified after the first round of voting.

Despite having one of the largest voter turnouts (60.3%) since 1985, in the first round of elections, which took place on September 9, 2007, none of the contenders received the required 50% plus 1 of the votes required to win (Azpuru 2008:563). Álvaro Colom Caballeros of the National Unity for Hope (*Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza*, UNE) obtained 28.3% of the vote and Otto Pérez Molina's *Partido Patriota* (PP), 23.5% (Azpuru 2008:563-564). Given the lack of a clear winner in the first round, a runoff election took place on November 4, 2007, and was won by Álvaro Colom of UNE with 52.8% of the vote, while Otto Pérez Molina (PP) obtained 47.2 % of the vote (Azpuru 2008:564).

Throughout my fieldwork in Guatemala I heard comments of support for both parties and leaders. I observed that those with leftist political leanings, and/or people working within government and non-governmental institutions or organizations promoting human rights, tended to position themselves squarely in opposition to Pérez Molina and the PP. For instance, at a workshop I attended on gender violence and the media in October 2007, a woman commented to a group of us during the break how many Guatemalans had lost all sense of indignation. "How can you *not* be indignant, when an assassin is running for president?", she remarked on Pérez

Molina's candidacy. Those opposing Pérez Molina, such as the woman at the workshop, brought up his involvement in human rights violations during and following the armed internal conflict, as he was a commander in the Guatemalan intelligence agency (known as D-2 or G-2) and head of a branch of the Estado Mayor Presidencial (EMP) – both of which had been implicated in human rights abuses during the conflict. Pérez himself has been linked to several massacres and assassinations, including those of guerrilla leader Efraín Bámaca and Bishop Juan Gerardi.[1] It was no surprise that his participation in the presidential elections would be unacceptable to segments of the population and ignite controversy.

There were segments of the population that energetically supported the PP, arguing that what the country needed was indeed a politician who was "strong", not a "soft-spoken" leader such as Colom.[2] In a country that has one of the world's highest per capita murder rates, with more than five thousand killings annually, Pérez Molina's vow to take a hard-line approach and crack down on crime, through measures such as increasing the police force and reviving the death penalty in the country, were well received, particularly in the capital city where he won a majority of the votes. While there was alarm among the human rights sector that Pérez Molina would emerge victorious, Colom won 20 out of 22 departments, making him president of the Republic. Notable, however, was that one of the two departments that did not vote in their majority for the UNE was the Department of Guatemala.

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[1]Guatemalan and Jewish-American writer, Francisco Goldman, in his investigative book on the assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi, who lead the Truth Commission project of the Catholic Church, signals Pérez Molina as having played a role in the crime.

[2] In addition to lacking a strong oratory style, Álvaro Colom was mocked by supporters of his opponent for a speech impediment.

Colom won the presidency without winning a majority in the capital, making him the first president in the country's history who did not obtain a majority in the capital city (Azpuru 2008:565).[3] Furthermore, there was a division in the voting pattern: urban residents, especially in Guatemala City, largely sided with Pérez; smaller towns and rural areas largely supported Colom (Azpuru 2008:564).

That Pérez Molina won a majority among urban dwellers is telling of a situation in Guatemala's capital and surrounding municipalities where everyday life is marked by experiences of fear and crime. Pérez Molina's discourse of tackling street violence, and the youth gangs in particular, had a resonance among city residents who, as this thesis will illustrate, confront a situation of fear and insecurity they wish would soon end. One survey, for instance, conducted by the United Nations Development Program (PNUD 2007:52) reported that 40% of residents of the municipality of Guatemala reported that they expected to be the victim of a violent crime within the next six months. A previous study (CIIDH 2006) found that in a six month period alone (January to June 2005), 2559 persons in Guatemala were murdered while 2962 were injured as a result of physical violence. Moreover, in a six month period the following year (January to June 2006), the rate had increased to 2961 killings and 3130 persons violently injured (CIIDH 2006). Thus certain researchers (e.g., Asturías and del Águila 2005; Green 1999; Urías 2005) describe a palpable sense of fear and insecurity that envelops Guatemala now as it did during the

[3] It was also the first time since 1950 that a presidential candidate who described himself as a social democrat, identified with the modern left, and won the presidency (Azpuru 2008: 565).

war.[4] However, while during the war most violence occurred in the northwest and rural parts of the country, present day crime and violence is increasingly moving to urban locales, with Guatemala City topping the list as the most violent and crime-ridden (CIIDH 2006; Urías 2005).

The electoral process was centred on the different parties' approaches to violence. Furthermore, the 2007 presidential elections were some of the bloodiest in Guatemala's recent history; in total 56 people linked to political parties were killed between March and October 2007 (Azpuru 2008:563). Newspaper spreads and different polls conducted in the lead up to the elections indicated that insecurity, and how to effectively tackle crime and violence were of top concern for voters (Ibid.). Thus, the high crime rate and people's sense of everyday insecurity were part of each candidate's political discourses and platforms.[5] Pérez's party symbol and central campaign motto was *mano dura* (hard hand), which was meant to signify the hard stance on crime his party would take. Colom countered with '*la violencia se combate con inteligencia'* ('violence is fought by means of intelligence'), in reference to his party's "intelligent" platform to invest in education, development, housing, and health, thus addressing underlying causes of violence rather than simply punishing suspected perpetrators of crime.

Tensions over the collective memory of war spilled over into the different political positions of the presidential candidates and their supporters. Those

[4] These authors identify impunity (the lack of legal punishment of perpetrators of violence), the lack of governmental will to address the problem of human rights violations and their implication in these, as well as structural inequalities, as central factors behind the enduring climate of violent crime, insecurity, and fear in Guatemala.

[5] Local and international media coverage of Guatemala's "crisis of security" was heightened by the murder of three Salvadoran legislators and their driver in Guatemala in February, 2007.

supporting Colom argued that a win by Pérez Molina represented a return to the past, a return to killings and impunity. One morning on one of my frequent taxi rides from Zone 11 to Zone 1, downtown Guatemala City, I noticed a billboard advertisement for Álvaro Colom's party that was particularly striking. The billboard, for which I would later see a television commercial, drew my attention as it appeared to be of a burial or exhumation. Indeed it reminded me of documentaries I had seen about Guatemala's internal armed conflict; it contained the image of a group of indigenous women, possibly war widows, crying over the graves of their deceased husbands and/or other loved ones. The billboard contained text below the images of the weeping women, stating that a victory by Pérez Molina would result in a return to the past, a return to war, counter-insurgency tactics, mass suffering and impunity. It could not have been a more explicit mobilization of memory for political purposes. Not only did the image on the billboard evoke recollection or historical memory of war, but it was deeply emotionally evocative.

It was not merely Álvaro Colom's party that invoked memory and emotion (especially fear) among Guatemalans. Pérez Molina's party also mobilized memory and fear though in ways quite different from those of Colom and the UNE. The focus of the PP was not Guatemala's period of war, but rather the **present** (and the future); the party focused on the "urgency" of addressing present-day insecurity. The party clearly identified gangs as a prime source of insecurity in the country and vowed to tackle them through applying harsher penalties to individuals found guilty of criminal activity. Pérez Molina's campaign deployed images of gang members: images utilized were typically of young men displaying tattoos covering their faces and arms.

While Colom's party drew on images and experiences of the past, Pérez Molina's party invoked the future, and the potential for further chaos and insecurity in Guatemala if the present situation were not dealt with "properly" through his hard-line strategies, including incarceration and death for those involved in criminal activities. When his opponents made reference to Pérez Molina's involvement in the armed conflict, his party deflected attention from the issue by insisting that its leader had fought for a better country, "helped to negotiate Peace", and once in power would continue the work of making the nation a "safer" place. Thus his party held him as a "Peace General" as opposed to a "War General". In other words, one party (UNE) and its supporters insisted that Guatemalans remember, while the other pressed the population to forget, or at least not to dwell in the past (PP).

The historical period of the armed conflict, as the Guatemalan electoral process illustrated, is not a static and neatly bounded part of Guatemala's past. Rather, it figures actively today in Guatemalan political and social life, helping to shape the contemporary reality of the country and the everyday lives of its inhabitants. Guatemala today remains haunted by the memories and experiences of war, as its inhabitants work to reconstruct their life worlds on a daily basis amidst ongoing problems of civic insecurity, poverty, and ethnic, class and gender segregation. As such, Guatemala's complex contemporary social landscape demands the (re)construction and rethinking of methodological and analytical approaches for better understanding the impact of violence in the lives of women and men. These reformulations must take into account the interconnections and intersections of different forms of violence, injustice and types of suffering present in the lives of

individuals and communities in the wake of mass violence and war. For instance, in the case of women in Guatemala, they may not only be affected by a range of gender-based forms of violence – for example, physical or sexual violence in the home – where the perpetrator targets their gender identity. They may be targeted and threatened too by the civic insecurity present at a broader societal level and may also have to live with the war-related memories and losses. In a support group for women dealing with issues of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence at the institution *Fuerzas*[6], which I had the opportunity to observe and participate in during the initial months of my research, and in personal interviews, women frequently spoke of various forms of violence in their lives. The analytical separation I discuss in the next section of symbolic, structural, physical, everyday forms of violence is not one that entirely makes sense in women's experiences in urban post-war Guatemala. Thus, this dissertation asks: how do multiple forms of injustice, violence and suffering become intertwined and expressed in the everyday experiences of women (and men) in the present-day urban context of Guatemala City? What does living in Guatemala City, in the current post-war period – when discourses of violence (past, present and potential) abound – mean and entail for women situated at a crossroads of multiple systems of injustice and violence? In the chapter that follows (Chapter 1), I outline the objectives of this dissertation as well as the theoretical and methodological approaches that have helped to shape my arguments. I begin the chapter by providing a brief background to "post-war" Guatemala.

[6] For purposes of confidentiality, I use a pseudonym to refer to the institution.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THEORY AND METHOD IN THE STUDY OF VIOLENCE AND GENDER IN POST- WAR GUATEMALA

[I]f people make war, war also makes people.

-Diane Nelson (2009:xiii)

“Post-War” Guatemala?

In 2007, twelve years after the signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala, the country is described was, “one of the most violent countries in the world officially in Peace, where the human rights of the population continue without being fully respected” (PNUD 2007: 9). Guatemala has followed a worrying trend described by researchers of Latin America (e.g. Balán 2002; Caldeira 1996; Rotker 2002) – namely, that despite certain recent democratic reforms, systemic human rights violations, as well as everyday crime and insecurity, continue to thrive. In addition to continued political violence in the form of intimidation and violent attacks against human rights workers or individuals for political purposes, the country faces growing homicide rates, including increasing rates of murders of women, children and youth, escalating gang activity and rates of organized crime, high rates of fire arm possession and use, as well as high incidences of armed robberies, kidnappings, and theft (del Alamo 2004; Amnesty International 2005; Asturias & del Águila 2005; Logan *et al*. 2006; CALDH 2006; CIIDH 2006; PNUD 2007; Urías 2005). Moreover, there are indicators demonstrating that problems of violence have intensified in the current post-peace agreement era. One report indicates, for

example, that since the year 2000 homicidal violence has increased in Guatemala by more than 120%, climbing from 2,655 homicides in 1999 to 5,885 in 2006 (PNUD 2007:9).[7]

Many explanations are offered for the persistence of violence in "post-conflict" Guatemala. Not surprisingly, these vary depending on who is doing the analyzing of incidents and forms of violence, and for what purpose. While *mareros* (youth gang members) are often cited in governmental[8] and in everyday discourses as the principle cause of current violence in the country, a deeper analysis of the present situation brings other factors to the fore. These include vast social inequalities and high levels of poverty along class, ethnic, gender, and geographical axes, and rampant legal impunity. Another contributing factor are organized and clandestine groups (often linked to politically powerful individuals) who profit from illicit activities such as the trafficking of human beings, arms and drugs (PNUD 2007:10).

Guatemala's long history of violence and State repression toward vast segments of its population spanning the colonial period, then through a long line of conservative and liberal dictators, and most recently exacerbated by decades of horrific internal armed conflict, is also at the root of persistent and ubiquitous violence today. While both sides, the military and the insurgency, committed acts of violence during Guatemala's armed internal conflict, the U.N. sponsored Truth Commission found that over 90% of acts of violence were carried out by agents of the State. Mayan indigenous

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[7] See appendices B and C for violence and homicide statistics in Guatemala.

[8] Army General Otto Pérez Molina of the *Partido Patriota* ran for president in 2007 on a platform centered on battling crime in Guatemala through a plan to quash gangs.

peoples, whom the State considered guerilla supporters, represented over 80% of the victims of violence (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998).

During the war, women were among the targeted victims of State-sponsored violence: indeed, government agents carried out mass sexual violence, particularly in the form of rape and sexual torture, against women. The greatest proportion of this violence was directed at indigenous women as a means of damaging the social fabric of indigenous communities and of creating a climate of terror in the country (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998). As in other war-torn countries, such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone or Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina (IRIN 2004), rape and sexual assault of women in Guatemala were part of the machinery of war.

In the aftermath of the armed internal conflict, violence against women has been on the rise across Guatemala, as post-war violence is taking gendered forms. Human rights organizations and activists have laboured hard since the signing of Peace to prove that genocide occurred during Guatemala's armed conflict. And yet, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the concept of *femicide*—the killing of women by men because they are women (Russell 2001:3)— has gained currency among women's organizations as they attempt to evidence the existence of this insidious, systematic form of violence against a targeted group. Present-day violence against women in Guatemala, particularly the increase in the killings of women, demonstrates all too well the on-going violence that pervades Guatemala's "post-conflict" era. Various studies (e.g., Amnesty International 2005; CALDH 2006; PNUD 2007) attest to the disturbing increase, over the past ten years, in the murder rate of Guatemalan women. For example, the Amnesty International (2005) report,

Guatemala: No Protection, No Justice: Killings of Women in Guatemala, which has played a central role in drawing attention to this disturbing issue, indicates that the number of women murdered annually over the three years spanning 2002 to 2004 almost tripled (from at least 163 women in 2002, to 383 in 2003, to over 527 in 2004). A subsequent report produced by the United Nations Development Program for Guatemala indicates that the numbers of murdered women in 2005 and 2006 were 518 and 603 respectively (2007:30). These numbers increased in subsequent years: 722 murders of women were registered in 2008 (GHRC 2009:2) and 708 in 2009 (Fundación Sobrevivientes 2010).

Femicide in Guatemala is occurring in a context of generalized violence affecting great segments of the population. Both women and men face a situation marked by fear and the potential of being victims of violence at any given moment. Moreover, a woman and a man's experiences of life in Guatemala are influenced by their various social locations, including ethnicity, class, age, and geographic location. Thus, Guatemalan women may experience life and violence in quite different ways. While women's experiences vary, a focus on their lives is necessary as the violation of their bodies has constituted a virtually normative practice in Guatemala. As certain scholars (e.g., Few 2002; Nelson 1999; Smith 1995) have highlighted, since the Spanish conquest, ethnic relations as well as national and state formation in Guatemala have been maintained and (re)produced through gender and gendered violence. In the "post-conflict" context, as during different historical periods in Guatemala, including during the armed internal conflict, men are murdered with more frequency than women. However, there are indicators the

violence directed at women has increased proportionately at a higher rate in this period than the increase in violence directed against men (e.g. see, Palma & Sas 2007). Furthermore, violent crimes against women often involve rape and other forms of sexual violence, and their bodies frequently show signs of mutilation of facial features and sexual organs (Amnesty International 2005). The patterned, gruesome, sexualized and misogynist nature of violence perpetrated against women is a central factor for distinguishing violence toward women and men, and suggests a need to carefully interrogate violence directed at women in particular.

A number of factors impede accuracy in the recording of the murders of women in Guatemala. A lack of public confidence in State institutions, indifference on the part of officials, and deficiencies within the judicial system to deal adequately with these cases, all contribute to the under-registration of violent crimes against women. In addition, it is widely believed that police forces collude with organized crime in criminal activity, as has been observed for other Latin American contexts (Caldeira 2000; Goldstein 2003), and thus may be complicit in violence against women. The chronic lack of reporting, investigation, and prosecution of these crimes has resulted in a situation where the perpetrators of these acts remain largely unidentified and unpunished, which can be seen as exacerbating the climate of fear and insecurity present in Guatemala. In Guatemala, as in countless societies throughout history and around the globe, violence has been perpetrated on women's bodies for the purposes of sustaining patriarchal systems, nation building and nationalism, and for the waging of war (Das 1997; Giles & Hyndman 2004; Malkki 1995; Olujic 1998).

Recently, certain observers (e.g., del Alamo 2004; Urías 2005) have pointed out how documented rates of domestic abuse—a less publicly visible form of violence— are also alarmingly high in Guatemala. Due to the secrecy that often accompanies domestic violence and the great methodological challenges it poses for researchers (Ellsberg et. al, 2001), the figures on such incidents are much more scarce and perhaps even less accurate than the figures on cases of femicide. Nevertheless, researchers and the written media (e.g., see Asturias & del Águila 2005; del Alamo 2004; La Hora 2005; Urías 2005) signal that domestic violence (*violencia intrafamiliar*) constitutes a serious problem in Guatemala. In her research on gender relations before, during and after the Guatemalan civil war, anthropologist Judith Zur (1998), for example, listened to many women in the war's aftermath who told her that for them, men's alcoholism and violence in the home were serious issues of concern.

Thesis Objectives & Theoretical Considerations

This thesis focuses the everyday lives and experiences of working class indigenous and non-indigenous (*ladina*) women in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area. I examine how Guatemalan women reconstruct their lives in the aftermath of one of the bloodiest armed conflicts in Latin America's recent history and amidst conditions of acute structural violence and poverty. As Caroline Nordstrom asks, "How do we understand, not abstract text-bound definitions of war's violence, but what it lives like, experiences like, tastes, feels, looks, and moves like?" (2004:9). This dissertation is concerned with these questions in relation to post-war fear and crime as these impact the lives of women in Guatemala City. It does not aim to posit the

causes and/or solutions behind Guatemala's social problems of insecurity and high rates of violence. Rather, the focus is on the effects of such processes in order to reach an understanding of some of the more insidious and deeper effects of violence. In the opening pages of his "anthropography" on political and ethnic violence in Sri Lanka, *Charred Lullabies*, Valentine Daniel (1996) warns his readers that, "anyone who reads [his] book to find causes and their corollary, solutions, to what has come to be called the ethnic conflict, reads in vain. If there be solutions, they may well rest in forgetting causes and remembering the carnage in 'paradise'" (Daniel 1996:9). In these short lines, Daniel proposes a shift in focus away from grand theories of the causation of violence towards an examination on its devastation, its social unfolding, its effects.

Violence is often seen as a noun, as an acute event. However, in the last four decades a growing body of anthropological research has demonstrated the various ways in which violence is embedded in ongoing social processes and relations of power, with a range of effects (e.g., see Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Caldeira 2000; Das, Kleinman, Ramphele and Reynolds 2000; Feldman 1991; Malkki 1995; Nordstrom 1997). Thus, this thesis examines violence as a social process, with a life that precedes and long follows any particular manifestation. I therefore approach violence as a verb, as a power that can create and shape realities of individuals, families and communities. Thus as the quote by Diane Nelson (2009) that begins this chapter indicates, violence is not only constructed by humans, but can also work to give shape to human social life: violence can impact the meanings we give to different aspects of our daily lives and how we relate to others. For instance, a state

of fear and impunity might give rise to forms of sociality based on distrust and suspicion (see. e.g., Green 1999).

To treat violence as a process is not to deny its intensity or force– for instance, that individuals and communities, such as hundreds of Mayan indigenous communities in Guatemala, have experienced acute organized attacks on their bodies, psyches, sexualities, and family and community life. It is rather to acknowledge that these events have repercussions beyond the immediate moment of the violent act[9]. Further "events" of violence are often not located outside of the realm of the "ordinary" but actively work to (re)configure the everyday (e.g., see Feldman 1991; Green 1999; Taussig 1992). Thus, I ask in this dissertation, how do "acts of spectacular violence" (Das and Kleinman 2001:17) – such as the sexual assaults and/or massacres of their communities that some of the women in this study endured, and individual and collective memories of such atrocities, impact upon women's ongoing social relations and everyday experiences in the aftermath of war? How are the daily lives of Guatemalan women and men affected or transformed by ongoing and ubiquitous violence in post-war Guatemala City? How do individual Guatemalans, communities, national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and media sources produce particular discourses of violence that then circulate in the post-war urban locale of Guatemala City? And how do these discourses feed back into experiences of fear and life in the city today? How do external forms of political, structural, symbolic, everyday and gender-based forms

[9] Some of these repercussions including consequences on the psychosocial and health of war survivors, loss of material goods such as homes and crops that had to be abandoned or were destroyed by the military, break-up of families, and community conflicts are documented in the volumes of the Truth Commissions in Guatemala (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998).

of violence become part of women's subjectivities – their felt interior senses of self? Below I discuss further the specific objectives of this dissertation and how these build on the anthropology of violence and social suffering and feminist approaches to the study of violence in the lives of women. I then proceed to a discussion of the research site, Guatemala's Metropolitan Area, and the methodology and ethical considerations that have informed this research.

i. Theoretical Framework

Several bodies of work have given shape to the arguments and discussions contained in this dissertation, including specifically the anthropology of violence, a growing subfield of socio-cultural anthropology. While anthropologists have always been witness to violence, including the violence of colonialism – the victims of which became anthropology's research subjects – the development of the anthropology of violence, as a subfield, has occurred primarily since the 1970s (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:5). Until this period, anthropology had said very little about violence, and most theories of the causes and consequences of mass violence came from other disciplines, including history, psychology and psychiatry, and political science (Ibid.).

Although anthropologists did not directly engage violence as an object of enquiry (and to the contrary, systematically ignored the subject), they were aware of its presence in the societies they studied. For example, Bronislaw Malinowski, in his famous diary that was published posthumously and covered the period from 1914 to 1918, commented on the violence committed against the "natives" in New Guinea

by the colonizers (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:7). Malinowski moved back and forth between supporting the extermination of the "natives", to stating that,

> the duty of the anthropologist is to be a fair and true interpreter of the Native and … to register that Europeans [have at times] exterminated whole island peoples; that they expropriated most of the patrimony of savage races; that they introduced slavery in a specially cruel and pernicious form. (Ibid)

This acute awareness of colonial violence and its severity, evident in Malinowski's field diary, however, is not reflected in his academic writings on his research among the Trobriand peoples of New Guinea (Ibid.).

The lack of systematic analyses of violence in early anthropological works can be seen from the vantage point of the discipline emerging alongside colonialism, and anthropologists not wanting to expose the violent actions of their own nations or their discipline's complicity in the violent colonial project. Colonial violence, however, was not the only type of violence that went un-remarked by early anthropologists such as Malinowski. Other forms of violence, such as the local and regional conflicts and domestic violence present in societies that anthropologists worked in, were similarly disregarded as issues of pertinence to anthropological analyses.

The historical silence of anthropology with respect to various forms of violence may be also partly explained by the nature of how the discipline envisioned itself in its formative years. Until the mid-twentieth century, the discipline tended to focus on small scale or hunter-gatherer societies, with little interest in State or global-level processes. Thus violence fell outside of the issues considered of interest

within anthropology, and was largely perceived as an area more appropriate for analysis by other disciplines.

Moral relativism subsequently served as the reason behind anthropologists' lack of a serious engagement with the subject. For instance, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:6-7) highlight the example of Clifford Geertz not even hinting at the "killing fields" that were breaking out in Indonesia as he departed from the field, including the massacre of suspected Communists by Islamic fundamentalists in 1965. When questioned at a conference years later about why he had not spoken out against political violence in Indonesia, Geertz replied that, "he had not wanted to distract attention away from the theoretical points he was making by engaging in a media fray or a politics of advocacy" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:6-7). As Jayne Howell (2004) points out, moral relativism is still today offered as a reason not to study issues of violence, such as domestic violence in "other" societies, for fear it may invite charges of ethnocentrism.

While the anthropology of violence has been slow in its consolidation as a subfield, especially in the past forty years a significant body of research has emerged dedicated to the study of violence. Early work that directly engaged the subject of violence, such as Napoleon Chagnon's (1968) work on the "'fierce' Yanomami of Venezuela/Brazil", borrowed from evolutionary socio-biology looking for biological explanations for human behaviour. However, there has been a general shift within anthropology, which arguably extends across the disciplines, away from treating violent action as principally rooted in the biology of individuals (Nagangast

1994:112)[10], and toward considering the multiple ways in which violence is culturally and socially produced and sustained (e.g., see Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Caldeira 2000; Das, Kleinman, Ramphele and Reynolds 2000; Feldman 1991; Malkki 1995; Nordstrom 1997). That is, violence is now recognized as the outcome of particular social, cultural, political, and economic structures and processes that sustain and legitimize the suffering of certain groups of people at the expense of others. Thus, for instance, social structures and institutions, such as government, the media, humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, the family, and even individuals interacting in those particular social milieux may contribute to the emergence and proliferation of violence (Caldeira 2000; Das et al. 2000; Kleinman et al. 1997; Nelson 1999).

Identifying violence as a phenomenon shaped by the social setting and with social purposes, has inevitably implied a widening of the concept of violence itself, and has led to further difficulties in outlining its characteristics. Thus we have seen the emergence of concepts or categorizations such as "direct violence" or "political

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[10] For some scholars outside of socio-cultural anthropology, however, biological factors are still considered significant in understanding violence. For instance, in his book *On Killing,* psychologist and former army Ranger and Paratrooper Lt. Col. Dave Grossman makes the case that humans in fact have "an intense resistance to killing their fellow man" (1996:6). In other words, humans in general have a propensity not to kill. Psychiatrist James Gilligan (2000) advocates a reworking of this explanation, namely to bring psycho-social forces to bear. Gilligan argues that certain cultural or social cues, particularly those that produce shame and humiliation (such as that of a man who 'inadequately' enacts his masculinity), work as a stimulus for a psycho-physiological condition to act in a destructive manner towards the other. These works to a certain extent denaturalize violence and killing by pointing out that inflicting physical pain on another human being is learned (for example, soldiers are trained to kill in the case of Grossman's (1996) research) or that it is the outcome of social pressures (for instance the shame of not complying with social norms in the case of Gilligan's [2000] work). At the same time these works privilege a universal biological explanation to violent action.

violence", "structural violence", "symbolic or cultural violence", the "violences of everyday", and "gender violence" which I explore below.[11]

In the introduction to their reader *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology,* Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois argue that physical assaults represent only a small portion of that which may be considered violence, and define violence as "assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim" (2004:1). Thus, the sources, manifestations, and effects of violence can be many and diverse. As such, the authors point to various forms of violence. For example, they point to genocide and politically motivated violence. In his own essay in the same anthology, Bourgois defines this "direct political violence" as targeted physical violence and terror administered by official authorities and/or those groups opposing it, such as military repression, police torture, and armed resistance (2004:426). The bloody wars and dictatorships seen in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s would be classified by researchers such as Bourgois (2004) as prime examples of political violence.

Structural violence is a concept used to explain "the violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion and humiliation" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:1)[12].

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[11] It is important to acknowledge that the move to make violence an increasingly inclusive category has also been met with opposition. For an example, we can turn to the first chapter of the edited collection *The Anthropology of Violence,* where David Riches (1986) argues against the broadening of the definition of violence. In his essay, Riches adheres to a notion of violence as, "an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses" (Riches 1986:8). Riches argues against a broadened definition of violence that includes elements such as "state violence" or "working class violence" on the grounds that these determinations are largely ideological and influenced by the researchers' perspectives (1986:4). Riches thus conceptualizes as violence as only that which results in direct physical harm of another.

[12] In an article in the same *Violence in War and Peace* anthology, Philippe Bourgois defines structural violence as, "[c]hronic, historically entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality, ranging from exploitative international terms trade to abusive local working conditions and high infant mortality rates" (2004:426).

In other words, structural violence refers to the suffering that results from unequal social structures, such as an economic model that relies on and produces poverty, and from unequal relations of power. Paul Farmer (1999, 2003) applies this concept to his research in Haiti, where he demonstrates how inequalities in the distribution of infectious disease, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, are directly correlated to class and gender. As a consequence, certain people, namely the poor and women, are likely to die of infections while others are spared the risk (Farmer 1999, 2003). Farmer argues that social inequalities often determine both the distribution of disease and clinical outcomes among the afflicted. The social suffering (and assaults on the physical and moral well-being of individuals) that results from contracting a disease is labeled structural violence, as it would not necessarily be considered a form of violence utilizing its narrow definition as a direct physical attack as scholars such as Riches (1986) propose. Rather, a set of social and political conditions makes it possible for some to suffer and others not, or for them to suffer in different ways. Utilizing this concept, what appears to characterize violence is the processes and effects involved, rather than merely a particular behaviour or action.

Symbolic or cultural violence is an additional categorization addressed by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004), as it is by others (Bourdieu 1980, 2004; Galtung 1990). One of the key proponents of the concept of symbolic violence is Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that this form of violence refers largely to the processes by which the "dominated" internalize, embody and perform social schemes of the dominant. In this way, it too is related to structural violence as unequal relations of power serve as its fertilizing ground. For example, in his widely-read ethnography

In Search of Respect, anthropologist Philippe Bourgois (1996) masterfully conducts a political-economic analysis of the social conditions, particularly those of poverty and racism, that trapped many young Puerto Ricans into a life of crime and drug-dealing in East Harlem, New York. Bourgois does not stop here, as he also examines how these young people suffered the consequences of symbolic violence. Bourgois' nuanced representation of the gang members' lives illustrates how they often had intentions and goals of creating a better life for themselves and their families through participating in the legal economy. However, these goals were quickly shattered by the reality of the poverty and racism they faced. Bourgois' research highlights how, although many young men had goals of one day finding stable, well-paid, legal work, those few jobs available to them (incidentally those considered least desirable in a North American context) exploited, subordinated or "shamed" them, making the drug economy and a life of crime more "desirable". Furthermore, and demonstrative of the workings of symbolic violence, Bourgois highlights how his informants had not acquired the cultural capital or social skills that would enable them to succeed in a white middle-class context such as that of an office environment. Thus, they not only suffered the consequences of structural violence, but also the consequences of symbolic violence. The survival and other skills that contributed to success on the street and the drug economy (a balance between toughness and violence, on the one hand, and friendship and trust, on the other) did not translate well in the "legal" economy. In a street-life environment, Bourgois' informants could hope to find some of the "respect" that in the context poverty, employment shortages due to de-industrialization, racism, and

marginalization, where they performed the tasks of daily living, was too often denied to them.

When discussing symbolic violence, authors (e.g., Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997) sometimes also use the concept of "cultural violence" elaborated by Johan Galtung (1990). This concept is often utilized as a synonym for symbolic violence. Galtung contends that 'cultural violence' refers to "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (1990:291). In elaborating this concept, Galtung pushes us to make connections between symbolic violence and both structural and direct (physical) violence. To this end, Galtung produces a triangular model with direct, structural and cultural violence at each of the three points, to illustrate that each is required to sustain the others. In this way, Galtung's analysis brings an issue to the fore that I wish to highlight in this dissertation: these distinct categorizations of violence may enable us to analyze different processes and actions termed violence, and permit us to see their deeper effects on individuals and communities that a single definition of violence as direct physical assault may not. At the same time, Galtung's model reminds us that these categorizations are conceptual as, in practice, the 'distinct' forms of violence are deeply imbricated with one another.

Another category of violence that has been constructed by scholars of the subject is that of "everyday violence". This concept is elaborated in Nancy Scheper-Hughes' (1992) poignant ethnography *Death Without Weeping*. Focusing on the

lives of poor women in North Eastern Brazil, and their experiences of poverty and motherhood, Scheper-Hughes utilizes the concept of everyday violence to analyze infant mortality, slow starvation, disease, despair, and humiliation the women experienced in their day-to-day lives (Scheper-Hughes 1992). Everyday violence, therefore, refers to the more silent, perhaps less visible forms of suffering, such as hunger and poverty that take their toll on the bodies and lives of people who undergo it. The following quote by Eduardo Galeano captures well the sentiment behind the concept of everyday violence. Galeano states that, "[t]he human murder by poverty in Latin America is secret; every year, without making a sound, three Hiroshima bombs explode over communities that have become accustomed to suffering with clenched teeth" (Galeano 1973:5). It is the hardships encountered on a daily basis by individuals and social groups that result in slow assaults on their lives, senses of personhood, bodies and dignities, that are described using the concept of everyday violence.

Arthur Kleinman (2000) makes a slight modification to the concept of everyday violence, as he proposes the use of "violences of everyday life". This concept, Kleinman argues, enables us to see how structural forces may result in different and unequal forms of suffering between and among different groups of people. It permits us to see the violence of poverty, but also permits us to see issues such as the particular forms of everyday suffering of those who may otherwise be excluded from analysis, such as middle class women. Together, however, both uses of the concepts are related to the concept of social suffering, which results from and

in, “devastating injuries that social force can inflict on human experience” (Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997:ix).

Finally, gender violence, a kind of violence whose very definition depends on the gender identities of the parties involved (Merry 2009:3) is conceptualized by researchers as embedded within the aforementioned processes of violence (e.g. see Merry 2009; Nelson 1999; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Itself constituting an umbrella term for a wide range of violations, from mass rapes during times of war to intimate partner abuse within the domestic sphere, gender violence takes place within relationships of power and within the context of specific understandings and practices surrounding gender identities, and thus may vary from one social setting to the next (Merry 2009:3). Furthermore, as anti-racist feminists (e.g., Crenshaw 1994; Hooks 1981) have signaled, gender is not experienced uniformly. For instance, class, ethnicity, physical and mental capacity, age, and sexual orientation are among the social identities that articulate with and render the gendered experiences of individuals, within any one social milieu, heterogeneous.

The anthropology of violence is moving in the direction of interrogating the ways in which violent actions and social processes are lived and experienced by those they affect (e.g, Nordstrom 1997). However, it has until recently tended to concentrate on the social structures, political system, economic models, cultural practices and beliefs that give rise to violence and work to entrench it. Or, as Green puts it, anthropologists, “have traditionally approached the study of conflict, war, and human aggression from a distance, ignoring the harsh realities of people’s lives” (1999:56).

This thesis weaves together bodies of literature within the anthropology of violence, social suffering, and feminist anthropology (e.g., Aretxaga 1997; Das 1997, 2000; Green 1999; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Goldstein 2003; Pine 2008; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Olujic 1998; Zur 1998) with ethnographic data, and offers an in depth analysis of the daily struggles of women going about their everyday lives in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area, a social context marked by poverty, insecurity, and deep social inequalities.

Thus on one level, the thesis examines how, and argues for increasing attention to the ways that:

1.) Intersecting processes of violence (political, structural, symbolic, everyday, and gender-based) as well as constant fear of assaults, are experienced individually by women, and shape the different dimensions of their lives – for example, how these factors may contribute to shaping their subjectivities, social relations as well as everyday practices. The thesis examines how women's social relations, such as relationships to their children, families, neighbors, and even the State, are transformed by the engagement with violence.[13] In her work on women's practices in a context of violence in southeastern Mexico, anthropologist Jayne Howell recounts how, in her own case, she did not embark on fieldwork with the goal of researching violence and its impact on women's lives. However, during the course of her research, as she gained

[13] Whether by means of distancing themselves from their newborn babies who were likely to be taken by hunger and poverty (Scheper-Hughes 1992), burying their children who became caught up in a life of gang activity in Brazil (Goldstein 2003), or war widows distrusting their neighbors who may have been perpetrators of violence during the war in Guatemala or harboured "secret" knowledge about them (Green 1999), different researchers illustrate how women's everyday lives and relations can be deeply marked by violence.

rapport with her informants and built friendships with them, various women shared experiences of sexual violence, including rape. After repeatedly learning of these intimate and violent experiences, she slowly began to see how sexual violence had an impact on women's lives—their education, work, and family histories—issues that interested her both personally and academically. This new information led Howell to realize how women's practices in different spheres of their lives, such as what schools they attended or where and at what they worked, were influenced in great part by a fear of violence. For instance, if a job required a woman to travel by herself, and expose herself to the threat of rape or other forms of violence, she might think twice before accepting it. In this thesis, I am interested in this type of "hidden" information and quotidian experiences of women in post-war urban Guatemala.

At a deeper level, this dissertation asks, how are women's senses of themselves and of the world around them formed through violence? In other words, this thesis is concerned with processes of subject formation in the context of violence. The contributors to the edited compilation *Violence and Subjectivity* (Das, Kleinman, Ramphele and Reynolds 1997) explore the various ways in which subjectivity, or interiorized experience(s) of self formed within contexts of power (Das et. al 1997:1), is produced through experiences of violence, and the various ways in which the flow of images, capital and people contribute to processes of identity and subject formation of individuals. Along the same lines, in her thorough analysis, linking social processes of structural and symbolic violence in Honduras, anthropologist Adrienne Pine (drawing on the writings of Michel Foucault, among others) is particularly interested in the process of "subjectivation", or how

Hondurans come to see themselves and who they are in a context of structural inequalities, poverty, and everyday violence. Pine asks, how does violence from without become subjectivity? What are the processes by which we incorporate the world around us into our bodies, and our lives? Pine carefully considers how Honduras internalize a view of themselves as violent and "uncivilized", and how, through a process where the poor blame themselves for their social conditions, the structural violence of poverty is transformed into symbolic violence. The Hondurans who participated in Pine's research told her that they were more violent (and therefore "behind") other countries, something, she notes, that images of violence in the media and "actual" incidents of crime in their neighborhoods worked to confirm (2008:24). As I discuss in Chapter 3 of this thesis, which focuses on narratives and memories of violence in Guatemala City, I frequently heard analogous comments from Guatemalans. I was constantly told that "today violence is worse", that even in war times "the situation was not as bad", that Guatemalans have "lost a sense of indignation".

Green (1999) and Zur (1998) provide additional examples of the influence of violence on experiences of self, particularly on embodied experiences of Mayan war widows in post-war rural Guatemala. The authors argue that the widow's senses of selves were forever changed by their cruel encounters with violence. They no longer felt as complete persons since essential parts of their being, their husbands and sons, were stolen from them, and/or because their own bodies and dignities had been violated by the sexual violence perpetrated against them. Their senses and experiences of self and community were marked by painful memories and loss.

Their painful memories and bodies, however, also served as their means of resistance. By holding onto these memories, they 'kept alive' those they had lost, and in this way produced new senses of self that drew upon their violent memories.

2. The second focus of this dissertation concerns practices of memory and narration, examining the interplay between collective forms of (re)membering the past and individual experiences. Present-day crime and violence in Guatemala are occurring in the aftermath of a recent bloody civil war, making it necessary to address the themes of collective and individual memory and narrative practices – the ways in which individuals and communities draw upon, mobilize, and rework memory of war into life projects in the present and for the future. My project examines the weight of recent wartime violence on present-day experiences of the everyday and how social and individual memories of wartime violence impact upon, are invoked, and are re-constituted through narratives, interpretations and experiences of present-day violence. I maintain that experiences and memory of war are powerful forces in shaping the social and political life of Guatemala today, as well as the everyday lived experiences of individual Guatemalans.

Guatemala City offers an important site for this analysis since certain persons – such as those belonging to the younger generations, or those who were able to maintain a sense of 'insulation' in the City from the war that played itself out largely in the Northwest Highlands, and who may even go as far as denying the war[14]– do

[14] Debra Rodman (2009) found in her research that Ladino and Maya peoples in eastern Guatemala, an area typically considered outside of the "war zone", deny that genocide took place and thus maintain an atmosphere of denial regarding the mass killings of indigenous people during the armed conflict.

not necessarily narrate present-day violence in terms of past violence. Yet, as I discuss in later chapters, wartime violence did reach the capital city, which was enveloped by the climate of fear and repression that spread across the country. For instance, during the war's initial years, urban intellectuals were key targets of State repression. Indeed, this has a bearing on experiences of present-day violence and fear. For instance, I found that among those who were directly touched by the violence of the war, such as internally displaced refugees who resettled in Guatemala City due to the devastation of their communities by the conflict (see Chapter 3), tended to narrate their present experiences in light of the country's recent violent past. Other individuals grounded their narratives of everyday life in Guatemala City today more in day-to-day concerns as those related to poverty and the struggle to feed their families.

This study examines how memory of the past is variously drawn upon by individuals, and how it works to shape experiences of present-day violence and everyday life in Guatemala City. On the one hand, with the end of the armed conflict, the establishment of two official Truth Commissions and on-going exhumations in the country have provided avenues and frameworks for survivors of the war in Guatemala to organize and articulate their past experiences and memories. On the other hand, the Truth Commissions and exhumation processes have intensified the politics of remembering[15]: the context has seen contestations emerge over the historical memory as well as **what** memories and **whose** narratives are included in 'official' histories to the exclusion of others.

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[15] The David Stoll / Rigoberta Menchú controversy (e.g. see Arias 2001), serves as another example of the contestations over the past that have emerged in the aftermath of Guatemala's armed conflict.

It is precisely such tensions and differential invocations of the past that have concerned researchers interested in issues of memory and narrative (e.g., Antze and Lambek 1996; Malkki 1995; Rousseau, de la Aldea, Rojas and Foxen 2005; Rousseau, Morales, and Foxen 2001; Weine 1999). This significant body of work underscores how experiences, including those of violence, are often formed and reconstituted through memories and narrations. While experiences of violence are very "real", memory and narration may also shape the very experiences they re-tell (Ibid.). Thus, argue Antze and Lambek, memories are never simply records of the past, "but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations, practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration" (1996: vii). Memory in this way acts as a verb; it is something that persons *do* for diverse purposes, sometimes drawing upon collective memories and/or local social or institutional models of narration. In addition, the work of memory often takes place "within a charged field of contested moral and political claims" (Ibid.).

How past and present interact and work constantly to produce and reproduce one another in the everydayness and experiences of individuals may tell us about the insidious effects of violence and how it flows into the crevices peoples' bodies and psyches as well as social worlds. Literature on memory and narrative highlights that through narrative we try to make sense of how things have come to pass and how our actions and those of others have helped shape our history (e.g., Mattingly and Garo 1994). A focus on memory and everyday experience is also necessary as, "subjectivity is always grounded in history" (Aretxaga 2005:59). While underscoring the common

social, cultural, political, institutional and interpersonal dynamics in today's Guatemala that make particular narrative forms possible while precluding others, I am interested in differences in narrations and what these may reveal about individual subject formation in contexts of mass violence and its aftermath (such as the role of a person's social positionality and personal past experiences in everyday reconstruction of life in the present), as well as drawing attention to elements left out by dominant frameworks and discourses.

This study examines the ways in which women's present experiences of violence and fear in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area are shaped by memory of the war, and, in turn how narratives of present-day violence may work as sites for struggles over the historical memory of war in Guatemala. Thus, while this research acknowledges that there is individual creativity involved in the construction of stories, since these do not always conform to dominant modes of narrative production, this research explores the dialectic relationship between individual and collective memory and narrative forms, and the interpenetration of past and present experiences. Especially relevant to this analysis is the body of work of Veena Das with women survivors of the riots that followed the 1947 Partition of India, which examines not only the events of violence per se – the moments of horror women endured including rape and abduction – but, what happens to the subject when the memory of such events is woven into the everyday and ongoing relationships. Das (2007:7) states,

> my engagement with the survivors of riots also showed me that life was recovered not through some grand gestures in the realm of the transcendent but through a descent into the ordinary. There was, I argue, a mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary so that I end up by thinking of the event as always attached to the ordinary as if there were tentacles that reach out from the everyday and anchor the event to it in some specific ways.

As I will elaborate in the chapters that follow, women whom I came to know closely during the course of this study who had directly experienced war-time violence, told me that their memories of war, fear and anxiety were reawakened constantly by the current pervasiveness of crime, and impunity. However, this was not the case for everyone. And, whether or not individuals drew on historical collective memory of war in their own narratives of the present, I was consistently told that one had to take precautions, to travel and live "*con cuidado*" (with caution) as "violence today was worse".

3. Finally, closely related to the first two foci, this thesis is about the production of knowledge and circulation of discourses surrounding the causes and impact of violence and fear on women's lives, on the part of Guatemalan men and women themselves, the Guatemalan State, a burgeoning body of (international and national) non-governmental institutions working towards the eradication of gender violence, the media, and academics. As a number of anthropologists remind us, social structures and institutions contribute in distinct ways to processes of violence, including to their legitimation (Caldeira 2000; Das et al. 2000; Kleinman et al. 1997; Nelson 1999). If the daily lives of women and men in Guatemala City today are shaped by the

proliferation of violence and fear, these experiences are mediated by the institutional and social landscape that produces and promotes particular understandings and framings of problems of violence in post-war Guatemala. This thesis examines precisely **what** some of these understandings look like, and how discourses on gender violence in particular may be adopted and incorporated into quotidian practice, altered, or resisted by women in Guatemala today. For instance, the dissertation addresses the question, how do social phenomena as femicide, and more broadly gender-based violence, come to be understood and defined as such? How do ordinary Guatemalans, and women specifically, come to understand the causes and effects of violence in their own lives in light of the interlocutory roles of institutions (state and non-state, local and international), the media, and even academics, in producing particular understandings of violence?

Drawing on the insights of scholars such as Sally Engle Merry (2006) and Winifred Tate (2007) who examine the production of knowledge surrounding violence and human rights, it is possible to ask what role institutions that promote human rights ideas are playing in the lives of Guatemalan women. In what kinds of creative ways are women utilizing international human rights and violence against women frameworks, if they are, in their day-to-day practices? In particular, I examine the judicial and institutional landscape for addressing the phenomenon of violence against women in Guatemala, the human rights ideals they promote, as well as their role in producing particular representations of causes, problems and effects of fear and crime in the country. I draw special attention to the gaps between national and international institutional responses for addressing violence against women and women's everyday lived experiences. I argue that only by extending our analysis to

include the perspectives and experiences of women themselves will we reach fuller understanding of the deep toll of Guatemala's problems of violence and insecurity.

Research Site

The present thesis is concerned with social processes of violence in the post-war setting of Guatemala, in particular its impact on women in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area (*Área Metropolitana de Guatemala*, AMG)[16] in the department (province) of Guatemala. The Guatemalan Metropolitan Area includes the municipality of Guatemala City – Guatemala's capital city – and surrounding municipalities including Mixco, Villa Nueva, Chinautla, and San Juan Sacatepequez. This area contains three million of the country's thirteen million inhabitants. As Rotker et al. (2002) observe for other post-conflict and post-dictatorship countries in Latin America, violence in Guatemala in the post-war period has moved increasingly to urban areas, with the Department of Guatemala, and especially the Metropolitan Area, topping the list as the most crime-ridden area. In its statistical analysis of violence in Guatemala, the United Nations Development Program found that approximately 50% of illicit activities registered in the country in recent years have been carried out in the Department of Guatemala (PNUD 2007: 16-17). Furthermore, 35% of the registered illicit activities at the national level are carried out in the municipality of Guatemala City alone (Ibid). As such, the report also indicates that, "Guatemala City is one of the most violent places in the continent" (PNUD 2007: 24).

[16] The area covering Guatemala City and neighboring municipalities, such as Mixco, Villa Nueva, Chinautla, and San Juan Sacatepequez, is commonly referred to as the Área Metropolitana de Guatemala or Área Metropolitana de la Ciudad de Guatemala (Metropolitan Area of Guatemala - AMG). However, there is some disagreement about what constitutes the AMG, with some researchers referring to the entire department of Guatemala as the AMG (Gellert 1999). In this thesis, I use the former definition as it was the one I found to be most commonly used during my fieldwork.

In addition to being the site of a large percentage of violence and crime in the country, the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala also holds a significant portion of the country's urban poor (Gellert 1999:38).[17] While the city remains the centre of political, commercial and industrial power, great segments of its population do not earn a sufficient income to cover their most basic needs (Valladares Cerezo 2003:5). According to a study of urban slums in Guatemala City, approximately 60% of the population of the Metropolitan Area can be classified as "poor" (Valladares Cerezo 2003:6). In addition, it is estimated that one third of the inhabitants of the Metropolitan Area live in precarious settlements, many without running water, drains and sewage systems (Valladares Cerezo 2003:3). Thus, Valladares Cerezo (2003) points out that in recent years the city has seen considerable horizontal expansion with peripheral commercial sub-centres, an inefficient public transport system, proliferating precarious settlements, a free market economy and a decrease in State attention to housing needs.

While representing the largest Central American economy, Guatemala's national human development indicators remain poor. While in 1989 the extreme poverty strata represented five times the proportion of the population found in a situation of 'high development', in 2004 it represented nearly ten times the same population (PNUD 2005). Malnutrition among Guatemalan children is extremely high: 64% of extremely poor and 53% of poor children suffer from malnutrition (World Bank 2003:14)[18]. Compared to other countries in Latin America, Guatemala

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[17] See appendix A for basic human development indicators in Guatemala.

[18] The World Bank (2003:7) defines the extreme poverty line as the, "yearly cost of a "food basket" that provides the minimum daily caloric requirement of 2,172" for an individual, and yields an annual

ranks poorly with respect to health indicators: life expectancy (65 years) is the lowest and infant mortality (40-45 per thousand) is the highest in Central America (Ibid.). Furthermore, literacy in Guatemala ranks far below average in Latin America. In 2000, for example, the country had an illiteracy rate of 31%, primarily represented by women, the poor and rural residents; only Nicaragua and Haiti ranked worse (World Bank 2003:63).

I selected Guatemala City and its surrounding municipalities as the focus of this doctoral study as it represents an area I discovered to be little-studied in academic analyses of the impact of war on daily life and post-war reconstruction. Literature on the consequences of wartime violence in Guatemala has tended to focus, with valid reason, on rural areas of the northwest highlands, which saw the bulk of massacres during the armed conflict (e.g., see Manz 2004; Zur 1998). However, as documented in both truth commission reports (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998), State-sponsored violence during the first two decades of the war (1960s and 1970s) had an urban character. During the period from 1954 to the late 1970s, when U.S.-sponsored counterrevolutionary forces targeted politicians, academics, students, and trade unionists (committing "selective" killings), acts of political violence were primarily committed in Guatemala City (Ball et al. 1999; CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998). For instance, Paul Kobrak (1999) documents the systematic attack by State forces on leading intellectuals in the City, particularly those affiliated to the University of San Carlos. Three of the most publicized war-time incidents – the 1980 burning of the Spanish Embassy that killed 39 K'iche' peasants (including the father of Nobel

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cost of Q.1,912.00 (approximately $248.31 U.S.). It defines the poverty line as "the extreme poverty line (the cost of food that satisfies the minimum caloric requirement) plus an allowance for non-food items" or Q.4.319.00 (approximately $560.90 U.S.) (2003:7-8).

Laureate Rigoberta Menchú), the vicious stabbing to death of anthropologist Myrna Mack Chang in 1990, and the 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi (two days after he had presented the *Nunca Más* Report outlining the horrific abuses of the Guatemalan Military) – all occurred in downtown Guatemala City. Moreover, the severity of problems of violence in Guatemala City in the post-war period signals a need to include an urban focus in analyses of the multiple effects of war on people's everyday lives and social relations in its aftermath.

Why Women?

Given the situation of insecurity and precariousness that confronts great segments of the Guatemalan population –women and men—it is a fair question to ask **why** focus on women's experiences? The relationship between anthropology and feminism has been an awkward one argues Marylin Strathern (1987). Feminist anthropology initially emerged as a response to the canon of anthropological work that treated matters as economics and politics as arenas constituted almost exclusively by the efforts of the male sex. Thus, it sought to counter this trajectory by almost exclusively focusing on women (as a universal category). Today feminist anthropology has come to take different forms. Gender studies in anthropology has a relatively short history, dating to the latter half of the twentieth century, though its prehistory can be discerned in the discipline's early concern with kinship and social reproduction. Anthropological research on issues related to gender has increased enormously since the last third of the twentieth century, propelled especially by the work of feminist anthropologists. Beginning in the 1970s, feminist anthropologists, dissatisfied with gender inequality in their own societies, began to closely examine

the ethnographic record to determine whether male dominance was a feature of all human societies. Earlier work (e.g., Rosaldo 1974) suggested that male dominance was in fact a universal. In her review of anthropological literature on gender and gender roles cross culturally, anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo argued that while anthropological research had provided evidence that there was variation in gender roles, it also has provided 'proof' that despite this variation, there existed a universal tendency for the category "man" to be afforded a higher, more prestigious value over the category "woman". Sherry Ortner (1974) suggested that male dominance was rooted in a form of cultural thinking that opposed male to female. Males were then ranked higher than females because females were universally seen as closer to nature by virtue of the fact that they gave birth and nursed their young. In contrast, Marxist feminists argued that women's subordination to men was not inevitable but could be connected to the rise of private property and the emergence of the state (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako 1982).

In the 1960s and 1970s a concern regarding the universal differences between women and men dominated anthropological studies of gender (e.g., Rosaldo 1974; Ortner 1974). However, in the 1980s another body of literature emerged aimed at giving expression the experiences of dominated women and other minorities, especially in the Global South. A number of writers from the Global South (e.g, Abu-Lughod 1993; Spivak 1988) have insisted that there is no universal referent for the abstract category of "woman" and that, to the contrary, those named as women are subjects whose lives are determined by complex webs of political, economic, and cultural forces. Therefore factors such as race, class, geographical

location or personal trajectories make the experience of being woman, and for that matter men, diverse and heterogenous. As Mathew Guttman (1996:27), who has examined what it means to be a man, "*ser hombre*", for men and women in a *colonia popular* of Mexico City, indicates,

> categories that posit static differences in the male and female populations—the drunks, the loving mothers, the wife beaters, the machos, the sober family men, the submissive women—hinder one's efforts more than they assist them. Gender identities, roles, and relations do not remain frozen in place, either for individuals or for groups. There is continuous contest and confusion over what constitutes male identity; it means different things to different people at different times. And sometimes different things to the same person at the same time.

For comparative gender studies within anthropology, the implications of the increased acknowledgement that the categories "man" and "woman" are not only constructed, but often work to obscure the heterogeneity contained within them, have been enormous. If the categories are unstable, perhaps they suggest that there are not comparable boundable communities of women whose experiences can be described and then compared. Thus, there has been a shift from a tendency to universalize women's experiences to the study of gender in particular geographic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, studies such as Gutmann's (1990) on the construction of masculinities are increasingly appearing; these illustrate the ways in which identities (including gender) are socially constructed, fluid, and negotiated.

Feminist scholars have recently pointed out that the study of gender is not the exclusive study of women, but rather a particular epistemology that examines how gender roles themselves are constructed and how gender identities (man, woman or

otherwise) interact with our other identifications such as ethnic background, class, geographical location, sexual orientation and so forth. In Guatemala, both men and women face a situation of generalized insecurity and quotidian violence. However, I am interested in the particular ways in which this situation is lived and experienced by women, recognizing that their experiences may be diverse. I examine their experiences, not because they are the only ones affected by violence, but rather to understand some of the specific *ways* that violence affects women's lives and constructs their gendered identity as women. Furthermore, women are disproportionately victims of certain forms of violence which, due to the often private nature of these forms of violence and the social stigma attached to them, are less visible (e.g., sexual abuse, domestic violence and rape). These forms of gender-based violence (GBV) sometimes are not considered violence by everyone, for instance when they occur in the context of marriage.[19] Thus women's voices are often silenced or women opt for silence in the face of impunity and fear of retaliation for coming forth to denounce crimes against them. What is more, State institutions work with andro-centric (and racist) models and attitudes.

Methodology

The arguments in this thesis draw on 12 months of fieldwork conducted in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area. I took a preliminary fieldwork trip to Guatemala in the summer of 2005 for six weeks. Initially this thesis was intended as a study of the ongoing psychosocial consequences of war through a focus on mental health effects

[19] Until a few years ago, the Guatemalan legal system did not consider rape a punishable crime if it occurred within the context of marriage. Article 200 of the Guatemalan Penal Code, which established that criminal responsibility for rape could be waived where the victim was over 12 years old and the perpetrator married the victim was only suspended in 2005 (Amnesty International 2007).

of the conflict for surviving victims of the conflict. However, my doctoral pre-fieldwork in 2005 altered the course of this thesis, as I was struck by the number of news stories especially of cases of murdered women in Guatemala that I was constantly hearing and reading about. During this early period of fieldwork, I accompanied NGO workers who were involved in a project on sexual violence against women during the armed conflict, and sat in on a couple of sessions they held with women in a village of Izabal. The combination of hearing testimonies of past violence, with constant reports of violence toward women and men in present-day Guatemala, brought me to an interest in the intersections of contemporary post-war processes of violence, how the past and present are inter-related, and what these junctures might signify for women in Guatemala today.

When I returned to Canada following this preliminary research trip, I began to put together a proposal for the present project on current problems of violence in post-war Guatemala and their impact on the daily existence of women in the urban context of Guatemala City. The bulk of the data presented in this dissertation was collected throughout the year 2007 when I returned to Guatemala for fieldwork; I spent ten months between February and December of that year in Guatemala. I returned to Guatemala a year later, for one month in December 2008, and I was able to reestablish contact with certain research participants, a year following my initial departure.

Ethnographic, qualitative methodologies served as the principle research methods in this project. Participation observation was a particularly important research method throughout this project: I immersed myself in everyday life in

Guatemala City, and spent time with women, and their families, in their homes throughout the urban area. I engaged in informal conversations that provided insights on issues of concern in their lives, which could later be addressed in formal interviews. Simply spending time chatting about current events and observing the interactions of women with their families also added a rich texture to the narratives they offered in the context of interviews. Indeed participant observation allowed a space to explore the many layers and "webs of significance" that, Clifford Geertz (1973) writes ought to concern anthropologists in their aim for "thick description" as the object of ethnography.

In addition to participant observation, this research consisted of interviewing women who resided, worked, studied, or otherwise carried out their daily activities in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area. I conducted forty structured and/or semi-structured interviews with women throughout the Metropolitan Area as well as engaged in countless informal discussions. As with participant observation, informal, unstructured interviews and conversations tended to offer in-depth, rich information that complemented interviews through further clarifying and/or exposing gaps and contradictions in the content of narratives and practice, and from which deeper understanding could be gleaned. A central objective was to include the perspectives and experiences of a broad cross-section of women. To this end, I conducted interviews with a range of both indigenous and non-indigenous (*ladina*)[20] women—including women not aligned to any particular institution—ranging in age

[20]In Guatemala, the term *Ladino/a* is used to refer to European descendents or (usually) to persons of mixed Mayan and Spanish ancestry. Sometimes the term is used interchangeably with *Mestizo/a.* In Chapter 2 I discuss in more detail the construction of ethnic identities and their intersection with gender and class in Guatemala.

from twenty to forty-five years, all of whom resided in the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala. While research participants were almost evenly indigenous and *ladina*, the majority were of lower socio-economic status. However, I also interviewed certain professional, middle-class women including activists, human rights workers, as well as government and NGO employees, and other professionals whose work was related to, in broad terms, advancing women's rights and, specifically, aiding women in situations of violence. Interviews were conducted with personel from institutions including: the Guatemalan Women's Group (*Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres,* GGM), Survivors Foundation (*Fundación Sobrevivientes*), Presidential Secretariat for Women (*Secretaría Presidencial de la Mujer*), National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violence Within the Family and Against Women (*Coordinadora Nacional para la Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar y Contra las Mujeres*, CONAPREVI), Human Rights Ombudsman Office (*Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos* , PDH), Indigenous Women's Rights Office (*Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena* DEMI), Program for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Within the Family (*Programa de Prevención y Erradicación de la Violencia Intrafamiliar,* PROPEVI), and the Centre for Comprehensive Attention to Abused Women (*Centro Integral de Atención a Mujeres Maltratadas,* CIAMM).

Entering "the field" was facilitated by contacts established through previous research and personal trips to Guatemala, as well as my personal connection to the country as a Guatemalan. Nonetheless, given the nature of my research and the fact that I was exploring personal, and often painful, experiences and memories, I encountered the challenges any ethnographer, Guatemalan or otherwise would likely

confront. For instance, I was faced with the challenge of finding the appropriate means of gaining the trust of research participants in order for them to feel comfortable participating in the study and sharing difficult experiences of violence. During the early stages of my fieldwork I often felt unsure about how to proceed with the research. I frequently wondered, for example, how I would get women to open up about private matters, such as violence within their families, or even acts of violence perpetrated by an outsider against a family member. Given the nearly 40 years of armed confrontation that took place in Guatemala, a period that saw "selective" as well as indiscriminate violence committed largely against a civilian population, distrust is not uncommon among many Guatemalans. And, there are also many ethical questions surrounding the study of violence, particularly regarding the possibilities of researchers opening up 'wounds' and then leaving research participants to deal alone with any pain that might result (e.g., see Cvetkovich 2003; Atlani and Rousseau 2000).

Partly as a means of facilitating my process of gaining access to interviewees and of gaining their trust, during my initial months in Guatemala I sat in on a woman's support group run by a Guatemala City-based institution, Fuerzas,[21] that supports families of murdered women and victims of domestic and other forms of violence. Although my research project is concerned primarily with the lives and experiences of women, I also conducted informal interviews with men in order to understand more fully the implications of violence on women's lives and the specific gendered effects of violence on both women and men.

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[21] I have used a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of staff and clients who participated in my research.

During the final phase of the research, I became affiliated with the University of San Carlos' Centre for Psychosocial Support to Victims of Political Violence (*Centro de Atención Psicosocial para Víctimas de Violencia Política*, CAPVIPO) and joined them in their weekly visits to an *asentamiento* (slum settlement/shanty town) in the municipality of Villa Nueva on the outskirts of Guatemala City. This community was composed of survivors of the armed conflict, including a large proportion of war widows who were among the 1.5 million people internally displaced by war. I conducted participant observation and interviews with women from the community, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

Finally, I collected secondary sources throughout my fieldwork research to provide further context to the data gathered from interviews and from participating and observing life in Guatemala City. These included documents, texts and other representations of life in Guatemala, such as newspaper articles and national studies conducted on violence and gender by government and civil institutions (such as those listed above).

Ethical Considerations in the Study of Violence Against Women

Until fairly recently, anthropologists have tended to ignore the study of violence: the bulk of anthropological work on the subject has been produced from the late 1970s onward. Moreover, within the anthropology of violence, violence directed at women specifically due to their female gender has seldom been the subject of study. One explanation offered for this omission is that anthropologists do not wish to be accused of being ethnocentric and of passing negative judgements on the practices, customs, and beliefs of "others" (Merry 2001). Additionally, there are

methodological challenges to studying violence toward women. For instance, secrecy often accompanies certain forms of violence such as domestic violence and sexual assault, complicating the task of the researcher (Ellsberg et. al 2001).

Conducting an ethnography of violence, as I discovered, is a necessarily complicated endeavor. Not only is the researcher faced with the practical challenges of keeping her/his research subjects, as well as him/herself safe, but there are many ethical questions begged by the research process, which must be taken seriously and inform the research at all stages. On the one hand, the qualitative research methodologies that have come to be a signature feature of socio-cultural anthropology lend themselves to valuable, nuanced and layered analyses of the complex consequences of state terror, violence, and war. On the other, ethnographic contexts of mass violence challenge some of the most fundamental premises of an ethnographic approach. For instance, what might participant observation of violence entail when neither participating in nor simply passively observing violence are acceptable options?

Ethical issues in the study of violence are woven into the different chapters of this dissertation, as I have been forced to grapple with them throughout the research and writing phases of the dissertation. For example, how ethical it is (in the crudest sense) to build a career based on the lives and suffering of others? This has been a key question of much debate within the anthropology of social suffering, as researchers (e.g. Kleinman and Kleinman 1995) have raised criticisms of the “professionalization” and “appropriation” of suffering by academia, humanitarian organizations and the media by means of the mobilization of images and the circulation of papers of trauma.

While the role of researchers of violence is debated, these researchers are also in the position to speak out against human rights abuses and the toll of violence and war. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992; 1995) argues that cultural relativism, read as moral relativism, is no longer acceptable; she insists that anthropology, if it is going to make valuable contributions to the study of humanity, must be ethically grounded. Anthropologists, Scheper-Hughes (1995:419) argues, "as witnesses are accountable for what they see and what they fail to see, how they act and how they fail to act in critical situations". The perspective of cultural relativism can provide anthropologists with the lens for a more nuanced analysis of experiences of social injustice and suffering; it does not mean, however, that the anthropologist must uncritically accept these process in the lives of peoples they work with. In his evocative work on political violence in Sri Lanka, Valentine Daniel (1996) expresses his desire to find an appropriate way to write about violence that, on the one hand, neither gives into the desire to shock, nor, on the other hand, normalizes or sanitizes that violence through its theorizing. As such, Daniel rejects an approach to violence that locates it in particular places and peoples. To this end, he titles his own work an "anthropography of violence" rather than "ethnography of violence", "because to have called it the latter would have been to parochialize violence, to attribute and limit violence to a particular people and place" (1996:7). Daniel maintains that violence is an issue universally human, although by no means a quality of human nature or of certain "peoples". In other words, it is sadly a part of the human condition (Daniel 1996:9), and as such, a subject deserving of our attention. I address problems of violence in Guatemala in this dissertation not because these are

unique or intrinsic to Guatemala (or any region), but to illuminate the particular relations of power, cultural ideals, and institutional and individual practices that make violence proliferate.

Thesis Organization

This dissertation is composed of three parts. The first part of the dissertation (Chapters 1 and 2) exposes the current social and political climate in Guatemala. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 of the dissertation provides a brief historical sketch of Guatemala's Metropolitan Area, highlighting key themes—namely patterns of class, ethnic and gender segregation as well as structural inequalities and violence—that frame the dissertation's analysis of life in post-war Guatemala City.

After presenting the historical and contemporary social and political context of Guatemala City in the first part of the dissertation, in the second part (Chapters 3 and 4) I shift the discussion to community, family and individual experiences of violence and fear in today's Guatemalan Metropolitan Area. Chapter 3 provides an "on-the-ground" examination of the lives of women existing in the shadows of war in today's urban Guatemala. Of particular interest are the dynamic intersections between collective social memories of war and individual memories and narrations. I examine certain key narratives, of both women who experienced violence of war directly and those who were indirectly affected by it, in order to explore how (or not) their experiences of life and fear in the city today are formed and reconstituted by their individual and collective memories of war.

Chapter 4 centeres on the phenomenon of femicide and specific gender-based of violence against women. For instance, I draw on ethnographic examples involving the experiences of families dealing with the repercussions of gender-based violence against a family member (in one case the murder (femicide) of a 19-year old woman), women confronting domestic abuse in their homes and fear of assault outside of the home, and the experiences of indigenous women survivors of sexual assaults and the massacres of their communities during the armed conflict. Through presenting an array of cases pointing to the multi-faceted nature and entangled processes of violence in which Guatemalan wo/men must carry out their daily lives, I hope to elucidate the more insidious effects of violence – the "long arm" of violence (Menjívar 2008) – lost in approaches that treat the phenomenon as a bounded event. Chapter 4 also offers a critical reading of the various "official" positions – namely, that of the government, the media, NGOs, and the scholarly community – on the issue of femicide in Guatemala. I am concerned in Chapter 4 with what happens to the lives, experiences, and voices of women in the official discussions and debates surrounding femicide in Guatemala today.

The third section of this dissertation (Chapters 5 and 6) addresses "responses to violence", that is, how women actively make a life for themselves in the midst of crime, violence, and fear, whether in political forms through activism or in subtler acts of agency (see for e.g., Mahmood 2005). In Chapter 5 I examine women's political engagement and activism against gender-based violence as well as State programs for addressing the issue. In this vein I trace the development of a legal and institutional framework for addressing violence in women's lives. I highlight the role

of international and local forces, such as the efforts of the Guatemalan women's movement in the post-war period, in pushing judicial reform and the creation of institutions and services for assisting women in need of support. Moreover, I draw special attention to the gaps between institutional responses for addressing violence in the lives of women, and women's everyday experiences and agency in carving out social spaces to resist distinct forms of violence in their lives, whether within their families and/or on the streets.

Chapter 6 of the dissertation focuses on the resources women draw upon in reconstructing their lives amidst a "multidimensionality of systems of subordination" (Forster 1999:58) where political, structural, economic, interpersonal and symbolic violence intersect (Menjívar 2008), and synergetically manifest themselves in their everyday experiences. For example, I examine women's humor and other strategies and sources of strength and support for women, their everyday means for going on (*salir adelante,* "get ahead", "succeed"), including those acts of agency not necessarily expressed in feminist protest politics (Mahmood 2005). Finally, this Chapter brings the various thematic threads of the dissertation together, pointing to directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

GUATEMALA CITY: BRIEF HISTORY OF URBAN FORMATION, VIOLENCE & SEGREGATION

Before the justification was "you are not going out because you are a woman". Now, mothers with good reason say, "you can't go out because you could be raped, you could be killed". Last month in my colonia there were two or three killings in one week. Imagine in one week!

-Ana, 30 year-old resident of Guatemala City

Living in the barrio *El Limón,* one of the countless so-called 'red zones' of Guatemala City with a reputation of intense gang activity and crime, thirty year-old Ana, a Mayan K'iche' woman, fears for her safety every day. Each morning as she gets on the *camioneta* to travel to her workplace, she is uncertain whether she will make it to work and return home safely at night without incident. For Ana, like many residents of Guatemala City and adjacent municipalities, fears that she may be robbed, assaulted, injured, or killed at any moment are not unfounded. As one of the most dangerous cities in the Americas today, everyday life in Guatemala City is marked by the constant fear and threat of assault, and the uncertainty of where an attack might come from –a particular individual who 'seems odd' on the bus or who appears to be a gang member perhaps, the driver of the vehicle with tinted windows in the car behind, or the stranger one might encounter when shopping in the market or traveling home from school or work. For Ana, an indigenous woman who wears a *traje* ('traditional', indigenous dress)*,* being visibly indigenous in a city that conceives itself as a ladino city, her experience in urban Guatemala cannot be disentangled from her ethnic, class and gender positioning.

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of Guatemala City[22], the ethnographic context of this dissertation. By examining historical patterns of segregation and violence, particularly on the basis of 'race' and ethnicity, class, and gender throughout the formation of Guatemala's capital we are able to see violence as a process embedded in particular relations of power, instead of merely the outcome of individual action or as an event removed from everyday life and social relations. I discuss the founding of the capital city in the 16th century, and highlight how the establishment of Guatemala City relied on the violent expulsion of indigenous peoples from their territories and the exploitation of their labor, the construction of the "two republics", Spanish and Indian, as well as a particular race-class-gender ideology which, as I will illustrate, is still present in today's Guatemala. Also of interest are the periods of urban expansion and growth (1950s to the present), the City's role during Guatemala's 36 year-long internal armed conflict, and current problems of urban violence and poverty in neo-liberal post-war Guatemala. While urban violence affects all sectors of the area's population, experiences of violence are not uniform. Class, ethnic and gender social locations are among the factors influencing people's very experiences of violence and fear. For instance, feminist scholars argue that cities where crime figures prominently and discourses of fear circulate more readily pose challenges for the exercise of women's full citizenship rights (e.g., see Wilson 1991). Women, and other groups, such as

[22] This chapter presents aspects of the formation and recent history of Guatemala City that are relevant to the arguments advanced in this dissertation. For a more comprehensive reading of the City's history see for example, Bravo (2007) Camus (2002), Caplow (1949), Few (2002), Gellert and Palma (1999), Gellert and Pinto Soria (1992), Lutz (1994), O'Neill (2010).

minorities or children, for example, do not necessarily have full access to certain streets and urban spaces (Wilson 1991:8).

A central aim of this chapter, then, is to illustrate some of the long-standing structural factors behind processes of violence today. Enduring legacies of State violence and military power as well as economic and social inequalities, combined with political and cultural ideologies that work to justify violence towards marginalized segments of the country's populations, are at the core of Guatemala's post-war violence. In the context of neo-liberal globalization, expressions of violence take on different forms: however, neo-liberal reforms may be seen as amplifying an underlying condition of inequality that makes violence in the country proliferate.

Founding of Guatemala City: Colonization of Indigenous Peoples & the Establishment of "Two Republics"

Present-day Guatemala City –Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción[23], located in the Valle de las Vacas ("Valley of the Cows", also known as Valle de la Ermita) – was founded in 1776. The valley is surrounded by mountains and the major volcanoes Pacaya, Agua, Acatenango and Fuego, making the Guatemala City skyline – at least on a clear day – very picturesque. Valle de las Vacas, however, is only the latest home of Guatemala's capital, since the founding of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción came after several shifts in location of the capital city due to a series

[23] In this thesis, I use the official name "Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción" interchangeably with Guatemala City.

of earthquakes and fears of further natural disasters during Guatemala's colonial period (1524 to 1821).

The creation of the capital city itself constituted a violent process, with the usurpation of indigenous territory by Spanish colonizers. In particular, the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado led the takeover of the Iximche territory belonging to Cakchiquel indigenous peoples. Colonization was not an uncontested process, as indigenous peoples resisted domination and control in various forms, whether through uprisings or in their everyday practice within a colonial social order (see for eg., Few 2002; Lovell 2005; Lutz 1994; Martínez Paláez 1970). Gisela Gellert (1992:6) indicates that as a direct result of Cakchiquel uprising the city was moved several times, the final setting being the Valle de Almolonga at the foot of the volcano Agua (today known today as Ciudad Vieja). However, the Valle de Almolonga would not last long as the capital city, as in 1541 this settlement was destroyed by a huge flood and mud flow originating from the nearby volcano Agua. This natural disaster led to the establishment in 1543 of another new capital, the present Antigua Guatemala (Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala) (Stadel Nd.:2).

From 1543 to 1773 – most of Guatemala's colonial period – Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala served as the capital city. In wealth and in size Santiago de los Caballeros was the "third city" of the New World after Mexico City and Lima (Caplow 1949:116). Today Santiago de los Caballeros is celebrated as among, if not *the* most, "beautiful" and "tranquil" of Guatemalan cities. The city, scattered with ruins of buildings destroyed during the earthquake, and the main destination for

thousands of tourists who visit Guatemala every year, retains its colonial architecture and cobblestone streets.

The seeds of racist ideologies and practices, and an unequal class system where land-holdings and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a small elite, were sown during Guatemala's colonial period. This was enabled partly through the division of physical space as colonial officials worked toward the establishment of "two republics", Indian and Spanish. The "two republics" policy was the result of royal directives, and was ostensibly aimed at "protecting" Indians from Spanish abuses as well as to facilitate the collection of tribute and forced labour (Few 2002; Lutz 1994). Martha Few argues that the move to divide society into two republics reflected official Spanish racial and social hierarchies and reinforced the political realities of daily life under colonial rule (Few 2002:17).

Racial hierarchies were also reinforced by means of use of space. Hegemonic control of society through the use and ordering of space has long been a strategy of States (Schirmer 1994). As Jennifer Schirmer points out,

> Although state power is delineated by laws, codes, and institutions, it is also articulated spatially by way of its stately buildings; its orderly, gridlike streets; and, most saliently, the strict uniformity of its military garrisons and bases. These ordered spaces and monumental buildings exist, to some extent, so that we may know where the state begins and where it ends. (1994:186)

The very creation of cities and the design of their streets, buildings and neighborhoods serve as instruments of order and regulation (Ibid.). Following a typical pattern replicated across colonial Latin America, the new Spanish inhabitants of the Guatemala's capital quickly settled in large houses near the central plaza, houses built with Indian labour. "Indian barrios", legally recognized entities, were pushed to the

outskirts and subsequently came to encircle the Spanish core (see Camus 2002; Few 2002; Lutz 1994). Indigenous peoples who lived in these barrios had their own institutions of local government as well as religious brotherhoods (*cofradías*), overseen by parish priests and other colonial officials. In return, Indian officials ensured that the inhabitants of their barrios complied with tribute and forced labor requirements (Few 2002; Lutz 1994; Martínez Peláez 1970).

An independent nation since 1821, today Guatemala conceives of itself, in official terms, as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual society where, at least at the level of state ideology, Guatemala's ethnic heterogeneity is celebrated. The 1996 Peace Accords were a turning point in the area of cultural rights of indigenous peoples in the country, particularly with the negotiation and signing of the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous People. Among other things, the accord stipulated respect for the language and customs of distinct Mayan ethnic groups, and indicated that, "[t]he development of the national culture is therefore inconceivable without recognition and promotion of the culture of the indigenous peoples" (Article 3.2). The same year Guatemala ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.[24] Furthermore, legislation was passed in 2002 to protect indigenous languages and provide money for bilingual education (UNHCR 2008).

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[24] As is the case with many government-ratified agreements including the Peace Agreements of 1996, the Guatemalan government has not enforced ILO Convention 169 and, in fact, has violated it. For example, several Mayan communities and organizations are calling for the immediate suspension of all mining activities taking place on Mayan land–including Goldcorp's Marlin Mine – precisely on the grounds that it violates ILO convention 169. This is particularly due to the lack of a proper consultation process with indigenous communities regarding the use of their lands (see, for e.g., Mining Watch 2007).

Despite the officially-celebrated multiculturalism of the Guatemalan nation-state and the heterogeneity of Guatemalan peoples, the “two republics” racial ideology that sedimented during the colonial era, is still pervasive in contemporary Guatemala. However, as the next section shows, the “two republics” were never neatly bounded to begin with and their borders constantly had to be policed and reinforced, as they do today (see for e.g., Nelson 1999). While colonial governance and ideology planted the seeds of the two republic ideology (composed of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples), it also gave birth to a complex race-gender-class ideology that has permeated Guatemalan society until the present day, complicating any simple binary conceptualizations of the nation. For example, in her examination of race-class-gender ideologies in Guatemala from the colonial era to the present, Carol Smith (1995:729) underscores how European beliefs about inheritance (in its material, biological, and cultural senses) are the key element linking race, class, culture and nation to gender. In her words,

> In Western ideology, a person’s race, class, and culture are thought to be more clearly inherited from women than from men because it is assumed that women’s uncontrolled sexual lusts will make paternity muddy or uncertain. Europeans institutionalized these concerns about patrilineal inheritance with particular kinds of sexual controls and marital arrangements. [….] they created separate roles for wives and concubines, controlling the sexuality of each (and the progeny of each) in different ways. As colonialists, moreover, Europeans linked different marriage and mating patterns to women of different classes, races, and national origins in such a way as to maintain separate hierarchies for different races, classes, and cultures. [….] Women thus became the key icons around which a modern nation or culture would be built in cultural, biological, and material terms. (Smith 1995:729-730)

Guatemalan elites today still consider themselves as belonging to the white ‘race’ (Smith 1995:733). In her book *Guatemala: Linaje y Racismo,* Guatemalan historian Marta Casaús (1992) traces the lineage and marriage practices of elite families in Guatemala from the colonial period to the present, exposing how these families held on tenaciously to an ideal racial purity. Casaús explains how elites who often trace their descent back to European ancestors, attempt to hold onto their “whiteness” through building cultural and marriage links to what they consider to be “whiter” regions of the world such as Europe and the United States. Further, while members of wealthy elite groups throughout history in Guatemala have taken indigenous or mulata lovers, rarely have they made such women their wives, a practice with its roots in colonialism. Citing Guatemalan historian Severo Martínez Peláez, Carol Smith writes how during the colonial period,

> The Indian woman was not simply fertilized by the Spaniard or the creole. Whether she was raped, deceived, bribed, seduced, or persuaded…the fundamental condition of the relationship that occurred between Spanish men and Indian women was, after all, the superiority of the colonizer over the native—not only the pretention of superiority but effective superiority in terms of economic and social advantage. […] [T]he Indian woman was not the wife of the Spaniard or the creole who occasionally or regurlarly possessed her. She was rather his Indian concubine (his *barragana* in the judicial lexicon of the era), which in this context meant his extramarital servant supplying the commodity of sex. (Smith 1995:731-732)

Casaús illustrates in her work how race, class and gender in Guatemala have become intricately entangled. For instance racism towards indigenous and “darker” Guatemalans works to reinforce a hierarchical class structure, one in which men and women are ascribed particular roles based on their gender. Hence upper class men

might be permitted or even be expected to have extra-marital affairs with women of a different 'race' and class, while an unmarried young, upper class, woman's sexuality is closely monitored due to the prevailing insistence on premarital virginity.

Gender and class, and the unstable aspects of identity itself, challenged the consolidation of the two republics in Guatemala at the same time as the two republic ideology challenged the consolidation of a unified nation. In this way then, the "ethnic question" acts as an "irritant" for a nation-building project in post-war Guatemala (Nelson 1999). After nearly forty years of political strife, which saw the State carry out genocidal violence against thousands of indigenous peoples, Guatemala has emerged as a wounded nation. These wounds are regarded by ladinos as only re- opened by the provocations of Mayan cultural rights activism (Ibid.). Nation, ethnicity, gender and class interpenetrate in Guatemala in ways that render rigid classifications of identity problematic and incomplete. Each is formed in relation to the others (Ibid.).

Urbanization and the Emergence of a Multi-Ethnic Capital

Santiago de los Caballeros was almost completely destroyed by a disastrous earthquake in 1773, resulting in yet another move of the capital to a presumably more secure site in the northern part of Valle de las Vacas (Stadel 1973:2).[25] Among

[25] There are various dates given for the move to Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción (1773, 1775, 1776). What I gather from the literature is that following the 1773 earthquake that devastated Santiago de los Caballeros, the process of relocating the capital took over two years, with the official authorization from the Spanish crown and move taking place near the end of 1775 or early 1976 (e.g. see, Gellert 1992: 9).

the rationales given by colonizers for the move was that the city would be further away from volcanoes and thus less likely to suffer as a result of natural disasters (Gellert 1992:8). However, as Gellert points out, the economic elites also saw potential economic gains from moving the country's capital to the Valle de las Vacas region (Ibid.).[26]

In the process of establishing the new capital city, previous practices of expropriation of indigenous lands and exploitation of their labour were once again put into practice by colonial authorities. Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, what remains today as the capital, was built on the Mayan city of Kaminal Juyu (Camus 2002:60). Today the ruins of Kaminal Juyu sit in the middle of a bustling residential area with tall shopping centres, such as Tikal Futura and Centro Comercial Miraflores, in sight. With the takeover of Kaminal Juyu, colonial authorities forced indigenous peoples to move to the surrounding areas of the new urban centre (Camus 2002:59). Like Santiago, Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción was built according to the colonial structure common to Hispanic cities, with a central plaza, including a park in the centre and government buildings and a Church encircling it.

Three years after the move, the population of the new city had grown to 11,000 residents, whereas the population of Santiago dropped to 12,500 (Gellert 1992:9) from the almost 40,000 inhabitants it had reached prior to being destroyed by the earthquake (Few 2002:22). During early years after the founding of the city, the racial segregation of Spaniards and Indians was strongly marked. The centre of the

[26] Gellert (1992:8) explains that in the pre-colonial period, as a result of its favourable climatic conditions, this area was used for the cultivation of sugar cane, wheat and for ranching activities.

city surrounding the Plaza Mayor was taken by Spanish colonizers and the indigenous populations, who were crucial for providing the labour force that would ensure the city's functioning, were forced to settle into surrounding and neighboring, marginal barrios (Gellert 1992:7; Lutz 1994). The central area was reserved for political, economic, and religious elites (Bravo 2007:174), while indigenous peoples who worked as artisans, construction and domestic workers, and vendors were pushed to the margins (Camus 2002:60). Marginal *barrios* for groups deemed of "low" social status such as the poor and indigenous peoples are thus not a new phenomenon.

Despite their efforts to enforce the two republics policy, city planners did not consider setting aside a physical space for the *mestizos* who had been growing in numbers since the early colonial period. *Mestizaje* (racial and cultural mixing)[27] intensified beginning in the 1550s and continued throughout the colonial period (Few, 2002:22). During the initial years of the conquest in Guatemala, *mestizo* was a term applied to persons of mixed Spanish and Indigenous ancestry. However, as the "first" generation of *mestizos* reached adulthood and Spanish colonizers brought in African slaves[28] a new ethnic and racial component ("black") was brought into the mix. Martínez Peláez explains that,

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[27]While referring to a process of cultural and racial mixing, the concept of *mestizaje,* like other categories of race, ethnicity and identity, is wrought with contradictions and ambiguities. In various countries of Latin America, mestizaje has been used as "the hegemonic idiom of nation building", where a nation's indigenous roots (or African heritage in the case of Cuba and Brazil) are celebrated alongside the privileging of the "white" (European-related) mestizo (Hale 2005:12). Particular to Guatemala, the term *Ladino* is used as a synonym of mestizo (Smith 1990:72). During the colonial period the term Ladino was used to refer to people or groups of people who were neither Indians, Spaniards, nor criollos (Martínez Peláez 2009:155).

[28]Slaves from Africa were brought by Alvarado in 1524, and were regularly sent to Guatemala on a small scale until the 1580s, and sporadically until the early 1700s (Few 2002:20).

> From unions between the three basic racial types – Spaniards, Indians, and Africans – emerged three basic types of mestizo: first, the offspring of a Spaniard and an Indian, properly called "mestizo"; second, the offspring of a Spaniard and an African, termed a "mulato"; and finally, the child of an African and an Indian, called a "zambo". Spaniards or criollos, Indians, Africans, mestizos, mulattoes, and zambos thereafter produced an infinite number of ethnic combinations, all of which proliferated and formed the middle strata [forming the "castas", which] …. had an advantage over Indians since they did not have to pay tribute. Furthermore, they were free to live wherever they wished, or could hire out their labor to whomever they pleased. Compared to the Spanish and the criollos, however, castas were at a disadvantage because they did not have access to public office and were barred from certain occupations. (2009:154).

The emergence of a multiethnic population, which began to outnumber the population of the Spaniards, and the growth in an illegal trade network in the late seventeenth century that created connections between minority groups, raised fears among the Spanish of an uprising by castas and Indians (Few 2002:26; Lutz 1994:44). Consequently, colonial officials enacted a series of laws intended to contain the growing numbers of castas, Indians, Black, mulato and poor Spanish populations, including the banning of these groups from carrying weapons and the establishment of Spanish-managed patrols (*rondas*) to monitor casta neighborhoods (Ibid.).

The social transformations brought on by the changing demographics of Santiago created a blurred social landscape that saw women, especially casta, Black, and Indian women, entering the informal economy and participating in popular religious life (Few 2002:28). In the seventeenth century, many poor Spanish, casta, Black, and Indian women legally and illegally participated in the local economy, for instance as peddlers, seamstresses, laundresses, market sellers, servants, and shop

owners. Women came to dominate some trades, mostly those having to do with food distribution and preparation, such as *panaderas* (bakers), *tortilleras* (tortilla makers) and *revendedoras* (resellers) of beef, running market stalls in plazas throughout the city, and managing small shops in their own homes (Few 2002:24).

As a result, colonial authorities enacted laws to control women's growing economic participation by defining as illegal certain activities of women such as selling meat (Few 2002:28). Furthermore, during the Inquisition in Guatemala, the Catholic Church targeted, imprisoned and killed, indigenous, *mestiza, mulata,* and Black women healers and midwives, accusing them of performing witchcraft and sorcery. The Inquisition aimed to curb women's power through punishing them for possessing the very capacities that were a source of their power (e.g., the ability to heal). Inquisition authorities paid special attention to these *"mujeres de mal vivir"* (women who live evil lives) imprisoning them for their supposed cultural and religious deviancy (Few 2002:28-29).

Women healers, whose power was both admired and feared, tended to be lower-class castas. Thus, efforts by colonial powers to curb women's healing practices constituted an attack on them on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and class (Ibid.). As Nelson (1999) aptly points out, gender, class, ethnic, and national identities are always formed in articulation, one never existing prior to or without the other. Colonial rule in Guatemala operated precisely through the nexus of ethnicity, class and gender.

Few argues that in this period, secular and religious authorities not only began to crack down on women's illicit economic activities, but also to define

women's social and cultural behavior in particular ways (Ibid.). For instance, women in Santiago were told in Church services to refrain from wearing the "low-cut" (*escotes*) dresses that were popular at the time (Ibid). Colonial authorities also expressed alarm at the "inappropriate behavior" of *damas de sociedad* (elite women) and their slaves in church, such as drinking hot chocolate during church service.

Ethnic and cultural 'mixings' effectively challenged the "two republic" policy, yet racial segregation persisted, though in different forms. The Spanish elites remained in the city centre, but increasingly shared this space with non-elite Spaniards and mestizos. Indigenous persons remained in the extra-urban spaces encircling the centre (Camus 2002:59). Increased 'multi-racial' mixings and the emergence of a multi-ethnic capital, combined with women's significant involvement in economic activities and public roles (for instance, as healers and midwives), challenged the colonial social and political order, which established a division between the Spanish and Indian and relegated women's social roles to providing sexually and biologically to men and their respective collectivities. Women carved out social spaces and cultivated different sources of economic and social power at the same time that colonial authorities worked to suppress them.

Modernization and "Ladinización"

In 1821, four decades after the founding of Guatemala City in the Valle de la Hermita, its present location, Guatemala gained its official independence from Spain. However, the racist, classist, and sexist ideologies and practices that had become deeply entrenched in Guatemalan society during the colonial period persisted through its transition to independence and even afterwards. For instance, in

her analysis of justice and gender in rural Guatemala between 1936 and 1956, Cindy Forster (1999) highlights the class and racial violence in the country that often paralleled incidents of sexual violence. Using as her historical referent court cases of instances of rape of women and infanticide during the dictatorship of General Jorge Ubico (1931-1944) and the subsequent democratic revolution (1944-1954), Foster highlights patriarchal, as well as class and racial biases that underpinned legal proceedings and rulings, and thereby contributed to the routinization of violence against certain groups of persons. Forster highlights how in a historical period marked by struggle over land – when class and racial identities tightly intertwined as "elite fears of class war were expressed in racial language" (1999:56) – sexual violence against poor and indigenous women did not count in official terms as violence. Indigenous women and women from lower socio-economic social strata were deemed dishonourable, and in some cases even "bad women" (*mujeres malas*) by virtue of their social positioning, and thus their "morality" could not be defended in court. Forster cites cases where even documented physical proof of assault was not enough to convict an assailant. Forster points out that the social revolution of 1944 brought about changes in social attitudes towards rape and other forms of violence against women. Civil society was less willing to condone violence against women after 1944, stemming in part from the new discourse of social equality between 1944 and 1954 (Forster 1999:60). Forster argues that the numbers of rape cases brought to trial increased in this period. However, most men charged were never imprisoned or otherwise punished.

As I note in Chapter 4 though a close examination of the current phenomenon of femicide, violence in Guatemala continues to operate today and becomes “naturalized” through the construction of certain groups—for example indigenous peoples, women, the poor, and street youth—as either “threatening” or “responsible” for violence perpetrated on them. Similar to the findings of Pine (2008) in her analysis of violence, neo-liberalism and subjectivity in Honduras, structural violence in Guatemala has relied historically on symbolic violence where violence against certain groups is constructed by those in position of power as legitimate if not “deserved” by its victims. Symbolic violence, however, has an even deeper effect when its targets or the “subordinated” accept the conditions of their suffering or violence enacted against them: “it is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004:272). Thus in Guatemala, for instance, when the poor accept the murder of a street youth or of a working class woman, because “who knows what they were involved in” (*saber en que andaba metido/a*) symbolic violence is present, as the poor become complicit, either through active support, passive acceptance or even indifference, toward violence committed against “their own”. Furthermore, though it was never completely actualized due to the fluidity of identity and Guatemala’s social and cultural heterogeneity, the two republics ideology continued and remains today as a powerful organizing force in Guatemalan society.

The physical character of Guatemala City remained largely the same for the next century after independence from Spain. In her historical work on urbanization and the formation of Guatemala City from 1524 to 1950, Gisela Gellert points out

how in the approximately five decades directly following independence there was no substantial change to the "colonial square" of the city, and population growth was steady. At Independence, the population of the city was approximately 28,000 and remained steady until the mid-nineteenth century when it reached 40,000 (Gellert 1992:13). In 1880 the population of Guatemala City was at approximately 55 728 inhabitants (Ibid.). The nucleus of the city continued to be the area surrounding the Plaza Mayor (Plaza de Armas); the *barrios* with their adobe and straw constructions built around churches were pushed to the margins and had an almost entirely separate existence. The 'sub-urban' areas were filled with trees and vegetable gardens with the most northern and southern towns connected by long stretches of green areas and reached by horseback (Gellert 1992:12).

The decades following Independence were witness to a slow but steady population growth, unlike the rapid rate of growth the city would undergo in the twentieth century. The political climate in Guatemala following independence was one of prolonged internal conflict between Conservatives and Liberals for control of the economy and government offices. There were several differences between the two political parties, but these centred mainly around the Conservatives' preference for maintaining institutions that sought to preserve the colonial status quo, and the Liberals' preference for a new social and economic order that viewed progress as attainable by promoting capitalist links with the outside world (Lovell 2000:127). In 1871, the Liberal Justo Rufino Barrios gained office and not long after, Guatemala saw a return to declining food production for local consumption, rising foreign debt, forced labour, debt peonage, and the greater impoverishment of the majority (Lovell

2000:128; Keen and Wasserman 1984:436). The Liberals made several economic reforms in the late 19th century. One of the principle changes was the formation of an agricultural economy around the cultivation and exportation of coffee, which spurred growth of the city in the early 1900s, what some scholars have referred to as the 'first' modern phase of urbanization in Guatemala (Gellert 1992:15). The orientation of the national economy toward the cultivation of coffee stimulated some European migration and also provided financial conditions for the construction of new infrastructure, such as roads and other transportation routes, and institutions in the country. For instance, the coffee industry required the construction of a railway, the creation of the first banks, factories, as well as other commercial institutions (Ibid). As part of its political agenda, the Liberal government introduced public schools, changes to the municipal administration and created new administrative institutions – all concentrated near the central area of the city (Ibid.). In 1880 the city's population was 55 728 inhabitants, growing to 67 818 in 1893; in the census of 1921 it had nearly doubled to 112 086 inhabitants. The increase in population is attributed to mass migration to the city from rural areas, the need to provide the labour necessary for the construction and operation of new institutions, as well as international migration to Guatemala (Gellert 1992:16).

A later phase of population and spatial expansion of the capital city would follow in the mid twentieth century, as thinkers of the time promoted notions of modernity which made a connection between urbanization, modernization and *ladinización*. In his review of urbanization in Guatemala during the period spanning 1944 to 2002, Guatemalan intellectual and civil engineer Mario Alfonso Bravo

(2007:52-53) argues that the intellectuals in the late 1950s associated the process of urbanization with modernity, and as a natural and inevitable path for the Guatemalan nation. Furthermore, he contends, urbanization was seen by these thinkers as a process of *ladinización,* that is, a "whitening" of the nation, making it "non-indigenous". Bravo explains,

> the great majority of thinkers during these years [1950s-1960s] were associated to a broad notion of "modernity", conceived by anthropologists and sociologists of the period as a natural process, an inevitable and positive change associated with the transformation of the ethnic structure of Guatemala. In line with this vision, modernity meant finishing with indigenous communities who were seen as residues of the past, if not an obstacle to "national integration". The association of indigenous to the rural and the "non-indigenous" (or "ladino") [….] with the urban, and by extension with "the modern" and "progressive", made it so the urbanization process became seen as the equivalent of a "process of *ladinicación*" (2007:53, translation mine).

Guatemala City experienced a significant demographic increase from 1950 to 1973 where in just over two decades the city almost doubled in population. Initially this growth was due to migration inflows from Guatemala's non-indigenous *oriente* (eastern region) (Camus 2002:61). In the 1970s and 1980s Guatemalans from various parts of the countryside begin to migrate to Guatemala's Metropolitan Area in large numbers. The powerful February 4, 1976 earthquake that took the lives of 2300 people and injured approximately 76 000, combined with political conflict, concentrated in the countryside during *La Violencia,* propelled the migration of thousands into the capital. The earthquake caused major destruction, particularly to homes of poor Guatemalans living in adobe houses; with the aid of international

donors and organizations, and government subsidized materials such as *lámina*[29], 126 'provisional' settlements were created by groups affected by the quake (Franco 2006:10). It is estimated that in the six-month period following the earthquake the numbers of Guatemalans affected by the natural disaster who migrated to the city was between 100 000 and 150 000 (Ibid.). These 'temporary' shelters remained for almost a decade, until the government, through the National Housing Bank (BANVI), created new settlement sites in order to move this population (Valladares Cerezo 2003:3). The State's housing projects were aimed at providing plots of land and basic services to families, who were given the responsibility of constructing their own homes. The majority of these homes were built with deficient materials, giving these areas the characteristics of precarious settlement zones (Franco 2006:10). In addition, an economic debt crisis that saw sinking export prices, inflation, and declining product values, combined with the intensification of the armed conflict in the 1980s led to a new wave of immigration – people economically displaced, or increasingly displaced by the conflict participated in the invasion of urban plots of land (Valladares Cerezo 2003:3). Invasions of urban land continued in the 1990s, including the illegal settlement of areas surrounding the municipal garbage dump, zones with minimal hygiene standards (Ibid.).

Internal Armed Conflict, the City, and the Production of Fear

The role of the armed conflict in shaping the political and social landscape of present-day Guatemala City, and the capital's role as a site of mobilizations and popular organizing in the conflict, cannot be overlooked in the analysis of urban life

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[29] These are strips of light corrugated metal.

and contemporary processes of violence in the city. Not only did Guatemala City experience a mass population increase in the late 1970s and early 1980s due to the influx of internally displaced refugees who, fleeing their communities, sought refuge in the capital, but the city itself was a site of violent confrontation. Indeed, State-sponsored violence during the first two decades of the war (1960s and 1970s) had an urban character. Guatemala City in the early 1900s was a highly politicized place, the site of mobilizations and protests against the State's abuses (AVANCSO 1988:9). For instance, City residents, particularly schoolteachers and other intellectuals, were the protagonists of the October 1944 revolution against the dictator General Jorge Ubico as they staged mass protests and effectively carried out a week-long general strike. Conducting fieldwork among poor families in Guatemala City in the late 1960s, Brian Roberts (1973), for instance, recounts how his fieldwork was interrupted by time spent under martial law and constant states of siege and alarm. Roberts states that, "[t]he wave of political assassinations and kidnappings that put Guatemala in world headlines was occurring in the city during this period, and these events were often reported to me by my informants in the neighborhood"(1973:26). A Guatemalan woman in her late 70s, mentioned to me, as we chatted about her memories of life in the Capital during Arbenz government and onward that she remembered at one point seeing bombs falling on the *Palacio* (Presidential Palace)., as she hand-washed clothing for a family on the rooftop of their home in Zone 1. (In the chapter that follows I examine such memories of violence in Guatemala City during the country's internal armed conflict.)

While violence during the armed conflict would ultimately move to the countryside as indigenous communities became prime targets of State-sponsored violence, violence during the initial years of conflict targeted activists in the City. Kobrak (1999) explains how by 1978, when the government was beginning the worst wave of repression, what would come to be popularly termed La Violencia (the period between 1978-1984 that saw the highest levels of repression), the military government had denounced the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City as a “centre of subversion”. Security forces raided the university campus on various occasions and murdered and disappeared nearly 500 University of San Carlos faculty and students (Kobrak 1999: figure 6). Moreover, guerilla and military offensives as well as confrontation between these forces occurred throughout the city during this period (e.g., see Payeras 2006).

Popular unrest combined with a revolt by junior officers in the armed forces led to the overthrow of Jorge Ubico in 1944, and four months later gave rise to what is known in Guatemala as the “October Revolution”. Elections held the following year saw Juan José Arévalo, a school teacher, sweep into power with more than 85 per cent of the popular vote. During his six year term in office from March 1945 until March 1951, in addition to implementing labour protection laws, literacy programs and public schools, Arévalo was concerned with agrarian reform (Lovell 200:139; Schlesinger and Kinzer 1982). Arévalo remained in office until November of 1950 and in March of 1951 the presidency was assumed by Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, who had an agrarian reform that sought to redress long-standing landholding inequalities at the centre of his design for a new Guatemala. This reform

would not last long as Arbenz attempted to expropriate unused lands held by the United Fruit Company, a Boston-based multinational corporation, and hand them over to landless peasants, offering the company compensation based on its fraudulent tax evaluation (Schlesinger and Kinzer 1982). Utilizing its close connections to the Eisenhower administration in Washington, United Fruit was able to convince the White House that a "Red Menace" in Guatemala threatened U.S. business interests. The United Fruit company then persuaded the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) into organizing the over throw of the Arbenz government, ushering into power a repressive *junta* headed by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, whose forces, protected by U.S. air strikes, invaded from neighboring Honduras (Ibid.).

The new Guatemalan government, backed by the CIA, immediately began to reverse the progressive social programs that had been implemented by Arévalo and Arbenz, repealed the land reform, and began targeting members of the revolutionary movement, trade unionists, teachers, students and anyone else it categorized as "subversive". In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the bloodshed in Guatemala escalated as military governments in Guatemala as well as the military itself, armed and trained under "U.S. Alliance for Progress" programs, intensified their attacks against the growing guerilla movement (Loucky and Moors 2000:3).

During La Violencia, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, under the regimes of General Lucas García (1978-82) and General Efraín Ríos Montt (March 1982-August 1983) military counterinsurgency tactics shifted towards mass indiscriminate violence against any persons in its way and set out to eradicate

insurgency and popular movements through attacking Indian villages which were perceived as actively supporting, providing combatants for, or harboring members of the *guerrillas* (Smith 1990:9). La Violencia was characterized by a brutal military government campaign of genocide against Mayan communities, including the complete destruction of over 600 villages, the rape and sexual torture of indigenous women and the creation of terror as a means of controlling the Guatemalan population (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998). Victoria Sanford (2003:123) draws out the "phenomenology of terror" of this period, particularly through a close examination of counterinsurgency military operations in the department of El Quiché. She argues that the unfolding of terror often included the following phases: 1) pre-massacre community organizing and experience of violence; 2) the massacre; 3) post-massacre life in flight in the mountains; 4) army captures and community surrenders; 5) model villages[30]; 6) ongoing militarization of community life; and 7) the living memory of terror. During La Violencia military bases were build across the county near Mayan communities and one million Mayan people were forced in *Patrullas de Auto-Defensa Civil* (PACs, Civil Self-Defense Patrols), where indigenous men and boys were commonly made, at gunpoint, to commit acts of violence against members of their own communities (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998). Thus in addition to serving as a strategy of physical control, the PACs aimed at destroying solidarity, through tearing the social fabric of Mayan communities.

The period of La Violencia not only saw high levels of State-sponsored violence and repression, but also the terrorizing of the population at a psychological

[30] The model villages were army-controlled work camps that were developed as a means of complete control over Mayan communities (Sanford 2003:137).

level, which was a central component of the State's counterinsurgency strategy. Suarez-Orozco (1990) describes how "cultures of terror" flourished in various countries in Latin America during roughly the same period. With bloody wars, ranging from the "dirty war" in Argentina, to the civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador and Peru, and dictatorships such as that of Augusto Pinochet's in Chile, disappearances, torture, death squads and massacres became common practices during the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America. Referring specifically to Central America, Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (1990) argues that the system of collective terror that flourished in the 1970s and 1980s possessed its own formal structures or "grammar".[31] In other words, political violence and the production of terror that accompanied it were systemic and structured.

An important point to highlight is that as the Guatemalan State engaged in one of the bloodiest counterinsurgency campaigns in the Latin American region, it was simultaneously devising national development plans directed by the idea of readjusting the economic conditions of the Guatemalan State to more adequately function within a capitalist economy. Writing in the 1980s, Peralta (1980:10) indicates that in the late 1970s State development plans,

> integrated projects for the development of the northern corridor, including building of roads, communication links and hydroelectric facilities, mobilization of peasants to serve as a workforce, creation of a service structure (schools, clinics, bank subsidiaries), and intensification of repressive measures and the use of terror (the massacre of Panzos and the assassination and kidnapping of trade union leaders in Huehuetenango). By these means, the state intend[ed] to foment the construction of a

[31] Suárez-Orozco examines the psychological mechanisms involved in such responses to terror and argues that the calculated unleashing of terror gives rise to denials on the part of the population, followed by the rationalization of daily events, and then the internalization and elaboration of terror.

> physical infrastructure and a situation of social pacification conducive to the operations of the multinational corporations exploiting oil and nickel resources.

Thus, as the quote by Peralta above suggests, organized violence was part of a development strategy aimed at "modernizing" Guatemala through promoting the growth of Guatemala's capitalist economy and building the infrastructure to sustain it, while pacifying resistance to such efforts. The City as the site of the State apparatus, including the different ministerial offices and headquarters of local and foreign industry, played a significant role in the State's modernizing efforts. As I will illustrate in Chapter 3 the experiences and memories of La Violencia are not only present in the physical landscape of Guatemala and mobilized for political purposes, but for some Guatemalans, particularly those who were directly affected by war's violence, these memories and experiences of the past figure prominently in their experiences of the present.

<u>The Fortress City: Neo-liberalism, Class/Ethnic Segregation & Gated Communities</u>

A significant drive behind the peace negotiations, that began in the 1980s and culminated in the official Peace Accords of 1996, was the stabilization of Guatemala's economic environment in order to facilitate the country's (re)integration into an increasingly globalized and neo-liberal world. During the internal armed conflict, Guatemala was largely insulated from global economic processes. Thus the Peace process promoted Guatemala's incorporation into a world economy, which in the late 1990s had undergone significant structural modifications that affected post-war Guatemala (Jonas 2000:218). Since the 1990s the Guatemalan economy has taken on a neo-liberal orientation, which has resulted in a reduction in

social spending on housing and other social programs by the State (Valladares Cerezo 2003:3).

The peace process facilitated the country's integration into a world in which nations and economic enterprises are increasingly integrated into the global market. The most common expression of this tendency are the drive for "free-trade", the elimination of state "interference" with market operations, and the dismantling of welfare institutions, including cutbacks to state-supported social programs and structural adjustment (Jonas 2000:218-222). Structural Adjustment Programs in Guatemala have led to a reduction in social spending and increased poverty through the State's having to pay for servicing its foreign debt. In 1998, 70% of the population of Guatemala's Metropolitan Area was found to be living in conditions of poverty and 55% under conditions of extreme poverty (Camus 2002:7).

While the city remains the centre of political, commercial and industrial power, it suffers from poor infrastructure, an inefficient transportation system, a severe housing crisis with decreased State attention to housing needs; great segments of its population do not earn a sufficient income to cover their most basic needs (Valladares Cerezo 2003:5). The Metropolitan Region of Guatemala holds a significant portion of the country's urban poor (Gellert 1999:38). According to a study of urban slums in Guatemala City, approximately 60 % of the population of the Metropolitan Region can be classified as "poor" (Valladares Cerezo 2003:6). In addition, it is estimated that one third of the inhabitants of the Metropolitan Region live in precarious settlements, many without running water, drains and sewage

systems (Valladares Cerezo 2003:3). While most remain illegal settlements, others have obtained legal recognition. In this way,

> [t]he settlements become sustainable peripheries—borderland spaces that, having fulfilled the "minimum" requirements of urban modernity, remain in subordinate social, economic, and political positions. The act of swatting thus becomes regulated and incorporated into the dynamics of Guatemala's constricted transnational democracy, legitimizing inequality. What begins as rupture—the violation of hegemonic liberal property norms—becomes normalized as the agencies of the Guatemalan state and international development help to transform illegal squatters into marginalized citizens living in legally sanctioned homes. (Murphy 2004:49)

The kind of citizenship we see today in post-war neo-liberal Guatemala is one that places the weight of responsibility on individual Guatemalans rather than the collectivity or the State (e.g., see O'Neill 2010). In Guatemala City, municipal campaigns such as the *Tú Eres la Ciudad* (You are the City) of mayor Álvaro Arzú or the *GuateAmala* ('Guatemala, Love It') campaign initiated by urban elites, like the 'Christian Citizenship' spurred on by neo-Pentecostal evangelical churches, promote acts of self-governance through urging individual Guatemalans to adopt the "correct" attitudes and habits as part of the practice of Guatemalan citizenship (Ibid.).

At the same time that all Guatemalans are called upon by governmental, civil, and religious institutions to do their part in 'building' post-war Guatemala, Guatemala City remains a city of sharp contrasts: luxurious apartment buildings and homes—with steel-barred doors and windows, surrounded by high cement walls, electric barbed wire, and video surveillance systems (the new symbols of class)—are found only a short distance away from squatter settlements and the most visible

markers of extreme poverty, including houses made of aluminum strips and cardboard. These inequalities are deepened by the lack of adequate State responses to improving the housing situation of the majority of the city's residents and the efforts of the middle class and wealthy to insulate themselves from the poor and crime through the creation of fortressed homes and gated communities. In recent decades there has been a global trend towards the criminalization of poverty and the construction of insular spaces for the wealthy, or those who can afford them, to "protect" themselves from the "criminal" activity and insecurity of the streets through the creation of gated communities. These communities have emerged in most major cities including New York, Los Angeles and São Paolo, a trend we are now seeing in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area. Where once elites occupied the City centre, today they have largely left the centre for areas deemed "less dangerous" and are increasingly constructing closed gated communities.

Middle class and wealthy segments of the population began leaving the City's core after earthquakes in 1917 and 1918, moving towards newly constructed neighborhoods particularly toward the northern part of the City[32]. While these neighborhoods were once, up until the mid 1970s and 1980s, largely open spaces with relatively free access, they have now been transformed into "*barrios cerrados*" (closed neighborhoods). Today these areas are lined with private residences, surrounded by fences and cement walls with entry permitted only for their residents.

[32] For instance along Avenida Simeón Cañas, neighborhoods adjacent to Avenida la Reforma (now Zones 9 and 10), and in the last forty years Avenida de las Américas (Zones 13 and 14), Boulvevard Vista Hermosa (zone 15), and Calzada Roosvelt (zone 11) and Boulevard Los Próceres and the "Salida a El Salvador" (Bravo 2007:176-177).

The creation of gated communities and fortressed homes are not merely architectural (physical) means by which certain groups mediate a context of insecurity, but also represent symbolic expressions of class and ethnic locations. Guatemalan social anthropologist Gabriela Torres (2006) argues that fortressed homes surrounded by barred windows and electric razor wire found throughout Guatemala City are not merely a means by which the residents of those homes attempt to shield themselves from the violence prevalent in the City. Torres argues such "security" measures are a way in which middle and upper class *ladinos* symbolically and materially create boundaries between themselves and the indigenous and poor. Thus the fortressed home is a symbol of ethnic and class positioning.

The history of Guatemala City can be read as a history of segregation—along the axes of ethnicity, class, and gender. Urban formation and (re)constructions of the City have not merely entailed physical constructions and demarcations, but have entailed too the creation of particular social relations. The expropriation of indigenous land and the displacement of indigenous peoples to the City's outskirts, alongside the exploitation of their labour for the construction and functioning of the City has been a pattern repeated at different historical moments. Class privilege has been sustained by elites through the deployment of racist beliefs and practices. As the middle and upper classes insulate themselves from the threat of crime on the streets though the construction of gated communities, they also insulate themselves from the indigenous and poor. Gender crosscuts class and ethnic identifications and influences experiences of violence and fear. A working class woman cannot take the same

precautions as a middle class woman can, for instance, avoiding public transportation or walking city streets after dark. Indigenous women, and men, experience daily racism that marks their experiences of life in the city as much as the threat of physical violence and assault. While certain manifestations of violence depart from former expressions, there is a centuries-long trajectory of structural and political violence that undergirds social dynamics in the City today. In the chapter that follows I focus on women's everyday experiences of Guatemala City today.

PART II: LIFE IN THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE

CHAPTER 3

"ANDA CON CUIDADO": MEMORY, NARRATIVE & THE (RE) CONSTRUCTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

[T]he event attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary. -Veena Das (2007:1)

They remain as if nothing occurred. But if you start speaking to them, some women cry, they cry a lot, they still feel very sad about the loss of their husbands and other family members. You can speak to a person, and she will laugh, she will talk, she may be working but inside she has something else. We say we have a wound that no one can heal, and that is the way things are. We can talk about what happened to us, what we suffered, but we can never forget the past, what we have, we will always have and it is that which bothers us. It always hurts. I see that we are all like this, men and women.

-Doña Thelma, war survivor, mother, resident of Villa Nueva, Guatemala

It was a quiet late afternoon, when I visited Eva in her home in the heart of Guatemala City. I was still becoming acquainted with everyday life in Guatemala's capital, which, not unlike many of its urban counterparts in other Latin American countries, is bustling with traffic, businesses, street vendors, and marked by striking contrasts between elite gated communities on the one hand and poor barrios and *asentamientos* on the other . On this afternoon, the traffic jams and heavy fumes from the diesel-fueled red city buses that characterize rush hour were largely absent

and there was a peculiar calm about the afternoon. I did not know yet how to navigate the city streets, and asked my uncle if he would give me a car ride to Zone 1, where Eva's home was located. A K'akchiquel woman from Chimaltenango, a neighboring Department, Eva had lived in the capital for over sixteen years; I went to visit with her and her family, and conduct an interview with her.

While outside of the capital, narratives of crime and fear tend to situate violence specifically in the dangers of the city, among residents of Guatemala City I observed a tendency to label only certain areas as "*peligrosas*" (dangerous). Sometimes, in these everyday commentaries the distances between "dangerous" and "safe" areas were only a couple of blocks apart. In one instance, as I was taking a taxi through Zone 3 and we passed the General Cemetery (recognizable by the tall, concrete, orange-painted wall that stretches several hundred meters), I made a comment to the driver that I'd been told that that was one of the areas in the city where you had to "take precautions". He half-nodded, and when we were but two blocks further up Avenida del Cementerio stated, "*this* is a dangerous part", indicating to me that a few blocks back where I had made my comment was not "as bad". I thought, was there *really* such a difference between the two points, located only two blocks apart from one another? Perhaps more importantly, what did such demarcations between safe/unsafe spaces communicate about people's experiences and constructions of urban violence and fear? Or, as I wrote in my field journal that night, "could it be that such apparently obvious demarcations between what is safe and unsafe are created by individuals to make sense and organize the constant experiences of disorder and fear that tend to characterize life in the city?".

Zone 1, the centre of the city was among the zones that people warned me about on several occasions. For many, this area is a worn down, un-cared for area to be avoided, or where one went solely for administrative purposes (government offices are in Zone 1, thus to obtain a passport or enquire about government pensions and so on one has no choice but to go downtown) or for shopping and finding the lowest bargains in the city. In his investigative book, set in Zone 1, on the 1998 assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi[33], Guatemalan-American writer Francisco Goldman (2007:66) describes the City thus:

> Guatemala City is a uniquely ugly place. The mid-nineteenth-century American travel writer John Lloyd Stephens described it as a "mere speck in the middle of a vast plain," but by 1998 it was a sprawling, choked, polluted, impoverished, claustrophobic metropolis with a population of 3 million and a level of so-called ordinary crime and homicide that made it, even though Guatemala's civil war was over, one of Latin America's most dangerous and violent cities. Its best feature is its horizon: on a clear day, immense volcanoes seem to loom so near that you might think it an illusion, as if the light possesses a magnifying quality. Sometimes the volcanoes belch plumes of black smoke, covering the city in ashes, or a crater glows like a flaming planet in the night sky.

In my many trips to Guatemala and during my fieldwork in 2007 I never heard the city described as "ugly"; instead people seemed to lament how they could not make (more) use of the city streets and public spaces, such as being able to leisurely sit in or stroll around Central Park. Thus, several individuals mentioned the colonial architecture of the buildings found in the downtown core as giving the downtown area great character. And while popular avenues such as Sexta Avenida –

32. Bishop Juan Gerardi, who led the Catholic Church's Historical Memory Project and was found bludgeoned to death two days following the presentation of the project's findings in the garage of his parish house of the church of San Sebastian. For more on the Gerardi assassination see Goldman (2007).

its sidewalks lined with vendors selling everything from fruits, domestic products, clothing, to pirated DVDs and CDs – are notorious for thefts, I still noted a longing among the city's residents for being able to safely traverse these streets.

Like various Guatemalans, as she reflected on her life in the capital, Silvia, an academic and activist, told me that she loved the downtown core. Silvia reminisced about the days when she used to stroll the streets, the Central Plaza and park, and described how it was something she would feel uncomfortable doing today. Indeed, on one morning while I waited to interview Silvia at *Radio Universidad*, located in a large colonial-style building that used to house the Faculty of Medicine where she hosted the radio show "Women's Voices" (*Voces de Mujeres*), I jotted in my field notebook,

> I am waiting now at *Radio Universidad* in Zone 1, Guatemala City. It is a beautiful part of the City, though worn-down. Indeed this is one of the oldest parts. The architecture is impressive—buildings are high with very tall doors and windows, as you might find in Antigua. I had been told by many people that Zona 1 is dangerous; I was nervous about coming here. It was at least somewhat easy to find my way, with the Avenidas running from North to South and the Calles from East to West. […] On other occasions when I have been here, as today, I have noticed a lot of graffiti on the walls: one I saw this morning was against George Bush. I imagine it had been painted in the days around his visit to Guatemala in early March. I am finding I feel a generalized nervousness/fear any time I am by myself on the streets of the city. (April 11, 2007)

The afternoon I visited Eva, I spent a couple of hours with her, and over tea we discussed how she had found her way to the city, her day-to-day routines, and her neighborhood. As I asked her about her daily life in Zone 1, she would say "Yes, the situation is very bad". However, Eva would almost immediately shift the discussion

to talking about everyday "resistance", and how "you had to be brave and go on with your life and routines". For instance, she stated,

> If we are looking for violence, violence is what we will see. So, we have to ask, where are those spaces where pain is not the generalized pattern? Where are the spaces where we have felt well? Not everything is marked by violence and pain; I want to find those spaces. I think there is a level of bravery in being able to go out walking, to go on the bus. I think I have not yet entered a phase of psychosis or to the level of fear when you say, "I won't go out now because this or this will happen". I think that the risks are risks, but there is another part of me that says I am going to try to confront violence. This form of thinking is a way of confronting it, and you have to know how to confront it. Fear paralyzes, it anesthetizes you, it corners you. It's not a natural fear, it is a fear that we ourselves, it's us humans who construct violence. There is where we have to find an alternative to violence. We have to acknowledge the situation of violence, it cannot be denied. But we have to work to open our minds, our bodies, our spirit to those things that violence has not yet killed. Because we cannot simply say, "here we can no longer do anything". Here there is happiness, there is life, we have to find those spaces, because they are there. That is why we are still alive. I don't agree with saying "these people are violent" and so forth. There are people who are violent, but there are those of us who are not reproducing violence. So we need to hold onto this.

Eva's reluctance to engage in discussion of crime in Guatemala City proved an intriguing contrast to the "talk of crime" (Caldeira 2000) common among *capitalinos,* and which I explore further in this Chapter.[34] Given that I had been warned on a number of occasions about Zona 1, I had anticipated Eva would have many stories to share about the impact of violence on women's and men's everyday lives. At the end of our interview, I could not help but feel that I had not been

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[34] As I discuss in the Chapter 1, the Partido Patriota (PP, the *Mano Dura*/ "Hard Hand" Party), whose leader Otto Pérez Molina ran for president on a platform centred around "being hard on crime" (particularly quashing gangs) took the majority of votes in the department of Guatemala. City residents demonstrated a concern with escalating rates of crime in Guatemala by voting in majority numbers for the PP.

successful in getting her to open up about the situation of violence in Guatemala; I wondered why she would not speak about violence in her everyday life. Other people whom I interviewed were very keen to talk about crime in their neighborhoods, or news stories they had heard about and so forth, but not Eva.

When our interview was coming to a close, it was evening and the sun was setting on the horizon. I had to wait for my ride and was standing by the front door. Any time I heard a car honk, I would open the door to see if it was my ride. After a couple of times of my opening the door to see if my ride had arrived, Eva quickly told me I should not stand in the doorway or open the door unless I was sure it was my ride. "Let's wait inside", she said. "Don't stand in the doorway and let's shut the door". "My street" she said, "faces the Gallito neighborhood, it's very dangerous and sometimes cars pass by shooting". I was taken aback by her comment, especially in light of her seeming lack of willingness to openly discuss instances of fear in her daily life and her neighborhood in particular.

Eva's warning that I not stand in the doorway due to a concern that cars could pass by shooting, following her earlier apparent reticence to acknowledge violence in her midst, raises a number of issues, some of which are undoubtedly related to methodology for the study of violence[35]. The apparent discrepancy between what she shared with me about her daily life in the city, and her concern about possible shootings if we stood by the doorway, may signal Eva's refusal to let

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[35]For instance, this incident illustrates the value of participant observation as a research methodology. There are aspects of the experience of living in a situation of violence that are inexpressible through language for various reasons. Maybe they are too painful, or individuals simply do not wish to touch upon them in conversations with researchers (e.g., see Das 2000; Morris 1997). By simply interviewing Eva, I could not have elicited parts of her lived experiences of life and fear.

the situation of civic insecurity present in Guatemala affect her, or as she described it, to prevent her from being "paralyzed" by fear.

Eva seemed both to accept the presence of fear and violence in her life while at the same time resist it through a refusal to dwell on the current state of crime in the city. In this way, she may have been both assimilating a situation of mass civic insecurity, as well as finding ways of escaping it. In his work *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel de Certeau (1984) is concerned precisely with the ways in which the 'lay' person, whether 'the consumer' or the 'city dweller', makes use of the schematas of the 'dominant'. De Certeau is interested in the everyday creativity or 'tricks' individuals employ in 'resisting' these frameworks though they may never leave the system they are a part of. It may be possible to read Eva's experience as an instance that sheds light on how 'fear' may become embedded in her everyday experiences of life in the city. On the one hand, perhaps she did not see the possibility of being the victim of a shooting at her front door as a evidence of violence and fear in her environment, as it was simply 'the way things were'. On the other hand, perhaps she was quite clear on the situation at hand, but through her speech acts (and lack of speech on instances of violence) was indeed employing "tricks" for escaping (momentarily), though not entirely, a system where production of fear has been an instrument of governance. Following de Certeau's work, we can observe social actors' agency such as Eva's without necessarily romanticizing or assuming resistance (e.g., see Abu-Lughod 1990). While broad-based collective efforts to combat violence and human rights violations, which I discuss in Chapter 5, are present in Guatemala and there are sectors working to propose alternatives to the

present system, women in their day-to-day action and speech also find innovative ways to assert their agency in different forms, whether these acts are "subversive" (Butler 1990) or not (Mahmood 2005). For, as Mahmood points out in her work on Islamic politics and women in Egypt, agency may also be present in situations where overt and explicit forms of resistance to structures of domination are not. (I return to the question of women's agency versus subordination in post-war Guatemala in Chapter 6).

This chapter focuses on women's narratives and everyday lives in contemporary Guatemala City, against the historical backdrop of war on the one hand and ongoing 'everyday' violence during post-war on the other. I examine certain key narratives – both of women who experienced violence of war directly and those who may have been indirectly affected by it – and explore how, and to what extent, their experiences of life and fear in the city today are formed and reconstituted by drawing on individual and collective memories of war. Thus, of concern here is the intimate relation between constructions and lived experiences of women's realities, and the role of narrative in mediating between recollections of the past, today's 'everydayness', and people's hopes for the future. As Mattingly and Garro (1994:771) note, "through narrative we try to make sense of how things have come to pass and how our actions and the actions of others have helped shape our history; we try to understand who we are becoming by reference to where we have been". A focus on memory and everyday experience is also necessary because our subjectivities are informed by history—"a history that includes the scars left by forgotten episodes and hidden discourses, as much as conscious narratives" (Lacan 1977:50-52 cited in Aretxaga 2005:59). The weight of history on the present lives of individuals and communities in the aftermath of war may tell us a great deal about

the insidious long-term effects of violence and how these flow and linger in the crevices of people's bodies, psyches and social worlds.

Spaces of Memory

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the contestations over historical memory in Guatemala that have arisen in the post-Peace Accords era have particular expressions in the capital city. The markers of war inscribed on the landscape – the sites of mass clandestine graves in the countryside or local military bases or schools where massacres were carried out – that are visible, physical reminders of the violence that took place during Guatemala's armed internal conflict, are not found in the same ways or numbers in Guatemala City. The urban landscape is inscribed with memories of war in different ways than rural settings. While one may not see the sites of mass graves in Guatemala City, if one drives, for instance, along the Periférico in the direction of Zone 1, past various buildings and walls of Zone 1 itself, one can easily see different forms of graffiti denouncing the government for war crimes (genocide) and present-day abuses of power.

Figure 3: Graffiti by the organization H.I.J.O.S, which is composed of sons and daughters of killed and/or disappeared persons during Guatemala's internal armed conflict. The image is of former President Efrain Rios Montt, who ruled at the height of the conflict. The text reads "For he who gave the order for agony, I ask for punishment". (Photograph taken by author)

Figure 4: "Government Kills". (Photograph taken by author)

Or there are the spaces where horrific crimes were committed, such as at the intersection of 8a Calle and Sexta Avenida, at the Portal del Comercio, where 23 year-old student leader Oliverio Castañeda was killed in 1978 by forces of Romeo Lucas Garcia's regime. Now marked by a commemorative plaque, this spot, like others, serves as a physical space inhabited by social memory of war – one to which my attention was drawn on numerous occasions. For certain social activists of Castañeda's generation or others familiar with historical events surrounding Guatemala's internal armed conflict, the space of Castañeda's death serves as living testimony to a repressive and bloody past.

For many Guatemalans, the memory of war lies just beneath the surface of their present, brought to the fore by different sights, sounds, and smells. Silvia, a contemporary of Castañeda who was herself a University of San Carlos student in the late 1970s and who now teaches at the institution, recalled in an interview the fear she felt as an academic during the period of *La Violencia*. She stated,

> During the armed conflict, of course I lived great fear. As I mentioned, working there, I practically lived at the University of San Carlos, from seven in the morning to until eight at night. I worked there since 1978; I worked and I studied. I worked there for 16 years. So, I spent a great part of my life in that environment. And of course I felt great fear, studying sociology, that was, in theory, more "aware" of the situation. I lived an intense period when they killed some students getting off a bus, and I was in the bus behind – you know, all of that.

Guatemala City is an important site for the analysis of the bearing of memory on present-day experiences of violence and fear, especially since certain persons – such as those of younger generations, or those who were able to maintain a sense of 'insulation' in the city from the war that played itself out largely in the Northwest

Highlands, and who may even go as far as denying the war – may not necessarily narrate present-day violence in terms of past violence. Many people I spoke with did not make reference to the armed internal conflict in their discussions of violence and fear in Guatemala today. Their narratives were anchored in more in day-to-day concerns, such as racism and poverty. Twenty-seven year-old Olga, a resident of Zone 2, and divorced mother and *maquila* worker whose family had moved to the capital when she was two years old, made no reference to the armed internal conflict in recalling her childhood and adolescence. What she remembered about her early youth were her family's economic hardships:

> What I remember about growing up was that sometimes we were happy and other times sad. Us with our mom, we grew up in very humble conditions. As they say, as she was making her *centavitos,* she struggled to raise us, we would be very sad to see her work so hard to raise us.

Thirty-year old Ana, an indigenous woman from Totonicapán who had lived in the capital city for nineteen years, similarly grounded her experience in the day-to-day struggle against poverty and racism. For instance, she stated,

> I consider myself a migrant in this city because since I arrived I have been treated in a violent manner. So, I have never identified with it. I think it has been my working space, where I have been able to grow, study, where I have been able to weave relationships, friendships. But where I really feel is my place of identification and where I feel most myself is in Totonicapán. Our arrival in the city had to do with poverty, looking for better living conditions. […] I say that our arrival was violent because racism has played such a large part. Nineteen years ago, it was much more, much more grotesque, so for me those looks I received of indifference or the devaluing of me, I consider them violent. In our community, we were all indigenous. There was no questioning of your being. In this city people question you, whether you are intelligent, whether you are capable or even whether you have the ability to talk, to express yourself.

Thus, political violence was not a point of reference for everyone. However, for certain individuals, particularly those with direct experience with violence during the armed conflict and/or who had contact with institutions or organizations providing assistance to surviving victims of war, political violence figured prominently in their accounts of their past. Wartime violence did reach the capital city, the location of systematic repression and "selective" killings in the period following the 1954-U.S. propelled overthrow of the Arbenz administration, and indeed has a bearing on experiences of present-day violence and fear. Furthermore, as I described in Chapter 2 during the years of intense state repression, when warfare shifted against indigenous communities in the countryside, hundreds of thousands fled their home communities. A large number fled to the Mexican/Guatemalan border, the U.S. and Canada, while others settled in Guatemala City, taking with them direct contact with and experience of war-time violence.

There are sectors of Guatemalan society, such as the Pérez Molina political camp, that emphasize the need for Guatemalans to forget, to 'move on' from the historical memories of war. This position stands in contrast to that of projects such as the Historical Truth Commissions in Guatemala that have documented the horrific human rights abuses, committed in their great majority by agents of the State. It is not only at the level of the national State discourse that such tensions regarding memory take place: at a very individual level, people engage in the daily work of (re)constructing their past, present and futures, variously drawing memories and experiences of war.

The explanatory trope of the armed internal conflict as being the root of present-day insecurity and crime is one that survivors of the armed conflict, particularly if they have exposure to or have worked closely with human rights NGOs, draw upon in their recollections of the past and in (re)constructing their present-day lives. While the process by which communities and individuals draw on institutional frameworks for organizing memories and reconstructing their present lives may vary, there is an important role played by institutions[36] in these processes. For instance, Cécile Rousseau and colleagues (Rousseau, Morales and Foxen 2001; Rousseau, de la Aldea, Viger Rojas and Foxen 2005) examine the "memory strategies" of young Mayan refugees in Guatemala who returned from Mexico as a community in the early 1990s. In particular, these researchers studied the ways in which young Mayans of the community of La Victoria represented their past and current experiences of community (in Ixcan, El Quiché) following the departure of NGOs in 1999. In a previous study conducted in 1996 (Rousseau et al. 2001), the memory practices of Mayan youth from La Victoria where numerous NGOs were present at the time, and another community (La Esperanza, which was relatively 'NGO-free') were compared to determine the influence of NGOs on individual and community recollections of the past and interpretations of present-day community life. The study conducted in 1996 (Rousseau et al. 2001) revealed that the memory practices – in other words, the particular ways the communities and their members drew upon memories and reconstructed their pasts as well as individual and collective identities– were indeed influenced by NGO presence in the community.

[36] Institutions are the focus of the Chapter 5, which examines institutional approaches for addressing gender-based violence in Guatemala.

Youth from La Victoria, for example, stressed the importance of education and organizing in re-constructing their community in Guatemala – two issues emphasized by NGOs working with Guatemalan refugees in Mexico and in La Victoria. However, youth from La Esperanza, where NGO presence was scarce, anchored their narratives more readily on everyday concerns like poverty, lack of food and alcoholism. Furthermore, the youth of La Victoria focused on their collective history of trauma, linking psychological trauma to massacres and the razing of their communities, whereas youth from La Esperanza focused less directly on the war.

The subsequent study (Rousseau et al. 2005) conducted in 1999 with youth from La Victoria, after most international non-governmental organizations had left, however, revealed that youth no longer spoke of collective community goals. Rather, they voiced more everyday concerns and personal plans. Furthermore, in 1996 (when NGO presence was strong in La Victoria) youth emphasized their Guatemalan identity, which had been emphasized by NGO projects through their promotion of collective organizing, the reconstruction of the group's traumatic past, and demands for education and human rights . However, in 1999 (once NGOs had left) youths' narratives highlighted their Mexican identities, as some youths had grown up in Mexico. Rousseau and her colleagues explain that, in the three years since the departure of the NGOs and the stop to aid to the community coming from outside, a shift had occurred in the way the young people talked about their concerns: their expressions were much more like those of communities that have lived through a similar experience but which did not receive massive outside support

(Rousseau et al. 2005:14). Rousseau et al. (Ibid.) conclude that the impact of NGOs on memory practices and reconstruction processes may be superficial and not necessarily permanent, thus adding the element of temporality. Rousseau and colleagues illustrate a very important point with respect to the flexible impact of institutions such as NGOs on the ways in which individuals and communities reconstruct their pasts and envision their futures. Nonetheless, the authors demonstrate the existence of an influence of institutions on the memory and narration practices of individuals. In the section that follows I examine key narratives, in particular that of Doña Tina, a K'achikel woman, in order to explore the working of memory in processes of (re)construction of daily life in contemporary Guatemala City.

Survival in the Ashes of War: Women of the María José[37] Community

For women in my study who had directly experienced war-time violence, traumas and memories of war were reawakened constantly by the pervasiveness of current violence, crime, and impunity. This was particularly the case for the women of the community of María José whom I came to know during my fieldwork in Guatemala. María José is a multi-ethnic community of indigenous peoples who were displaced by war, migrated to the city, and organized collectively to gain access to the land where they have now built their community. The members of the María José settlement had originally invaded other lands in the greater metropolitan area. But in early 1990s authorities threatened them with eviction and sent army and police forces halt their land. Doña Tina, an indigenous woman from a small village

[37] This is a fictional name used to protect the identities of research participants.

in Chimaltenango, whom I came to know closely during my research, recalled this period as one of struggle. “Some people were taken to jail,” she recalled: “We fought, as they say, with our teeth or with whatever we had. We were ready to pay, not just have them give us the land, but to at least pay for a small dignified space in which to live [*pagar al menos un lugarcito digno donde vivir*], after all we had lived through”. With the assistance of the National Committee for Aid to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons (CEAR), the group got help with their land claims and the resettlement and financial compensation process. In May 1995, the 160 families that make up the community moved into the Santa Elena housing project, which had been assigned to them (UN 1995). Doña Tina told me how in the early days of their invasion, they slept under plastic tents, under the rain, until the land, then belonging to the National Housing Bank, was approved for them. After a long struggle, the families comprising María José won access to land titles, their lands subsidized by the government.

On several occasions during my time in Guatemala I had heard that there was a community of persons who had been internally displaced from the war, who had settled on the outskirts of Guatemala City. I was intrigued since, as mentioned previously, much of the research that has been conducted on refugees or on persons displaced by war focuses on rural areas of the country. The work of Spanish anthropologists Manuela Camus (2002) and Santiago Bastos (Bastos and Camus 1990,1992,1994,1995), both long-time residents of Guatemala, represents an exception, as they directly address the experiences of indigenous peoples in the city. In her ethnographic work on “being indigenous” in Guatemala City, Manuela Camus

(2002) is particularly concerned with processes of ethnic identity formation and social organizing among indigenous peoples in the City, including those that migrated during the armed conflict and those residing and working in the capital prior to the war.

I enquired about the community of María José with Rosario, a staff member of the Centre for Psychosocial Support to Victims of Political Violence, whom I had met during my Master's research, which included an analysis of the Master's Program in Social Psychology and Political Violence at the University of San Carlos. Rosario had a long history with María José. For the past several years Rosario had visited families on a weekly basis, supervising upper-year social psychology students conducting their practicum requirement in the community. I would come to observe the respect shown to her by many of María José's members. After several years of support from the Centre, Rosario informed me that members of María José had asked her if she and her team would write the community's history. In addition to mental health support, the Centre was collecting life histories to be included in the publication about María José. During the time I was conducting my research in 2007, María José with the help of the Centre was setting up a community library and documentation centre, housed in the Community Hall Building of María José, itself painted with a mural depicting the community's history.

Figure 5: A section of the Community Mural, depicting community life followed by massacres and genocide in the 1980s. (Photograph taken by author)

I made my way to María José on a sunny Saturday morning, arriving with a group of university students and Rosario. The community of María José is part of the larger neighborhood (*colonia*) Santa Elena. On the surface, Santa Elena is very similar to other working class neighborhoods on the outskirts of Guatemala City. The entrance to the colonia is quite busy, lined with small household shops (*tiendas*) and street vendors selling items such as milk, eggs, bread, snack products, as well as fruits and vegetables. There is considerable human and vehicle traffic and noise near the entrance, with buses frequently stopping to drop off passengers and picking others up. This was clearly not a gated community – no gated entrance ways, no armed security or surveillance systems were in place. Off a main road on the Ruta Villa Nueva, Barcenas, the entrance to Santa Elena, as is the case with other working class colonias, is open, and accessible to anyone who wishes to enter.

Figure 6: Colonia Santa Elena (Photograph taken by author)

While the houses lining the entrance are constructed of cement block, as one approaches the centre of the colonia there are small strips of homes made of light corrugated metal (*lámina*). As I would learn, many of these homes belong to the residents of María José. Although members of the community successfully fought for rights to land, their living conditions are extremely poor. Having enough to eat is a daily concern for many of these families. "I have seen entire families living in a single room, sometimes up to eight people in a tiny space", Doña Tina indicated to me. Furthermore, women I interviewed expressed to me many health concerns, yet services were lacking. Self-reported health-related concerns included *nervios,* sadness and depression, digestive problems, and alcoholism, particularly of husbands but also of women.

Within the literature examining the embodiment of terror focusing on Latin America, the cluster of conditions such as anxiety, fear or 'fright' (*susto*), tension, and dizziness expressed as *nervios* ("being nervous"/ "having nerves") has received a wealth of attention (e.g. see Green 1999; Jenkins 1991; Jenkins and Valiente 1994;

Low 1994). In her research among Mayan war widows in Guatemala, Green (1999) found that the violence and terror women had endured was embodied as *susto* (fright) and *nervios* (nerves). Green also found that Mayan women experienced headaches and other chronic pains. Green argues that these illnesses not only served as proof of the violence the women had lived, but also served as its 'memory', as sites of resistance and for generating 'safe' discussions among women about the crimes that had been perpetrated against them. While the context of impunity in which the widows lived prevented them from coming forth to explicitly denounce the violations committed against themselves and their families, speaking of their aches and pains was one way in which they were able to "remember" and speak of the trauma they had endured. Despite the fact its residents voiced many health concerns, María José had no health centre. Thus, one community member indicated, "if someone gets sick, you have to go to [the capital of] Villa Nueva or Guatemala City".

Figure 7: María José (Photograph taken by author)

Analyzing the lives of members of María José provides insight into the multiple layers of violence and inequity that assault women's lives. On my first visit to María José, Rosario introduced me to a few women she thought would be willing to share their stories with me. Rosario introduced me as a Guatemalan, the daughter of immigrants living in Canada, assuming this would be the best way to enable the women of the community to feel comfortable with my presence. As I would come to see, the women of María José admired Rosario a great deal, and thus their acceptance of me may have reflected the relationship of trust they had developed with Rosario over time. It would become clear to me that the women to whom Rosario had introduced me were active in the María José community association and had shared their experiences of war-related violence with others. María José, as its successful political struggle for land and financial compensation from the National Compensation Program illustrates, is a self-aware and politically conscious community of war survivors. That individuals' narratives would draw on a collective story of war, loss, displacement and collective organizing is not surprising. As I would discover in getting to know individual members of María José, however, there were elements outside of the collective memory. Among these aspects are, first, sexual assaults of women during the war and their subsequent struggle deciding whether or not to disclose their experiences to their spouses and community members. A second dimension concerns present-day challenges to feed their families and remain safe from the 'violence on the street'.

One of the first women I met in María José was Doña Thelma, a survivor of the massacre of her community, the murder of both of her parents and a sexual

assault perpetrated against her during La Violencia when she was still a child. For Doña Thelma the past was constantly being re-lived in the present; the present condition of insecurity and fear, particularly palpable in Guatemala City, worked to continually reawaken the memories of these events. She indicated that the pain and constant state of *nervios* and worry she carried with her as a result of the difficult experiences she had endured were aggravated by the present-day threat to her own safety and that of her family. Thus, she revealed that when her 17 and 19 year-old daughters were out of her sight when they went to school or work, she experienced great anxiety and feared the worst. She was flooded by memories of what she herself had endured during Guatemala's internal armed conflict and feared that her daughters could be assaulted when they were out on their own. The memories of past traumatic events were frequently relived due to the presence of present-day quotidian violence.

Like Doña Thelma, other indigenous women belonging to María José similarly carried memories of war, which were easily triggered by events, people, or objects in their surroundings. For instance, 39 year-old Doña Tina, a K'ackchikel woman from Chimaltenango, told me how she could not bear the sight of a soldier or an armed man, a common sight in the country since many businesses, workplaces, residences employ armed security guards; in addition, firearms in Guatemala are easily accessible to ordinary citizens. The image of armed men stirred memories of soldiers barging into her home and cruelly taking the lives of family, neighbors, and other loved ones. Such evocations reawakened for Doña Tina a painful past,

intensified constantly by fear and impunity still present, challenging her efforts to construct an ordinary life for her and her family in the city.

The work of anthropologist Veena Das and colleagues (Das, Kleinman, Lock, Ramphele and Reynolds 2001) is helpful in examining how communities and individuals remake their life worlds in the aftermath (or in the face) of mass violence, social suffering, and/or everyday injustice. In her ethnographic work with women in India who experienced abduction and rape during the period of the Partition, Das is interested in "describing what happens to the subject and world when the memory of such events is folded into ongoing relationships" (Das 2007:8). Das is concerned with how "extraordinary" events are woven into the fabric of the "ordinary". As such Das locates agency in those actions of women, that do not necessarily attempt to escape the ordinary through "grand gestures", but rather "descend into" it (2007:7).

Below I provide a life narrative of Doña Tina, that exemplifies some of the ways in which she has had to blend extraordinary events of her life into her day-to-day experiences. I met Doña Tina through Rosario on one of the Saturday visits to María José. On one of these mornings I had the opportunity to meet Doña Tina's mother, who lived with her. Her mother was very thin, and visibly weak: she had fallen ill several months earlier and rarely could leave her bed. Indeed when I interviewed Doña Tina, she began by telling me about the events surrounding her mother's and father's abductions (and her father's ultimate disappearance) by military forces in 1981. Tina shifts from discussing the painful experiences of the

past, to current circumstances in her life, including marital problems and her mother's current illness.

> Well, you see *(pues fijese)*, my mom that 24th of December was left with four children. I was the eldest, I was nine years old, one of my sisters was seven, another four, and one was three months old. And after that 24th of December, on the 2nd of February they came to our house, the other one we were living in [after fleeing home]. They came, kicked down the door, they came in, kidnapped my mother and that day also raped me. On the 7th of February we left that place without anything, sleeping in the woods, running, underneath rocks, with my mom injured. Now she doesn't see with one eye, they broke her left retina and hurt her; we took her with us, without eating for three days. We arrived at a river, and from the river about three kilometers away we could hear gunshots, the army was killing so many people. We left, and thank God, we arrived in the City. When we arrived my mom practically gave us up for adoption and we were separated. [….] Today I am so affected by everything.
>
> At the age of 19 I married a Ladino man. His family has never accepted that he has an indigenous wife, and they do not hide their dislike of me, to the point that they threatened my husband with taking his inheritance away if he married me. Then more problems came, because I never told him I had been raped. I lived all my life without telling anyone, I didn't even tell him. Later he would reproach me, he would tell me he had left his family for me and I was worth nothing.
>
> My mom's illness, according to the doctors, stems from the same circumstances, from the life she led. She could barely feed us, her children, tortillas and beans to survive. [….] She worked from six in the morning until eight at night. All of this took a complete toll on her and her body, she has an ulcer and circulatory problems. [….] I am seeing her waste away. She doesn't eat so she has a serious peptic condition; she has a circulatory problem; she doesn't see because she lost one eye completely when she was kidnapped. Everyone says it is a miracle she is alive. When they kidnapped her, they were going to kill her, they say that they left her about a meter distance away, however, the weapon did not fire. When the gun did not fire, they were seeing how they would fix it, and so my mom began to drag and drag herself until she found a big rock that had some kind of large whole beneath it and got in. She began to pull earth over her so they would not find and shoot her. And she spent

> nearly three days there. Then she came out to look for us. Luckily she appeared, and when she did, we left, fleeing the place. The sad part about all of this, I often stop to think, is that we had not committed any crime, because my dad did not have anything to do with the army or the guerrillas. He never had anything to do with them, the only thing is that our village was so far, no one cared about our village, so they did what they wanted.
>
> I am now 39 years old. Thirty years ago have passed since all of this; I have 29 years with all this silence. I felt like the clown; when I was out and about I would put on a happy face, talk and smile. And I was like this here and there and everywhere I went. But I would always feel, that underneath it all there was something.
>
> I have lived some through some incredible things. One day as I was leaving my house, there where you have been, I was walking on my way to church. The church was located in front of the *Palomares*[38] where I lived. I was leaving my home one day, and ran into some kids who knew me. I greeted them and asked if they wanted to accompany me to church. Sure, they said. As we were leaving, a brother from church pulled up with his pick-up truck and asked if we needed a ride. I said that that would be good. Thank goodness for the delay with the pickup truck and the kids. When the car got to the market, we saw that three youths were going by. And they approached the truck that was distributing oil in the market, and one of the youth grabbed a machete, and without pity went for the officer's head. The police officer pulled the trigger of his gun and eliminated the young man. So, from approximately three or four metres, we saw how the poor boy uncoiled, like in the movies.

For several years, Doña Tina and her husband were separated. During the separation, Doña Tina had a difficult time earning a living and supporting her daughter. She rented a room in a palomar, where she recalled living in crowded circumstances along with other families. She looks at that time with great regret, since she had to leave her daughter alone for long periods when she went to work.

[38] As Doña Tina explained to me, *palomar(es)* is used to refer to a type of housing where many individuals or families live together. A palomar (from the word *paloma* or dove) is a pigeon-house or dove-cot, thus when it is used in reference to human housing it implies people sleeping in cramped quarters.

Though Doña Tina was unaware of it at the time, her daughter later told her how she had been sexually abused by a man in the building. The sexual abuse of her daughter haunts Doña Tina persistently, as does her own sexual assault as a young woman. She feels guilt about not having been able to protect her young daughter.

Doña Tina's experience flows outside of the analytical categories of political, structural, symbolic, gender-based, and everyday violence. She is not merely a survivor of war and displaced person, she is an indigenous woman, who has been the victim of gender and ethnic based violence. Moreover, as she herself maintains, her economic hardships, heightened during the time she was separated from her husband, put her daughter in a vulnerable position. She worries both as a daughter for her mother who is ill, and as a mother for her daughter and younger boy. As Doña Tina was making efforts to confront her past – she filed paperwork for the body of her father to be searched for and exhumed – her mother's health deteriorated. As a consequence, she indicated, she could not take the necessary time away from her home to pursue the exhumation of her father. In Doña Tina's own words,

> It was almost the same day. They called me from Chimaltenango, that they had my case in their hands for follow-up. The first time I went and told them my situation and how things had occurred. Then they gave me an appointment for two weeks from then, but there was no two weeks later, because the next day, my mother fell ill, she had a heart attack and we took her to the hospital. When I saw her in the hospital I could do no more. We took her from the hospital, and she is still the same. So, it has been a real problem, I have no longer been able.

Punctuating her narrative is also talk of present day incidents of violence, such as the example of the horrific incident that took place the morning she was on her way to church accompanied by several youths.

Anda Con Cuidado: "Today Violence is Worse"

While for members of María José, such as Doña Tina, or other Guatemalans who had direct experiences of war-time violence, the war served as an anchor for narrative (re)constructions of their lives, this was not the case for everyone. Whether or not individuals drew on historical collective memory of war in narratives of the present, I was consistently told that one had to take precaution, to live and *andar* (to go) "*con cuidado*" (with caution). Nowadays, as one young female university student told me, "when you say goodbye to someone or you leave one place to go to another people say "*anda con cuidado"* (go with caution, with care). She drew my attention to a phrase I had been hearing repeatedly.

Related to warnings to take precautions when leaving the space of home, work, or study, and to proceed with caution in interactions with strangers or 'untrustworthy' neighbors, I often heard individuals – men and women – indicate that today violence was worse than it was in the past. In other words, even during years when Guatemala was officially in a state of war, life then was more 'tranquil' compared to now.[39] I was somewhat puzzled by these commentaries as I would think about the armed internal conflict and the pervasive violence that was perpetrated against a civilian population. Or, I thought back to interviews with

[39] I cannot stress enough that my fieldwork was conducted in Guatemala City, thus the narratives of violence I collected are of urban dwellers. I did not collect the narratives of Guatemalans in rural areas, for whom memories and narrative reconstructions of the war-time period may vary from their urban counterparts.

survivors of war; it can't be "true" that violence is worse today, I would think to myself. In some ways too these narratives seemed to be in tension with official discourses of Guatemala's peace era. It is not the "truth" value of these claims that makes them most significant, but what they reveal and communicate about individual and historical memory, conceptualizations of life and violence today, and their interrelationship.

Silvia, who told me about the fear she felt as an academic in Guatemala City at the height of La Violencia, indicated:

> But it was a fear that was more localized, you can say that you knew, although nobody was sure, but it was a fear of another kind. Today it is a much stronger matter, which attacks, I think, the meaning of life itself. Because it is as if life has never been worth anything. But today it is worse because you are killed for your cell phone or something, or for being in the wrong place. So, it is a different fear, much more diffuse, because you don't know exactly from where the aggression will come.

There has been institutional work done to remember and commemorate Guatemala's war and its victims, as we can see in the Truth Commission reports (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1998). This work has provided narrative frameworks for individuals and communities to draw on in giving order to their memories and experiences. As both Truth projects in Guatemala highlight in their respective reports, violence during Guatemala's armed internal conflict was ideologically motivated: although it was both directed and indiscriminate at the same time, counterinsurgency violence was ostensibly targeted at those seen as allied to the guerrillas. The Truth Commissions have provided frameworks for approaching a history of war and for giving meaning to the violence that swept Guatemala from 1960 to 1996. Though the individual

perpetrator of an act may not have been known, and remains unknown, particularly since amnesty was declared for intellectual authors and perpetrators of war crimes, the survivors have at least a sense of whether it was the army or the guerrillas that committed acts of violence against them, their families, and communities. What city residents raised as particularly horrible about present day crime was that it is unexpected, and it could happen to anyone, at any time. The exact identity of the parties involved, the aggressors and the victims, is not so clear.

The everyday commentaries of individuals can serve to order disorderly experiences, and hence play a central role in daily reconstruction of life in an urban context marked by high levels of crime, more than a decade after the official end of war. As Liisa Malkki (1995) found in her work among Hutu refugees from Burundi who were exiled in Tanzania, for Guatemalan City residents narratives of violence may also serve as moral commentaries on their life conditions, their causes and implications. At the same time, narratives of violence can heighten a climate of fear. Teresa Caldeira's (2000) ethnography *City of Walls,* which analyzes crime, class segregation and citizenship in São Paulo, Brazil, demonstrates how the mundane everyday speech of individuals can contribute to the production of violence, even while it may resist it. Among the themes Caldeira explores is the concept of the "talk of violence", or "the everyday narratives, commentaries, conversations, and jokes that have crime and fear as their subjects" (2000:2). Caldeira demonstrates how these commentaries and narratives, "counteract fear, and the experiences of being a victim of crime and simultaneously make fear circulate and proliferate" (Ibid.). This 'talk' thus enables individuals to comment on processes of social

disintegration and the linked problems of pervasive unemployment, and increasing poverty and crime. At the same time, however, this 'talk' can work to legitimize violence such as the abuse of citizen's rights; it can also reproduce stereotypes, and reinforce the categories of the dominant, even while it may attempt to challenge these structures (Caldeira 2000). According to Caldeira, this talk of violence is contagious, as it is fragmentary, repetitive, expressive and productive (2000:19). Thus the "talk of crime" is not merely reflective, but productive of crime and fear. It organizes that which is disorderly (violence and crime) and serves as moral commentary about 'good' and 'evil'. In contrast to authors who speak of violence as opposed to or beyond language (e.g., Scarry 1985), particularly in the sense of violence destroying our ability to express the pain of violence, Caldeira argues that language produces violence. Narrative helps violence to circulate and proliferate, even while it counteracts it (2000:37).

One of the themes that I heard commonly raised in everyday discussions was that of gangs and their members (*mareros/pandilleros),* which operated in various neighborhoods. I was told, for example, how gang members would go around neighborhoods demanding that ordinary residents and business owners pay them an *impuesto* ("tax"). Paying the impuesto would ensure that individuals or families would not be harassed or harmed by gang members. If they did not pay, gang members would not guarantee their safety. Mareros are also frequently blamed by politicians for the problem of crime in Guatemala. As I described in Chapter 1, during the 2007 elections the former war-time army General Otto Pérez Molina ran

on a platform centred on ridding Guatemala of the gang problem. He vowed to take a Hard Hand (*Mano Dura*) approach to battle crime in the country.

Figure 8: Billboard from the *Partido Patriota* 2007 Electoral Campaign. Reads: "No More Fear: Hard Hand Urgently Needed". (Photograph from: *Prensa Libre*, March 22, 2007, p.5)

Drawing on Caldeira's concept of "talk of crime", it is possible to see how the everyday talk of crime involving *mareros* may provide an outlet for people's feelings about their daily situation. At the same time it may reinforce stereotypes and dominant positions, such as those promoted by State officials, that violence in the country is the result of the actions of violent individuals, a position that ignores political, economic, and historical factors contributing to the formation of such groups. Mari, a 22 year old ladina and university student, shared with me incidents of assault that she had experienced at the hands of gangs since she moved to the city five years earlier. She stated,

> Since I have lived here, during the five years, I have been assaulted on five occasions, four times directly and one time I was robbed without my noticing. […] The first assault (*asalto*)

was near Peri-Roosevelt intersection. I got off the bus and a guy with a jacket came close to me and pointed his gun at me, sort of hiding it behind his jacket, and he demanded I give him my cell phone; it was the first thing he asked for. I was with a classmate, and she also gave him her cell phone. But the most frightening thing is that he asked me for my *cédula* [I.D.]. I got so scared and I didn't know what to do. Of course, I gave it to him. We kept walking and I felt a horrible fear. But then he just took our money and cell phones and left. I felt more calm, but still scared; it creates fear. Another time I was on Bus 96, and I was, along with my friends, on my way to the central campus of the university, and four men got on the bus. Three were armed and other just watching. They asked us all, I guess they had figured out that the majority of us were students and carried cell phones. It seems that this is what they care about most, the cell phones. So they stole them from us. This time I felt it was more traumatizing than the previous time because one of them banged the roof of the bus with his arm and yelled, "if you don't give it to us you die". It all happened very quickly, maybe in a span of five minutes that they robbed all of us. I think they were under the effects of some kind of drug because they were shaking, the situation was really bad, they passed by three times checking our backpacks, and we no longer had anything.

Now on the buses, when I get on, when I have to travel by bus, I look and sit at the very front or if I see that the people who get on look like they are going to *asaltar* ['hold the bus up and rob'] and I can get off I do because you can tell, more or less who is going to rob you.

How can you tell? I asked, and received the following answer:

Well, you see they, those belonging to gangs, the *asaltantes,* use a type of dress more or less, here we say *cholo*. They have tattoos on their hands. The majority of them use hats, because all of the ones that have robbed me all have some kind of hat on. They use black jackets to cover, sometimes, their weapons. And usually they are not carrying anything, they keep looking at you; most of them are in groups of three. There is always one at the very front and two on the sides, and they are sort of looking at you. If I feel this, I prefer to get off and avoid the *asalto***.**

Mari's commentaries, like the commentaries of others I opened this chapter with in relation to safe/unsafe spaces, worked to create demarcations around *which* types of persons *should* be avoided, even as they provided an outlet for Mari to express her feelings and thoughts about the attacks against her. Talk of violence is pervasive in Guatemala's capital. While it was sometimes difficult during my research to obtain narratives of personal cases, especially those involving partner violence or sexual assault, when pertaining to generalized violence, news stories on the latest cases of crime, and mareros, Guatemalans, men and women, young and old, generally had much to say. I argue that these narratives played a significant role in shaping everyday experience, and highlight the need to approach violence, not as merely "event", but a social process with a social life prior to and beyond the its appearance or particular manifestation(s). Thus, *andar con cuidado* applies also to researchers; we must be cautious in how we traverse memories and narratives of violence and careful to listen to different voices, silences, and gaps. The chapter that follows, which focuses on the social phenomenon of femicide that has swept Guatemala in the last decade, continues with the analysis of the intersection of acute moments of violence and chronic everyday processes of injustice and their elaboration and unfolding in women's lives.

CHAPTER 4

WHERE ARE WOMEN'S VOICES?: FEMICIDE, FEMICIDAL VIOLENCE, BODIES, AND REPRESENTATION

Only numbers
Today
Another women was found killed.
Yesterday there were three.
This is added
to the hundreds of every year
to the thousands
during the internal armed conflict.
What is shocking, sickening, and indignant
is that they are only numbers
that do not move anything
do not stop anything
that do not change anything.

Sólo cifras
Hoy
Apareció otra mujer asesinada.
Ayer fueron tres.
Esto se suma
a las cientos de cada año
a las miles
durante el enfrentamiento armado interno.
Lo que asusta, enferma, e indigna
es que sólo son cifras
que no mueven nada
que no detienen nada
que no cambian nada.

-Ana Lucía Morán

There is profound misogyny in our country. I would say in all societies, but since I live in this one, I can affirm that in this society there is tremendous misogyny. Thus, women's lives, women's bodies are not worth anything. And this is paradoxical because in recent years women have emerged with force, since the late 1980s there has been a wave of women's organizing and mobilizing that was not there previously.

-Silvia, activist, academic, resident of Guatemala City

I first met Doña Celeste at Fuerzas, an institution located in downtown Guatemala City offering legal, medical, social work, and psychological services to women in situations of abuse as well as assistance to relatives of murdered women. *Fuerzas* immediately struck me as a rather "safe" space, operating in the heart of an otherwise chaotic and dangerous city. Housed in an old, colonial-style, two-storey home, complete with a small courtyard, the institution seemed to exemplify a world

in itself. Its walls painted lilac and light blue, and lined with slogans (such as "love does not hurt") and postcards from around the globe congratulating the institution for its efforts in fighting violence against women, I got the sense that Fuerzas was conducting important work. While on the one hand, Fuerzas seemed a reality apart from the chaos of Guatemala City, on the other, it shared the dynamics of life outside. For instance, a heavy, metal, barred door, a camera surveillance system, and a guard at the entrance[40] were among the measures in place to deter unwanted intruders, such as women's aggressors, but also to prevent potential 'petty' thieves from breaking in and, just as important, to protect staff and clients from being the targets of political acts of violence.[41] As with anyone who was not a staff member of the institution, I had to leave identification at the front and sign a log-book upon arrival, before being cleared for passing through to the reception area. Another set of bars and doors separated the reception area from the offices and different meeting rooms.

The first time I visited Fuerzas was one morning, early on during my fieldwork in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area. I showed up unannounced and without an appointment. After visiting numerous organizations and government offices, I

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[40] Private security agencies have proliferated in Guatemala in the post peace agreement era. Thus, it is quite common for banks, large stores and shopping malls, ordinary residential neighbourhoods, and governmental and non-governmental institutions to have armed security personnel and surveillance systems in place. While common throughout the country, and especially prominent in Guatemala City, Fuerzas had experienced thefts, another reason for security to be taken seriously.

[41] There would be cause for alarm for staff and clients of Fuerzas to be potential targets of violence by women's individual aggressors or of political violence. In Guatemala, both during the internal armed conflict, as in the current post-peace agreement period, human rights workers or individuals and organizations conducting work against human rights violations or impunity in the country have been systematic victims of intimidation, in the form of threats or physical attacks including murder.

had learned that sometimes this approach worked best. I presented myself as a researcher from a Canadian university, offering a letter of introduction and a business card. My intention was to see the institution I had heard so much about and make an appointment with the director, in order to return another day to conduct interviews with her and other staff.

Despite the various security measures, which might signal that Fuerzas was a closed space, I was greeted in a friendly fashion. A staff member working in the research department gave me a tour and information on the different services Fuerzas offered. While meeting with me, the Fuerzas staff member – herself someone who identified as a survivor of violence – received a call from reception that the director had become free and was able to see me. I met with the director, Laura, for nearly an hour, after which she introduced me to Julia, a psychologist and a co-facilitator of a woman's support group I was invited to sit in on.[42]

Given the methodological difficulties described in Chapter 1 that are implicit in conducting research on women and violence, when Laura, the director of Fuerzas, suggested that I sit in on the women's support group (if it was approved by the facilitators and the participants), I thought this would be the ideal opportunity to obtain insights on how violence operated in women's lives, meet potential research participants, and have the chance to gain women's trust. Doña Celeste was the only indigenous woman participating in the support group, composed of twelve women, that was run by two trained psychologists, assisted by a social work student. The intention behind the foundation of the group was to create a supportive space of

[42] The support group is discussed at further length in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

peers for women to begin working through issues of abuse and violence they had undergone in the past, or were still experiencing. Doña Celeste stood out, not only by being the sole indigenous woman, and one who wore her *traje;* she also had a heaviness to her gaze at the same time as an aura of strength about her. There was an added layer of tragedy and pain to her story that I would learn about with time, but that was almost palpable to me by merely being in her presence. I would come to learn, through sitting in on the support group and getting to know Doña Celeste personally, that her daughter Lorena had been a victim of murder in 2003. Four years had passed since the terrible killing of Lorena. Yet, as I describe further in this Chapter, this family was only beginning to live the repercussions of this horrendous event.

Lorena is one of the approximately 3000 women who have been murdered in Guatemala since the year 2000 (GHRC 2009:2). While human rights organizations and activists have long laboured to prove that genocide occurred during Guatemala's internal armed conflict, now, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the concept of femicide has gained currency among women's organizations as they attempt to evidence the existence of this insidious, systematic form of violence against a targeted group – namely women.

This chapter takes a close look at femicide in Guatemala, a phenomenon that has come to receive a certain level of attention by national and international non-governmental organizations, and, of late, with the April 2008 approval of the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women (Ley Contra el Femicidio y Otras Formas de Violencia Contra la Mujer), by the Guatemalan

government. My aim in this chapter is to offer a critical reading of the various positions – governmental, media, NGO, and scholarly – on the issue of femicide in Guatemala. I am concerned in particular with what happens to the lives, experiences, and voices of women in the discussions and debates surrounding femicide in Guatemala. For, even within the publications of NGOs and human rights organizations that are all working to draw attention to the issue and who call for the eradication of all forms of violence toward women, women's voices are notably absent. As Ana Lucia Morán's poem that forms the epigraph of this chapter points out, women are turned into numbers, and the textures of women's lives and deep effects of murderous violence on her family and extended community are lost.

While "body counts" have been instrumental in drawing State and international attention to killings of women in Guatemala, femicide in Guatemala is not simply a story about numbers. The very studies produced by various agencies and organizations (Amnesty International 2005; CALDH 2005; GGM 2006,2007) that draw attention to femicide in Guatemala and call for its eradication indicate that it is the particular *ways* in which murders of women are carried out. Femicides are often perpetrated with ("hate") as evidenced in the targeted mutilation of parts of a woman's body that symbolize her "femininity", such as her reproductive organs, breasts and face – that characterizes present day murders of women and make the phenomenon all the more alarming as an attack on women *because* they are women.

As the literature within the anthropology of the body highlights, the body is not merely a biological entity. The body has social purposes: it can serve for both social and cultural production, and therefore violence enacted on bodies can at once

be individual, social, and political (Feldman 1991; Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996; Lock and Farquhar 2007). Violent action can have the effect not only of hurting and killing the victim, but tortured bodies can also become carriers of powerful social and political messages (Feldman 1991; Das 1997; Torres 2004, 2005). In this vein, feminist scholars have long documented how, in societies throughout history and around the globe, violence has been perpetrated on women's bodies for the purposes of sustaining patriarchal systems, nation building and nationalism, and for the waging of war (Das, 1997; Giles & Hyndman, 2004; Malkki, 1995; Olujic, 1998). For instance, in Guatemala, as in other war-torn countries such as Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzgovina, and Rwanda, violence against women has been utilized as a weapon of war (IRIN 2005). Women often occupy a symbolic place as representatives of culture or the 'collectivity', with control of their bodies and sexualities tied to the honour of the family and community. For instance, drawing on her research in Eastern Guatemala, Cecilia Menjívar (2008) illustrates how gossip and rumor operate as a key forms of social control—ways in which women's movements, bodies and sexualities are monitored, particularly in the case of the absence of a male spouse who may be away in another town, city, or working in the United States due to local employment shortages. The honour of the family is deeply tied to how the rest of the community perceive a woman and the degree to which she is perceived as being a "good wife" by not arousing public suspicions by being seen with other men or displaying signs of "promiscuous" behaviour.

Attacks on the honor of men and their communities, thus, often occur in the form of rape and killing of “their” women (Wikan 2008).[43] For instance, in Guatemala, as in other countries where mass ethnic violence has occurred, genocide and femicide are closely related issues. In her work *Guatemala: From Genocide to Femicide,* Sanford (2008) explores the social, political, and historical context in which these phenomena are intertwined. Sanford raises the point that since genocide (as was carried out in Guatemala against Mayan indigenous communities) has the intent to destroy the “means of reproduction” of targeted peoples, women are too often primary targets of this type of violence. Similarly, a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (IRIN 2005:5), which provides an overview of gender-based violence against women and girls in conflict zones worldwide, indicates that, “[w]omen and girls are singled out because the harm and humiliation inflicted not only hurts them, but also deeply harms and affects the men in the targeted community”. Cynthia Enloe (1989:42-64) highlights how much ideological and symbolic weight is assigned to women’s bodies, their outward attire and sexual purity. In this way, women become seen as,

> 1) the community’s – or the nation’s – most valuable *possessions*; 2) the principle *vehicles* for transmitting the whole nation’s values from one generation to the next; 3) *bearers* of the community’s future generations – crudely, nationalist wombs; 4) the members of the community most *vulnerable* to defilement and exploitation by oppressive alien rulers; and 5)

[43] For example, Veena Das (2007) illustrates in her analysis of the mass rape and abduction of Indian women during the Partition how the Indian State’s preoccupation with recuperating women was intimately tied to regaining honour through regaining control of women’s sexual and reproductive functions. Thus, efforts to recuperate abducted women and subsequent forms of commemoration for the hardships endured by women during this historical period became linked to the origin of the State, as an origin that established “correct” relations between men and women (2007:33).

> most susceptible to *assimilation* and cooptation by insidious outsiders. (Enloe 1989:54, emphasis in the original)

How women's physical bodies become linked to social and political bodies is critical to understanding the place of femicidal violence in post-war Guatemalan society. In Guatemala contestations over citizenship have historically occurred through violence. The body politic has relied on the marking and wounding of bodies particularly along ethnic and gender lines (Nelson 1999). The most explicit example is Guatemala's armed internal conflict which endured for nearly four decades, during which time the State perpetrated the cruelest forms of violence against those "threatening" the national project of "modernization". Today as women emerge as a powerful political force[44] (Berger 2006), misogynist violence is increasingly perpetrated against them. The messages written on the bodies of women have social functions and effects. What these functions may be, what they may signal to other women in Guatemala today about their lives, rights, possibilities and safety, or what the effect of a woman's murder may be to those in her circle of family, friends and extended community are of concern to my discussion. To begin to address these questions however, it is essential to look at women's everyday experiences and listen to the narratives these lives and women's voices tell us.

<u>The Context of Guatemalan Femicides</u>

In Guatemala, there is a specific historical, political, social and cultural backdrop against which murders of women take place and where these acts are either accepted and/or opposed. As anthropologist and former Mexican congresswoman Marcela Lagarde (2007) argues, femicide does not simply occur everywhere and in a

[44] I discuss women's activism at more length in Chapter 5.

vacuum; it unfolds in particular locations and social settings, as well as at particular historical moments (Lagarde 2007). Femicide in Guatemala is presently occurring within a context of violence toward both men and women. Thus certain scholars argue that, in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of femicide in the country, we must also analyze the murder of men (Sanford 2008). To this end, Victoria Sanford conducts an analysis of the phenomenon of "social cleansing" that has become a pressing issue in post war Guatemala. Social cleansing involves the mass killing of youth, particularly young men (CALDH 2007; Sanford 2008) who are socially constructed—through everyday speech, government discourse, and the media—as "criminals", and the cause of all the country's social ills.

"Social cleansing" is a term used today by a range of human rights organizations to refer to an organized form of violence where the State is implicated through its conspicuous inaction in preventing such crimes, and through the active involvement of its forces in certain social cleansing activities, such as the involvement of police forces in killings of youth. According to the Centre for Legal Action in Human Rights (CALDH), which uses the term "extrajudicial killings" of youth rather than social cleansing, the practice has been in place for years and, therefore, is not a "new" phenomenon. For instance, in the 1990s, there were publicized cases of youth being drugged, kidnapped, tortured, and later killed (CALDH 2007:15) According to CALDH (2007) this type of aggression was a common strategy on the part of state officials in dealing with street youth.

In a broader sense, the practice of social cleansing – the elimination of "undesirable" members of society – has been in practice for centuries in Guatemala,

such as during the dictatorships of Manuel Estrada Cabrera and Jorge Ubico (CALDH 2007:19-20). Through the "*Ley Fuga* " and "*Ley Contra la Vagancia*", these presidents both legally empowered authorities to shoot escaping prisoners and imposed harsh penalties including capital punishment on those who did not comply with forced labour requirements (ie. the "vagrant" and unemployed).[45] Moreover, the campaigns of genocide against Mayan indigenous populations, and the selective killings of university students and faculty and social activists during the armed conflict, are also examples of the cruelest forms of social cleansing that have taken place in Guatemala. Systematic investigation into social cleansing, particularly as it is occurring today, is imperative. This chapter, however, focuses on femicide, a symptom of the same system that produces and reproduces quotidian violations of citizens' rights in Guatemala.

Why Femicide?

Why use the term femicide? The fact that a wide range of women's and human rights organizations are utilizing the term signals it has some utility. Indeed, this concept permits the differentiation of this phenomenon from others because it refers to a specific form of violence against a particular group. As such, the concept lends legitimacy to violence against women, and it has been precisely through mobilizing this concept that women's and human rights organizations in Guatemala have been able to draw national and international attention to the issue.

[45] The *Ley Contra la Vagancia* was effectively a forced labour law, ensuring that large farms had a labour force. Landless peasants and indigenous people had to work a minimum of 150 days a year or they could be punished under the law if they did not present proof of service.

The term femicide has different meanings and uses. For instance, within criminological studies, the term has been used to refer simply to the homicides of women (Sanford 2008:61). In this way, the concept is utilized to distinguish whether the victim of a homicide is female or male. However, for feminist researchers this understanding of the term is insufficient as it fails to place the killing of women on a continuum of gender-based violence. For such scholars this use of the term is apolitical, merely a technical term to distinguish the victim's sex. The term "femicide" as used by feminist scholars places gender at the centre of analysis (e.g., see Radford and Russell 1992; Russell and Harms 2001). Even if an act of murderous violence against a woman is perpetrated by an individual "stranger"[46], it nonetheless occurs within complex webs of power, marked by particular social attitudes and practices towards women, their bodies, and their rights. For feminists, the concept of femicide is intrinsically political.

Nonetheless, even within feminist scholarship, research on femicide has been scarce. In 1992 Jill Radford (1992:4) argued that "[t]here are more books on women who kill […] than there are on men who kill women". The edited compilations *Femicide the Politics of Woman Killing* (Radford and Russell 1992) and the follow-up volume *Femicide in Global Perspective* (Russell and Harmes 2001) have played a central role in highlighting this global phenomenon and its particular local manifestations, by drawing on diverse case studies. In 1992, Jill Radford defined

[46] There is a prevalent belief, one often reinforced by the media, that violence against women is carried out by an "unknown" perpetrator. However, countless sociological and criminological studies have illustrated that, most often, a woman's aggressor is not a stranger, but someone close to her. Women are often victims of violence perpetrated by relatives, spouses or former partners, and members of their communities (Radford and Russell 1992; Russell and Harms 2001).

femicide as the “misogynous killing of women by men, in a form of sexual violence” (1992:3). Radford also identified different forms of femicide, including racist femicide, homophobic femicide (or lesbicide), marital femicide, serial femicide and mass femicide. A decade later, Diana Russell (2001) offered a similar definition of the term, though somewhat modified. Russell used, and continues to use, the term femicide to refer to the “killing of females by males *because* they are females” (Russell 2001:3, emphasis original). The author states, “I was and am still convinced that the sexist aspect of most murders of women by men needs to be incorporated into the definition of femicide” (Russell 2001:13).

While seemingly new, the term femicide has been around, at least in Europe, for at least the last two centuries. Moreover, “the phenomenon it describes is as old as patriarchy itself” (Radford and Russell 1992:25). According to Diana Russell (2001:13), the term was first used in 1801 to signify “the killing of a woman” in *A Satirical View of London at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century*. In the 19th century, the term also appeared in *The Confessions of an Unexpected Femicide* (1827), which was written by a perpetrator of femicide himself, and also appeared in the *Wharton’s Law Lexicon* in 1848 (Russell 2001:12). The late 1970s was a turning point, however, in popularizing the use of the term. Dianna Russell utilized the term in 1976 when she testified at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels, a meeting attended by over 2000 women, intended to address and make public the range of discrimination and violence experienced by women from countries worldwide.

Although the term femicide (*femicidio* or *feminicidio* in Spanish) emerged in an English-speaking context, it has come to carry importance among human rights and women's organizations throughout Latin America that are denouncing in the region escalating rates of violence against women, and its most extreme manifestation, woman-killing, in particular. In Guatemala a debate has ensued regarding which of the two terms—*femicidio* or *feminicidio*—should be used when addressing the escalating rates of murders of women in the country. For some, *femicidio,* an "anglocism", refers to the murder of women because of their gender, aligning well with Russell's conceptualization. However, others (e.g., see GGM 2006:6-7) make a distinction, arguing that *femicidio* represents the "technical" and "depoliticized" term to refer merely to "the killing or homicide of women", whereas *feminicidio* highlights the political dimensions of the killing of women, particularly the social and legal impunity that surrounds such crimes.

Which term one chooses to adopt is perhaps less important than the fact that there is a significant debate currently taking place in Guatemala surrounding what the phenomenon of woman-killing should be called and how it should be approached. The sharpness of this definitional debate signals the weight that the issue carries in Guatemalan society today. Marcela Lagarde (2007), who played a critical role in drawing attention to, investigating, and leading legal reform in the area of violence against women in Mexico, proposes the term femicidal violence. Lagarde's conceptualization offers important analytical tools for the analysis of violence toward women as it goes the furthest to place women's violent deaths on a

spectrum of violent structures and practices that diversely and vastly affect women's lives.

Femicidal violence, Lagarde elaborates, "is the most extreme form of gender violence against women, a product of the violation of human rights in the public and private spheres, the result of misogynist conducts that can occur with social impunity on the part of the State, and can culminate in the homicide or other forms of violent deaths of women" (Public lecture, Antigua, Guatemala, May 2007). Thus femicidal violence can take the form of homicides of women, maternal deaths, or illnesses such as cervical and breast cancer. In other words, according to Lagarde, femicidal violence occurs when women die prematurely due to women's gender and particular social relations (such as family and community),and State and institutional practices. This broader framing of the concept better illuminates the intricate ways violence acts upon Guatemalan women.

Is Femicide *really* Occurring?

In the middle of my fieldwork I returned to Montreal to participate in the annual conference of Latin American Studies Association (LASA). As I waited for a session to begin, one of the conference participants introduced himself to me and asked about my research. I mentioned that my study was concerned with violence and women's lives in Guatemala. Further, I explained that it was not merely femicide that interested me as a researcher but the spectrum of violence confronting Guatemalan women, including violence within the home. He turned to me and replied, "but domestic violence and femicide are not connected. What is the connection?" I responded that there was an underlying system of gender inequalities

and power exercised on women's bodies whether in the private or public sphere. Explained in terms of gender, he responded, he could see the connection, a connection that to me was more than evident.

Other questions I have received in relation to my research include: is femicide *really* occurring in Guatemala? Isn't the killing of women merely a reflection of growing rates of violence generally occurring in the country? Are rates of violence on the rise, or are crimes against women less tolerable in times of 'Peace'? These questions are valid ones and have forced me to consider important factors surrounding femicide in Guatemala, and problems of violence in the country that extend beyond this particular issue. However, at times I have felt these types of questions stem from a certain disregard for the topic of gender-based violence, or that the topic is regarded as unimportant unless it is evidenced by "hard" statistical data. Diana Russell (2001) makes a related point in her discussion of media coverage of the Montreal "mass femicide" (known better as the "Montreal Massacre"), when , in 1989, Marc Lépine killed 14 women because of their gender. Russell highlights how media coverage of the crime focused on the mental state of the perpetrator, downplaying gender and the misogynist nature of the murders. Thus the femicidal elements of this crime were downplayed or altogether ignored.

Establishing that femicide is taking place is necessary for the construction of institutional and legal frameworks for combating the problem. In making the case that State resources and efforts need to be directed at eradicating the killing of women, women's and human rights organizations in Guatemala have had to produce data on the phenomenon, particularly in the form of statistics.

The existing statistical data, however, contain significant gaps. There is no uniformity with respect to statistics, which are difficult to compile in Guatemala for a number of reasons. These include a lack of public confidence in State institutions and an indifference on the part of officials, as well as deficiencies within the justice system to deal adequately with these cases – all of which result in the under-registration of violent crimes against women. In addition, it is widely believed that police forces collude with organized crime, as has been observed for other Latin American contexts (Caldeira 2000; Goldstein 2003), and may thus be complicit in violence against women. The lack of reporting, investigation, and prosecution of these crimes has resulted in a situation where the perpetrators of these acts remain largely unidentified and unpunished, which can be seen as contributing to the climate of fear and insecurity present in Guatemala today. Yet, there are many indications that femicide is taking place in the country.

"In Guatemala it is the fashion to kill" states a young man in Canadian filmmaker Giselle Pelletier's (2007) documentary *Killer's Paradise,* which takes a close look at femicide in Guatemala and the impunity that surrounds it. The film, which screened across North America[47], portrays a situation in Guatemala where men kill with impunity and authorities are both uninterested and unequipped to properly investigate murderous crimes against women. The Guatemalan president-elect at the time the film was made, Oscar Berger, who is interviewed, displays a nonchalant attitude toward killings of women in the country, telling the film maker that she has a negative outlook, while his government has a "positive" one. The film

[47] I first saw the film at a 2005 Toronto screening by the National Film Board of Canada.

also depicts the painful situations that families of the victims confront in the aftermath of a femicide. The sister of Nancy Peralta and the family of Claudina Velásquez (two young women, victims of femicide) search for justice, only to have their files added to the piles of unresolved murder cases in the country. They face tremendous suffering due to the premature and unjust deaths of Nancy and Claudina and are indignant at the institutional and social impunity they encounter at every turn. Claudina's father goes to the neighborhood where his daughter's body was found to ask if neighbors saw or heard anything the night of the murder, information that could help in the investigation, but to no avail. Even if families had heard something, a "culture of silence" (Green 1999) pervades Guatemala as individuals fear retaliation (*venganza*). With vultures flying in the skyline, waiting to prey on the next body, and sad melodies playing in the background, the film portrays the dark and difficult climate of violence, death and injustice present in Guatemala today, which expresses itself in the cruelest way as an assault on women's lives.

Like "Killer's Paradise", various studies (e.g., Amnesty International, 2005; CALDH, 2006; PNUD, 2007) attest to the disturbing increase, over the past ten years, in the murder rate of Guatemalan women. For example, the Amnesty International (2005) report, *Guatemala: No Protection, No Justice: Killings of Women in Guatemala*, which has played a central role in drawing attention to this disturbing issue, indicates that the number of women murdered annually almost tripled over the three years spanning 2002 to 2004 (from at least 163 women in 2002, to 383 in 2003, to over 527 in 2004). A subsequent report produced by the

United Nations Development Program for Guatemala indicates that the numbers of murdered women in 2005 and 2006 were 518 and 603 respectively (2007, p. 30).[48] These numbers climbed in subsequent years; 722 murders of women were registered in 2008 (Guatemalan Human Rights Commission 2009:2) and 708 in 2009 (Fundación Sobrevivientes 2010).[49]

In 2006 a National Commission to Address Femicide was established in Guatemala with a mission to investigate and develop strategies for the government to respond to the crisis of mass killings of women. In its investigation into the phenomenon, the Commission determined that: 1) murders of women have been on the rise in post-war Guatemala; 2) that these murders constitute femicide; and 3) that more research is needed, as well as improvements to women's access to justice and a strengthening of legislation in the area of violence against women (*Comisión Nacional Para el Abordaje del Femicidio* 2006).

Paradoxically, violence against women has been a key organizing issue for a largely fragmented women's movement in Guatemala. As I describe in Chapter 5, women's activism aimed at eradicating distinct forms of violence against women specifically, and within Guatemalan society in general, has made gender-based violence an issue deemed worthy of attention by government, media, human rights organizations, and ordinary Guatemalans. Women's activism in the last two

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[48] The United Revolutionary Party (URNG) carried out a study, which was entitled "Femicide in Guatemala: Crimes Against Humanity", where the researchers analyzed the context, characteristics, differing explanations, institutional responses and proposals for addressing the problem. The URNG study found that the cases of femicide rose from 213 in 2000, to 215 in 2001, 163 in 2002, 383 in 2003 and went up to 527 in 2004 (URNG 2005:55).

[49] http://www.sobrevivientes.org/, accessed May 1, 2010.

decades, concurrent with the Peace negotiations in the 1990s and judicial reform subsequent to the signing of Peace in 1996, has resulted in important laws passed in the area of violence against women, including: the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar* (Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence within the Family, 1996), the *Ley de Dignificación y Promoción Integral de la Mujer* (Law for the Dignification and Integral Promotion of Women, 1999), and the *Ley Contra el Femicidio y Otras Formas de Violencia Contra la Mujer* (Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women, 1999).

Women's organizing around violence and the efforts of women's organizations such as the *Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres* (GGM, Guatemalan Women's Group) and the *Red de la no Violencia Contra la Mujer* (No Violence Against Women Network) led to the creation of the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violence within the Family and Against Women (CONPREVI). CONPREVI is an institutional body, composed of both State and civil society representatives, that is responsible for overseeing, recommending, coordinating, and implementing public policies aimed at reducing violence within the family and against women. As a result of women's activism and women increasingly working within State structures, rather than merely providing pressure from outside (Berger 2006), women have been able to push for change from within. In 2004 the United Nations Special Rappporteur on Violence Against Women, Yakin Ertürk visited Guatemala, and met with high functionaries, including president Oscar Berger, later producing a report outlining her findings (Ertürk 2005). The report proposes specific recommendations for the Guatemalan state and international community for

responding to the realities of Guatemalan women. The Commission on Femicide was established following Ertürk's visit and the Commission's proposed lines of action coincided with her recommendations.

The concept of femicide is one that has been imported into Guatemala. In the 1990s, the cruel rapes, disappearances, and murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico attracted international attention (e.g., see Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2002; Ensalaco 2006; Olivera 2006), and victims' groups, as well as feminist organizations, ultimately came to utilize the concept of femicide to describe the Mexican situation. In many ways, the murdered and disappeared women of Ciudad Juárez have been the most publicized cases of femicide internationally, perhaps due to their proximity to the United States. In Mexico, since the 1990s, there has been a disturbing increase in the murder rate of women (*Femicidio en América Latina* 2006; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2002; Ensalaco 2006; Olivera 2006). While violence against women is prevalent throughout the country, Ciudad Juárez City and the State of Chihuahua especially have seen a marked and tragic increase in the abduction, rape, sexual torture, murder, mutilation, and disappearances of women (Ibid.). Although the numbers are disputed, and likely to be conservative, for Ciudad Juárez alone it is estimated that at least 300 women have been murdered since 1993 (*Femicidio en América Latina* 2006; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2002; Ensalaco 2006;Olivera 2006).[50] Moreover, it is estimated that an equal number have been disappeared, bringing the total number of women victims of femicide in Ciudad

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[50] Nationally, it is estimated that 8 000 women have been murdered in Mexico from the early 1990s to 2005 (Lagarde 2005, cited in Olivera 2006:105).

Juárez alone since 1990 closer to 600 women (Ensalaco 2006:419).[51] When a similar pattern of murderous violence against women was observed in Guatemala, human rights and women's groups drew comparisons to the case of women in Ciudad Juárez.

Parallel to the steep rise in the number of killings of Guatemalan women is the increasing frequency with which their murdered bodies are being discovered with signs of rape, torture and mutilation that follow patterned forms – a patterning that distinguishes violence against women from that committed against men (Amnesty International 2005; CALDH). The increase in murders of women in Guatemala has been accompanied by increased sexual violence, as well as gruesome forms of aggression, where violence is enacted not only to inflict pain and kill the victim but also to terrorize others affected by those acts, such as family members, coworkers, and notably, other women. As at other historical moments in Guatemala when social control of particular groups has been an explicit objective, violence has figured prominently as a mechanism of such control (for instance, State violence against indigenous peoples during the internal armed conflict). The subjects of this

[51] The case of femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico brings several important issues to the fore, that may enable us to understand cases of femicide in other (Latin American) contexts. First among these, is the direct links between gender-based violence and a neo-liberal economy, specifically as represented by the *maquiladoras* (transnational clothing manufacturing plants or 'sweat shops'). The neo-liberal restructuring of the economy through the establishment of *maquilas* located south of the U.S. border where work can be exported and a cheap, mostly female, labour force can be utilized to save costs for the transnational corporations, has worked to create a climate in Ciudad Juárez where violence against women can thrive for some of the following reasons: the women murdered in Ciudad Juárez include predominantly poor women who travel to work in the *maquilas* that are located on the U.S./Mexican border (Olivera 2006). Mercedes Olivera (2006) argues that the structural changes brought on by the restructuring of the world and Mexican economies, which has contributed to the disintegration of the peasant economy, has lead to women's need to participate in the paid labour force. This restructuring has resulted in changes to gender relations and practices, and to women's traveling, which have come to play central roles in the phenomenon of violence against women in Ciudad Juárez (Olivera 2006).

violence are always racialized and gendered. Thus where women's lives and bodies are at stake, physical signs of their sexuality are a target of attack; femicidal violence against women is sexualized.

Furthermore, several patterns have been observed across femicide cases in Guatemala: over 50% of victims are between the ages of 11 and 30 years of age – that is, adolescent girls and women of child-bearing age (CALDH 2005:49). Most murders occur in urban areas, primarily in Guatemala City and adjacent municipalities. In particular, Zone 18 of the capital city and new *asentamientos* (squatter settlements) have been the sites of disproportionately high murder rates of women. A terrible problem is the impunity that surrounds cases of femicide; at a national level only 10 per cent of all homicides end in legal punishment of the aggressor, and less than 2 per cent in cases of violence toward women (Orantes 2008).

State Responses, Non-Governmental Organizations and the Multidimensionality of Women's Lives

While the Guatemalan Congress approved the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women in 2009, marking an important victory for the Guatemalan woman's movement, State discourses surrounding the causes of violence against women in the country have predominantly blamed youth gang members and organized crime for the mass murders of women. In other words, the State has sought ways to shift blame away from underlying social factors that may underline the violation of women's rights. First, for example, the Human Rights Ombudsman Office in Guatemala has indicated that the increase in murderous

crimes against women is the result of organized and regular everyday crime (Aguilar 2006). In other words, blame resides in individuals or groups of delinquents who cause such trouble. Second, also in keeping with this line of argumentation, there is no intentional violence aimed at women specifically; their deaths are simply the result of the generalized crime that all Guatemalans confront. This position ignores the gender dynamics of present-day problems of violence in post-war Guatemala. Violence against women is treated as being no different than that committed against men. The National Civil Police, in a similar vein, argue that such crimes are gang-related (Ibid.). The problem of youth gangs in Guatemala is immense and thus they have become the preferred scapegoats for the Police. Third, the position official of the Public Ministry in Guatemala, which is supposed to investigate crimes and promote the legal prosecution of these, has indicated that there is no difference between violence against women and violence against men (Ibid.). Finally, another typical explanation offered by government officials and the mainstream media is that the killings of women are a result of their personal circumstances: they are killed in "crimes of passion" by former spouses or partners.

In contrast to these explanations for the occurrence of femicide in Guatemala offered by government sources, are the analyses provided by the human rights sector in the country[52] , which also has a set of explanations, discourses, and narratives it regularly circulates. This sector's explanations center mainly on violence against women today as being directly linked to violence perpetrated against women during

[52] By human rights sector I specifically mean international and national non-governmental institutions and organizations that conduct work related to promoting human rights (including women's rights) in the country.

the internal armed conflict (e.g., see Aguilar 2006). Thus present-day violence against women is seen as a product of the failure of the Guatemalan government to seriously address the horrors witnessed in Guatemala over the past four decades. For instance, military personnel who were trained in the most brutal torture tactics never received any sort of rehabilitation or support for re-integrating into society. Similarly, former guerrilla combatants were never re-integrated into civil society or provided with new, viable job options. Finally, the Peace Accords which outline numerous measures for advancing human rights have yet to be fully actualized.

Scholars such as Giles and Hyndman (2004) and Olujic (1998) argue that we need to theorize the relationship between violence against women in times of war and in times of peace. Human rights and feminist NGOs in Guatemala are precisely making the important connection between violence in these two time frames. The gruesome nature of present day gendered violence against women bears strong resemblances to the violence perpetrated against women during Guatemala's armed conflict. During the war, agents of the State carried out mass sexual violence against women, particularly indigenous women, as a mechanism by which to damage the social fabric of indigenous communities, which were seen as supporters of the guerrillas, and to create a climate of terror in the country. Thus, present day violence against women can be seen as a continuation of the violence perpetrated against them during Guatemala's war. In both cases, women represented approximately 25 per cent of the direct victims. Also, in both cases, in its sexualized nature, violence against women is distinguishable from that committed against men. Moreover, the victims were and are in similar age ranges: 18-23 years of age, the most frequent

age range followed by women aged 30-35 that is, women in their child-bearing years.

While it is important to interrogate the relationship between violence against women during Guatemala's war and in the present, there are certain dangers in making such a link. The continuum of gender-based violence is not the only one that connects gender-based violence during the civil war (1960-1996) and the current 'post' conflict era (1996-present). While there may indeed be various factors linking these forms of violence, the armed conflict alone is not enough to explain the large-scale denigration of women that is presently expressing itself in the form of femicide. For instance, we must ask, what was the situation of women before the civil war? As discussed in Chapter 2, the civil war and the present context represent an exacerbation of an underlying, centuries-long trajectory of structural and symbolic violence against women. In other words, the civil war and the present post-conflict context may have merely intensified the devaluation of women's bodies and lives, and led to more vicious and visible forms of aggressions towards them. The continuum of violence may therefore extend further back beyond the armed conflict. What is more, as Judith Zur (1998) underscores, the continuum of violence is not merely a continuum of historical time, but one about the interconnections between distinct forms of violence, such as the mass rape and killing of women and the private abuse experienced by women in the privacy of their homes.

In addition, there are certain differences between violence perpetrated against Guatemalan women during the war and the violence we are presently witnessing, which may become blurred if the only point of reference is the war. For instance,

whereas during the armed internal conflict, 87 per cent of the female victims were indigenous, the present-day killings of women are more or less evenly distributed between indigenous and non-indigenous women (Amnesty International 2005; Aguilar 2006). The common factor is now one of class (Ibid.); the overwhelming majority of women being murdered today are women from the lower socio-economic strata.[53] In this way, structural violence and poverty become tied to the phenomenon of femicide in Guatemala. Below I examine another contributor to the proliferation of violence and fear in women's lives in the country, namely, the mass media.

Media & Femicide

When one opens up a daily newspaper in Guatemala, it does not take long for one to find new stories of the violent and gruesome deaths of men and women. I frequently saw new stories about "waves of violence", sometimes with as many as fourteen or fifteen murders in one day. Many Guatemalans I spoke to about my research frequently joked, telling me, "you will have no trouble finding material for your thesis". Or, "you will have tons of left over material" and "you came to the right place to study violence". My aunt, who collected the *Prensa Libre* daily newspaper, saved numerous clippings for me, and frequently drew my attention to articles on violence against women. Media sources such as daily newspapers and local newscasts participate in the construction and circulation of narratives and ideals

[53] Another contrasting factor is that the murders of women in Guatemala today are principally occurring in an urban context, particularly in Guatemala City. Murderous violence against women during the war, as it was directed at destroying indigenous communities, occurred primarily in rural settings, namely, the Northwest Highlands where Mayan communities were concentrated.

surrounding gender, racial, and class identities as well conceptions and experiences of violence, bodies, and the State through everyday depictions and discussions of them. Most people I spoke to mentioned the media as a source feeding the fear they already felt as residents of the city. Some women indicated that they did not watch the news, as it made them more fearful than they already were to leave their homes. As thirty-year old Ana told me,

> I think that the media is playing a tremendous role in the emotional health of the population. I myself don't want to see newspapers; I don't want to watch national newscasts because it is all about killings, thefts, muggings. Then you hear things like, "they robbed a bank at gunpoint". And I think, the bank, it's so close to my workplace, and then I may hear ambulances go by or, I hear that so and so was mugged, or that they have robbed the place next door. So this is why I have decided, for my own mental well-being that I don't want to hear these news pieces. Of course, when I am on the bus or somewhere I see these newspapers, the popular ones that are very sensationalist, and I am curious to look.

Thus at the same time that Ana avoids reading newspapers and watching television broadcasts that have violence as their subject, she admits to being curious about news items. Even in poor barrios or *asentamientos* in Guatemala City I spent time during my research, where families often live in precarious conditions, I always saw television sets. Guatemalans I spoke to were very aware of the latest new stories, particularly those having to do with crime.

One study, *Women and the Media* (*Mujer y Medios* 2006:11) that included a review of national studies on the topic, found that violence against women represented approximately 12 per cent of news stories in the written press in 2004 and 22 per cent in 2006. The study concludes, however, that there is an under-representation of violence against women in Guatemalan media coverage, noting

that of the 81,999 stories of violent incidents analyzed, 17, 481 pertained to violence against women (Ibid.).[54] Putting aside the question of whether stories of violence against women are over or under-represented in the media, the content of the stories that are covered by the press tells us a great deal about popular, social and institutional perspectives on the issue. Where femicide is concerned, it is especially important to examine the role of the mass media in Guatemala as these cases are either sensationalized, their gory details graphically described, or they are presented in a very matter-of-fact manner, containing indications only where the body was found, in what condition, and at what time. For instance, in reporting on the murder of Lorena, the daughter of Doña Celeste, the *Prensa Libre,* the most widely circulating newspaper in the country, ran the following piece:

> **Another Woman is Killed**: The cadaver of **_________**, 19 years of age, was found on Kilometer 28 of the route to San Juan Sacatepequez, the voluntary firefighters informed. The body was decayed, presented multiple injuries and evidence of assault. This year 128 women have been murdered, according to figures from human rights organizations.

This was entire text of the article, which appeared below an equally short note on weather conditions in the country. Although the piece seems innocuous, as merely "presenting the facts", the repeated presentation of this type of story reflects but also arguably produces particular narratives of violence. During the armed internal conflict in Guatemala, the print-media was one important medium by which violence and fear were (re)produced and made to proliferate (Torres 2004, 2005). In her analysis of counterinsurgency violence during La Violencia, Gabriela Torres argues

[54] The remaining articles are refered to as "other notes". It is unclear what falls under the category "other", whether it simply refers to men or, for instance, children and youth.

that political violence, integral to the functioning of the Guatemalan State, has relied on media representations for the promotion of fear among the Guatemalan population. Torres (2005) analyzes over 3000 cadaver reports published in the *Prensa Libre* during this period, when the state was conducting its most gruesome killings and massacres, and finds that, for the most part, coverage of incidences of violence emphasized individual violent deaths, with massacres only minimally discussed. The author also finds that the typical cadaver report described, in brief, the victimization of an "unidentified" male[55], the location of the body's discovery, and some detail about specific pieces of clothing worn by the victim (Torres 2005:155). Torres argues that the combination of some detail (such as the clothing found on the body), with largely vague, anonymous reports that were open to speculation, worked to perpetuate a condition of terror among the population, thus serving the State's counterinsurgency strategy.

I found a second article on Lorena one day, in the daily newspaper *La Hora*, which, in line with many articles on killings of women in Guatemala, reported on how Lorena had been murdered, the signs of rape her body showed and the torture and mutilation, including the cutting off of one of her breasts, machete-inflicted injuries and a large rock thrown on her head, perpetrated by the aggressor. The second focus of the news piece was the suspected perpetrator, and how he had been set free due to insufficient evidence.

There are parallels between the cadaver reports analyzed by Torres and how murders are reported in Guatemala today. The first note on Lorena's murder is brief,

[55] Torres finds in her sample that cadaver reports of women constitute less than 10 per cent of the total.

leaving the reader to read between the lines and come up with his or her own conclusions. No mention is made about the possible perpetrator, nor an analysis given of the reasons behind the mass killing of women in the country. Nonetheless, the frequent appearance of this type of article reinforces the notion that it is dangerous for a woman to be travelling alone. The title "another woman is killed" and the figure given on incidences of murders of women in the year transform the woman's experience into a statistic. Her story is not unique, but simply "another" case of a woman murdered. Rape, which was perpetrated against Lorena, is suggested but not indicated. Torres (2005) found that similarly, during La Violencia cadaver reports of women avoided using the term rape, even in cases where evidence pointed to it having occurred, instead using terms such as "*ultrajar*" ("to abuse", "to offend").

DOS ASALTANTES ACRIBILLAN A TIROS A UN GUARDIA PRIVADO EN MIXCO
PÁGINA 3

MILLONES DE GUATEMALTECOS CELEBRAN A LA MADRE EN SU DÍA
PÁGINAS 4 Y 5

Guatemala, mayo 11 de 2007 • Viernes

Nuestro Diario
Noticias como son

Una desconocida de unos 20 años fue encontrada ayer con dos impactos de bala en la aldea La Laguneta, Chinautla. Habitantes del sector descubrieron el cuerpo antes del mediodía. PÁGINA 2

Asesinada a balazos

Otra mujer

Artistas festejan
Comparten con sus mamás PÁGS. 34 Y 35

Figure 9: Cover of Daily Newspaper, "*Nuestro Diario*" indicating that "Another Woman" (*Otra Mujer*) was found murdered. (Photograph from: *Nuestro Diario*, May 11, 2007, cover)

How the media portrays stories of violence toward women, and the discussions and narratives these news stories feed, tells us a great deal about the routinization of violence and fear. For instance, Jane Caputi and Diana Russell describe how in the aftermath of the Montreal Massacre, when 25 year-old Marc Lepine killed 14 women at the University of Montreal, media coverage ignored the social and political dimensions of the killing of women, fixating instead on Lepine's "pathological" state. "Fixation on the pathology of perpetrators of violence against women only obscures the social control function of these acts" (Caputi and Russell 1992:14). In Guatemala, perpetrators of violence often go unidentified and unpunished. Even if families are aware of who was responsible for the death of their loved ones, they do not come forth for fear of retaliation, a fear exacerbated by the climate of impunity that prevails today. When a perpetrator is mentioned, it is typically in the context of reporting on a "crime of passion", a claim that thus works to shift blame to the woman, as it is presumed that her personal relationships are the cause of her death. Furthermore, through presenting their stories as just "another" murder, and their significance downplayed through short notes, such as Lorena's three line report, violence against women is "naturalized". Furthermore, the report *Women and the Media* indicates, there is a tendency to blame the victim by indicating that she was "wearing a mini skirt and heels" or "had a tattoo"[56] (2006:18).

[56] Tatoos are often associated with gangs. Thus a young woman with a tattoo would be presumed to be part of a gang, and thus partially "responsible" for acts of violence committed against her.

Nacional 10 Guatemala, 22 de marzo de 2007 La Hora

Crimen pasional

MUJER BALEADA DENTRO DE SU RESIDENCIA

La violencia en contra de las mujeres cada día es más fuerte; esto quedó demostrado cuando una adolescente fue acribillada dentro de su vivienda, hecho registrado en un sector de la zona 18. La hermana de la víctima indicó que ignoraba los motivos del ataque.

Jorge Raúl Sente

A pesar de los constantes llamados de diferentes organizaciones que luchan en pro de la defensa de los derechos humanos, que solicitan la investigación de actos violentos en contra de las mujeres, los feminicidios siguen en aumento.

Una joven murió acribillada a tiros dentro de su domicilio, y las primeras investigaciones involucran a integrantes de maras. No se reportan capturas.

La tranquilidad de una familia fue interrumpida abruptamente, luego que tocaran a la puerta de la casa ubicada en un sector de la zona 18, donde una adolescente que salió a observar quién tocaba, al abeir la puerta recibió varios balazos. Un pariente que oyó las detonaciones, de inmediato buscó a su ser querido, y grande fue su sorpresa al ver el cuerpo tendido cerca de la puerta principal de la vivienda.

Otras personas que también escucharon los gritos solicitando ayuda alertaron a los Bomberos Municipales, quienes se presentaron a la manzana 45, lote 310, sector Rosado, asentamiento Esquipulas, colonia El Limón, zona 18, punto en que los socorristas ya nada pudieron hacer por la víctima, ya que las heridas fueron en puntos vitales, por lo que la adolescente murió en forma instantánea.

Mireya Valdez, hermana de la ahora fallecida, a quien identificó como Mariela Raquel Valdez, de 17 años, no daba crédito a lo que había sucedido, y expresó que desconocía los motivos por los cuales la asesinaron.

Agentes de la Policía Nacional Civil que llegaron al escenario del crimen realizaron un extenso rastreo por lugares cercanos en busca del o los responsables, pero sin resultados.

Peritos del Ministerio Público informaron que la víctima presentaba dos perforaciones de bala a la altura del cuello, y que las primeras pesquisas apuntaban a que se trataba de un crimen pasional, eso por la información que proporcionaron los vecinos. Sin embargo las investigaciones continuarán para dar con los responsables.

La hermana de la víctima fue atendida, ya que sufrió crisis nerviosa. Autoridades investigan el hecho.

Figure 10: National Newspaper *La Hora* reporting on a case of femicide. While the article contains more information than most, the headline nevertheless reads “Crime of Passion: Woman Shot Inside her Residence”. (Photograph from: *La Hora*, March 22, 2007, Nacional, p. 10)

<u>Lorena, Doña Celeste, and their Family: Ongoing effects of Femicide</u>

Elided in the various positions on femicide are the voices of women. One might ask, how can the victim speak if she is no longer here to tell her story? This is one challenge to conducting research on femicide. However, as Diana Russell (2001:8) reminds us, there are survivors of attempted femicides and family and friends of women who can shed light on the implications of killings of women. Peeling back the various layers of the repercussions of a woman’s death on those close to her reveals some of the deeper, enduring entailments of violent processes. Learning about the life and death of Lorena, Doña Celeste’s first-born daughter, made me aware of such effects. Initially it was Doña Celeste’s gaze that drew me to her. Mistrust is not uncommon among Guatemalans, but the deepness in Doña Celeste’s eyes seemed to me not one merely of mistrust. Without speaking, she seemed to

communicate something profound. Doña Celeste, I would learn was the mother of Lorena, a young indigenous woman whose life was cruelly taken from her at the age of 19. Indeed I had seen pictures of Lorena hung up on the walls of Fuerzas before I even met Doña Celeste.

The first time I saw Lorena's photograph was the very morning I first visited Fuerzas and had the sit-down meeting with the director, Laura. In addition to congratulatory cards, the institution had various pictures of women, victims of femicide, up on the walls. The use of photographs had the intended effect of (re) 'humanizing' the victim, giving them a face. In Guatemala, as elsewhere such as Argentina with the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, images have been used in protests against disappearances and killings of individuals (see for e.g., Schirmer 1994). Images of the person in life is one way to commemorate that life. The photographs of the women on the walls of Fuerzas were of women whose families the institution was aiding. In Lorena's case, I would come to learn that Fuerzas had been providing legal assistance to her family. Fuerzas was also giving psychological assistance to the entire family, in particular to Doña Celeste and her younger (17 year-old), now her only living daughter, Verónica.

When I first saw Lorena's picture, I was particularly struck by her apparent poise. The caption beneath her photograph indicated that she had been a community queen, as she stood tall with a tiara perched on her head. Later I would learn how Doña Celeste laboured for many months to put together Lorena's *corte* ('traditional' dress) that she wore in the picture.

Doña Celeste never spoke directly about what happened to her daughter in the context of the group sessions. Indeed, I cannot recall the exact moment when I heard from Doña Celeste herself that she was the mother of Lorena, the young woman I had seen in photographs. Doña Celeste never said in the context of the group, "when my daughter was raped" or "when she was killed". Instead she would often say, "When the thing with Lorena occurred…" ("*Cuando paso lo de Lorena*"). It was Andrea María, one of the psychologists who co-facilitated the support group, who mentioned to me that Doña Celeste was Lorena's mother.

The manner in which Lorena's death was taken up in the press was completely different from the manner in which Doña Celeste referred to her daughter's life and death. There was a gap between the "objective", anonymous media coverage of femicide and the emotion and immediacy of Doña Celeste's own personal narrative. Doña Celeste did not use the dominant language of violence. Her eyes spoke, her movements spoke, she spoke through implication, by vaguely referring to the events surrounding her daughter's killing. There was no need for her to provide details of the acts of violence enacted on her daughter's body and against her life.

Before visiting the family's home and interviewing Doña Celeste in private, I had several informal conversations with her in the hallways of Fuerzas when the support group took breaks. She, like most of the women in the group, was curious about me and wanted to know more about Canada. Unlike the other women in the support group, I saw Doña Celeste accompanied by her husband Mario and daughter Verónica on several occasions, and I was able to meet them. Mario accompanied

Doña Celeste and Veronica from their home in San Juan Sacatepequez to Zone 1 not merely to use the services of Fuerzas, but also so his wife and daughter did not make the trip on their own.

After three months of attending support group meetings, I felt I was able to request a one-on-one visit and interview with Doña Celeste. We planned to meet after one of the group's meetings, but the timing was never right. We decided it would be most convenient for me to visit her in her home, which was located in a municipality neighboring Guatemala City (San Juan Sacatepequez). On a clear, sunny June day I made the trip to Doña Celeste's home community to spend the afternoon visiting and learning more about Lorena, Doña Celeste and their family. Once out of the city, it was beautiful ride, with a lush mountainous view, an impression I related to Doña Celeste immediately upon seeing her.

When I arrived, Doña Celeste was on her way out of the home with Verónica; they were on their way to pick up Verónica's report card at the junior high school several blocks away from the family's home. I accompanied them and waited for them outside the school. On our way back to the family's home, Doña Celeste showed me Verónica's report card and indicated that her daughter was barely passing her classes, and even failing one. But, explained Doña Celeste, "its not her fault, Verónica started school late this year. She was not even going to study".

The death of Lorena had impacted various aspects of the lives of Doña Celeste and her family. If having to endure the tragedy of Lorena's death were not enough, now she constantly worries about her other children. Verónica must walk past the

home of her sister's suspected killer every day on her way to school. For a time, Celeste and her husband pulled Verónica out of school for this very reason. The decision of whether Verónica should continue her studies was influenced by violence and fear of further violence. Her grades dropped following the killing of her sister and being pulled out of school.

Once back in her home, Doña Celeste told me about the day Lorena went missing and the desperate search she made with her husband for their daughter. It all began, she told me, one afternoon when Lorena came home from work and asked permission to go out. She recalled, "I couldn't imagine what she was going to find there, to lose her life. Yes, but the very day she disappeared well, I didn't know if I was going to find her with life [*con vida*]. I felt [*presentía*] something very strong because she left and had not returned". Through the tears that punctuated her explanation, Doña Celeste continued:

> When Lorena came home that afternoon, she was happy. She was laughing and said, "mom, I am going out, I am going to go out with a boy". I asked who this boy was and told her, "you know very well that there are, well people say, there are those gang members (*mareros*)". [Lorena] reassured me it was a boy from work, who told her he was going to give her a surprise. I joked with Lorena and said, "well Lorena, what are you going to do? He is going to place a ring on your finger". I said, "*Mija* I will give you permission for 15 minutes because your dad will be home soon". "*Vaya"* she said to me, but then it was 5:30 and she was not back. I gave her 15 minutes and she was taking longer. Then I told my son, "*hijo* go see if you see Lorena down the road and tell her to come home or her dad will get angry and will scold me". Because if he sees she is not home, he will ask about her and will scold me because that is what he has said, "I leave you the responsibility because she is a woman, you have to educate her, teach her everything.

Lorena's father, however, came home that evening to find his eldest daughter was not home. Doña Celeste, explained how she and her husband "went to the bus stop to see if Lorena was coming" and how, "waiting for the buses, [she] imagined everything and didn't see anything".

Doña Celeste carried great guilt for the death of her daughter. She stated,

> My husband was angry at me, and we didn't know what to do. We came back home [from the bus stop] and he went to sleep, and said it was my fault. He ate, but I didn't want to eat. He said, "we have tomorrow, what are we going to do tonight? But I didn't sleep all night. I waited and waited. I heard the dogs outside barking, we've always had them, they barked. So, I would get up and see [if she was coming]. And I felt weak. Then morning came, we went down the road to ask for advice, what we could do, what path to take.

Doña Celeste did not sleep that night, and arose early the following day, a Friday, to begin her desperate search for Lorena. She asked neighbors if they had seen her daughter, and many thoughts ran through her head. Doña Celeste worried, she had a feeling something had gone terribly wrong. At the same time, she could not help but think that perhaps her daughter had run off with the boy she was supposed to meet. One of Doña Celeste's neighbors told her, "we will go looking for her [in the nearby woods], to see if they left her there. Because these days many women turn up murdered".

Before going to search for her daughter with the neighbor, a rumor reached Doña Celeste that a body had been found and that the police had taken it away. As she set off to the police, she was informed that the body found had been there for a long time, and thus was unlikely to be Lorena's. Doña Celeste was relieved, but remained worried as twenty-four hours had nearly passed since she had last seen her

daughter. When her husband came home from work that Friday evening, they made telephone calls to everyone they thought might know something or could help them in some way.

Doña Celeste and Mario had to wait until Monday to seek out authorities and begin a more formalized search for their daughter. On Monday morning, they set off towards the Public Ministry (a government entity charged with investigating and prosecuting crimes) with a picture of Lorena in hand, when a neighbor approached them. The neighbor asked Mario if he and Celeste had watched the news, as the news reported that firefighters[57] had found a body of a woman around 25 years of age without any identification on her. Doña Celeste told her husband that they had to go speak to the firefighters.

> When I entered the fire station, they asked me, "what can we help you with?". So I told them that my daughter had been missing since Thursday, and that I had heard they had found a body. They all looked at each other, and I saw them gesturing to one another. So I asked them if the body had any clothes on it. They said to me, "sorry *señora*, but the body had no clothes, we found it as God brought it to this earth. The only thing we found was a waist wrap". They asked me if I knew what colour the wrap was, as I had told them that I had seen Lorena get dressed before she left the home. They asked me, "*señora* do you feel ill?" I replied that what happened was that Lorena disappeared Thursday, and I had not eaten or slept since. Then I took out her photograph and I showed it to them. "Yes, it is her", they replied. "You know what, you should go to the Public Ministry to reclaim the body, to get permission to remove the body from the morgue, otherwise they will register the body as an XX[58]", they said to me. But I no longer had strength to go reclaim my daughter, and I asked my husband if he would be the one to go in and identify her. I had no strength. He could not find the courage to go in either, but went in. He came out and said yes, it is

[57]Firefighters are usually the ones to recover lifeless bodies and transport them to the morgue.

[58] When a recovered body is never identified, it is classified as an XX case (similar to a "Jane Doe").

> Lorena, and brought out her shoes. When we found her, God helped me, because if it weren't for him, I don't know what would have been of me. (Interview, 2007)

In addition to a deep sense of sorrow, Doña Celeste lived in fear that her daughter's killer, who remained free, would harm her other children. Doña Celeste feared pursuing justice because of possible reprisals.

The horrendous events surrounding Lorena's death are the beginning points of other stories, of other life and family trajectories, that must bear their consequences. Doña Celeste, Mario and their children now must also live the aftereffects; the reverberations of those violent events and their wounding impact. Husbands and male children also suffer as a result of the gender-based violence committed against women, a point often ignored by analyses of gender-based violence. Mario told me how he has to still work alongside and "shake the hand" of the man he suspects was responsible for Lorena's death. This daily act of symbolic violence angered him, but he could do nothing about it, he said.

Doña Celeste and Mario felt that a sense of just closure would result from their daughter's aggressor being punished, but it would not alleviate their fears of retaliation or concerns about crime in Guatemala City, or their concerns about mere economic survival. They are a poor family; Doña Celeste, who does not read and write, makes and sells *tortillas* for a living and Mario works in a *maquiladora*. Their opportunities for social advancement are extremely limited. What is more, stepping forward to denounce the crime against their daughter (which was possible with the assistance of *Fuerzas*) created its own set of problems for them. Doña Celeste believes that her own cousin was responsible for Lorena's death. However, the cousin was declared innocent in court of any

wrongdoing in the case. Doña Celeste's family has now turned against her. "This hurt me", she stated:

> They are happy, and I am here with pain. They have humiliated my family in front of everyone. They even held a special church service, in front of my husband and other children, where they accused us of Lorena's death, because we let her go out. This hurt me so much and I don't speak to my side of the family since then. My husband and children were there, we were all there when they said this to us. When the lawyers called me to be present at another public hearing, I said, why should I be there if justice is not made?

Thus, as well as experiencing fear that the accused aggressor and those close to him might take revenge on her other children, bringing Lorena's case to court caused great divisions between Doña Celeste and her extended family. Here, it is possible to draw parallels to the observations of Sally Engle Merry in her research in Hawai'i on the battered-women's movement in the United States. Merry illustrates how the sense of self that is promoted by a human rights approach, that draw on notions of an autonomous self, was often at odds with a sense of self rooted in the family, religion and community that she concluded was the case for women in her study (2006:181). As a K'aqchikel woman, for whom her extended family, religion and community were fundamental aspects of her sense of self, having to cut ties to her extended family has been for Doña Celeste a particularly painful experience.

The killing of women in Guatemala has both individual, and social and political dimensions. As Diane Nelson (1999) so aptly highlights in her work, the body politic has historically relied on the wounding of bodies. Furthermore, racial, ethnic, class, and gender categories have been policed through the same. During the armed internal conflict Mayan indigenous peoples, including

indigenous women, were prime targets of State-sponsored violence. Held responsible for standing in the way of the “modern” Guatemalan nation (not the first time in Guatemalan history, but the most recent expression), and aligning with the *guerrillas,* the most gruesome forms of torture and murderous violence were perpetrated against them. National, ethnic, class and gender identities, however, are not fixed: they are ever changing and in flux, hence requiring stronger surveillance for their maintenance (Nelson 1999). As women more and more frequently negotiate political spaces (the focus of Chapter 5) and thus challenge gender norms that dictate their positions of subordination vis-a-vis men, their bodies become, once again, the nation’s battleground.

Examining Lorena’s murder and its effects on her family, adds an important layer of understanding to the analysis of the social phenomenon of femicide that has swept Guatemala in the past ten years. As Doña Celeste’s narrative makes more than clear, Lorena is not merely a statistic, one of the 383 women murdered in 2003, but a young woman whose life and death continues to touch and shape the day-to-day personal and social experiences of her family and community. Her experience illustrates how there are particular lived effects of gender-based violence that ‘official’ discourses on femicide prevent us from seeing. We must look to women’s and men’s everyday lives to understand these broader and ubiquitous (often less visible) effects of violence, to understand the toll that processes of violence have on peoples’ quotidian lives and social relations. Researchers need to be more attentive to women’s lived experiences, as their lives have much to teach us about extent of violence’s reach as well as how life is remade in its presence: problems of violence

in Guatemala are not simply about rates of violent crime, but actively shape forms of sociality. By more readily listening to women's voices, we are able to observe the social life of violent processes and thus reformulate conceptions of violence as constituting simply an individual "act" or event separate from the everyday to see instead how violence is woven into on-going social relations. In Guatemala violence is embedded in historical processes of inequality, and marginalization along ethnic, class, gender lines, national and international economic interests that rely on social inequities, militarization and political warfare as well as unaddressed psychosocial consequences of war. Thus, femicide and gender-based forms of violence, while requiring specific attention, must also be seen in relation to the country's problems of civic insecurity. In the chapters that follow I trace the various ways in which women are pushing for social change as well as finding ways in their day-to-day practice to re-build networks of support and make "a better life" for themselves, their families and their broader communities.

PART III: WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE

CHAPTER 5

(EN)GENDERING JUSTICE & INSTITUTIONS? STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES TOWARD VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN GUATEMALA

I have always been a fighter, I was active in the left, I was exiled in Nicaragua; I have fought for human rights. […] When I discovered that we were hundreds of women, mothers whose daughters had been victims of abuse or rape, and we saw that there were no institutions providing support, we began to work with great force.

-Norma Cruz[59], founder and director of *Fundación Sobrevivientes*

Norma Cruz is the director of *Fundación Sobrevivientes*, a State-funded institution providing cost-free services to victims of violence and family members of murdered women in Guatemala. Norma has become a public figure in Guatemala and internationally in large part due to her efforts to draw attention and resources to combating femicide and other forms of violence against women in the country. Cruz has appeared in the widely circulating documentary film *Killer's Paradise* (which, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, focuses on the phenomenon of femicide in Guatemala), and frequently has speaking engagements in Guatemala and across North America. The target of constant threats against her and her family, in March 2009 Cruz was awarded the Secretary of State's Award for International Women of Courage at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., her award presented to her by U.S. First Lady

[59] I have not used a pseudonym in this instance since Cruz is a public figure who has shared her story publicly (e.g., see Díaz and del Cid 2003).

Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Giving her story salience in the public eye, in addition to her having founded *Sobrevivientes*, is the personal story behind the creation of the organization. She has shared her own story publicly (e.g., see Díaz and del Cid 2003: 52-53), and also shared it with me when I interviewed her for this study. Her own daughter, Claudia, was sexually abused for several years by her step-father, Norma's ex-partner Germán Noriega, a former member of one the URNG organizations. In 1999, at the age of 15, Claudia was finally able to verbalize ("to speak" of) the horrors of her experience and tell her mother about the abuse she had endured since the age of seven, a crime for which Noriega received a legal sentence of eight years in prison in March 2003. As Cruz worked through her own and her daughter's pain, and started to reach out to other women who shared their own stories, she began to see the vacuum then present in Guatemala with regard to institutions offering support and services to victims of violence and/or to their family members. What began as a group of women meeting in the living room of Cruz's home and sharing with one another their experiences, would a few years later become Fundación Sobrevivientes, a key institution in fighting violence against women in Guatemala. In Norma's own words, the institution was born as follows:

> Seeing that there was no justice, in the majority of cases, the aggressors had lawyers, because the State assigns them one, but not us. This forced us to get together, to cry together about our disappointments. "Today things went badly; they rejected this or that piece of evidence". So then we began to get together to cry. Then we began to see that in groups of two or three we could aid one another. We created a self-help group –for emotional and economic support, for instance with something as basic as photocopies or with filing such and such paperwork. That is why we call our organization *Sobrevivientes* ["Survivors"], because we have survived aggression, the system—in spite of the system closing its doors, we are here,

> fighting for our daughters. We didn't know what incest was, what dishonest abuses were, we didn't know what these things were. We began a small group, and formed the organization in 2003. […] We realized this work from my home. I set up a computer in one corner, and we began to work from there; it was not until 2005 that we began to support families of women, we were larger by that point. And we knocked on the doors of the Congress to inform them of what was occurring, so they would know the reality that many women were confronted with. And we asked that they provide us funding so we could create a support institution for victims of violence. I am not sure what we did, but something happened. Strangely, we touched the hearts of some, because they approved funding for us. (Interview with Norma Cruz, Guatemala City, 2007)

Today Sobrevivientes functions with an annual budget of approximately 2.5 million *quetzales*[60] and other donations; with which it is able to pay the salaries of a team of psychologists as well as legal personnel. The institution assists persons in crisis, offers therapy for the victim and others close to her who may need the assistance, and runs several support groups. The institution has also set up an alternative therapies section, which, among other things offers reflexology and massage therapies. The legal team provides assistance to victims and families; it has a civil law area for cases involving domestic violence and a penal law area for cases involving rape and/or murder of women.

Sobrevivientes is one of the various organizations that form part of the No Violence Against Women Network (*Red No Violencia Contra la Mujer*), a network composed of women's groups and organizations formally established following the

[60] This is the equivalent of approximately US $312 000.00. I obtained this figure from the organization's own blog: http://fsobrevivientes.blogspot.com/2010/01/norma-cruz-expresa-preocupacion-por.html (accessed April, 17 2010). According to this website the organization obtained Q 2.5 million from the government in 2009, but did not receive the same for 2010. No figure is given for 2010. It is worth noting that his figure does not include any international donations that may have been given to the institution.

passage of the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar* (Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence Within the Family) in 1996. The Guatemalan Women's Group (GGM), which was founded in 1988, played a decisive role in the Network's formation and continues to play a central role. GGM proposed the November 25 Coordinating Group (*Coordinadora 25 de Noviembre*), the antecedent to the Network (Walsh 2008:60). The November 25 Coordinating Group organized conferences, marches and protests in Guatemala around the November 25 International Day of No Violence Against Women (Berger 2006:47-48).

Since the Peace negotiations and signing of the Accords in 1996, Guatemala has witnessed a burgeoning of State and non-governmental organizations working in the area of the defense of women's rights and against violence toward women. As Norma's family story illustrates, most of the institutional building has been the result of external pressure on the State by women rather than being government-driven. As Norma's narrative also indicates, while there is pressing need for institutions for addressing gender-based violence in Guatemala, the State has (rather surprisingly) responded positively to pressures to set up such services. While the Guatemalan State has been generally hostile to the creation of institutions that work to improve the rule of law, they have in recent years supported the building of institutions that address violence against women (Walsh 2008:49). Why has the Guatemalan government supported certain efforts, such as those of Norma Cruz, Fundación Sobrevivientes, and the No Violence Against Women Network? What have been the

propelling forces behind institution building in the area of gender violence and women's human rights in Guatemala?

This chapter focuses on Sate and non-State (civil society) responses and frameworks for addressing violence against women in post-war Guatemala. In particular the chapter traces the development of a legal framework in the area of gender violence, highlighting the role of international and local forces, such as the efforts of the Guatemalan women's movement in pushing for legal reform. The aim is to offer a multi-level analysis of the judicial and institutional landscape for responding to the phenomenon of violence against women in the country, and underscoring its structure, tensions, contradictions, potential and areas of possible weaknesses. After reviewing, in the first part of the chapter, the development of Guatemala's legal framework for addressing violence against women, I then take an "on-the-ground" look at the work of organizations available for assisting women in need of support, through the lens of an examination of Fuerzas and its support group. Governmental and non-governmental organizations are providing particular frameworks for women to envision and articulate their experiences of victimhood, survivorship and what it means to be a woman in post-war Guatemala, such as through the notion of women as rights-bearing citizens, which may in various ways inform a woman's perception and experience of herself and of life in Guatemala today.

Exploring the development of national programs and the establishment of a body of legal statutes in the area of women's rights and gender violence in Guatemala is significant. It reveals women's active participation in fighting for

social change in the country, thus challenging representations of women as merely victims of the chronic and acute violence that has swept Guatemala in the past, evidenced today in rising rates of domestic violence and murders of women. Furthermore, as I have examined in the preceding chapters, exploring the interplay between collective, formalized, and institutionalized frameworks and women's lives in Guatemala requires a grasp of what constitutes these institutional frameworks. Thus below I address the development of Guatemala's legal framework for combating GBV.

Development of Guatemala's Legal Framework for Addressing Violence Against Women

Guatemala is among numerous States in the post-Cold War era (see Nyamu-Musembi 2006; Ulrich 2000) that have made significant judicial reforms in the area of violence against women. In the past two decades, international organizations and donors, within a framework of "strengthening the rule of law", have paid increased attention to gender-based violence, and countries around the globe have passed laws against violence toward women (Ulrich 2000). In Guatemala, since the signing of Peace Accords in 1996, the national congress has approved three important laws specifically directed at addressing gender disparities and protecting women against different forms of violence: 1] the Law to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Violence within the Family (*Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar,* 1996), 2] the Law for the Dignification and Integral Promotion of Women (*Ley de Dignificación y Promoción Integral de la Mujer,* 1999) and, most recently, the 3] Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against

Women(*Ley Contra el Femicidio y Otras Formas de Violencia Contra la Mujer,* 2008).

At this historical juncture, women in Guatemala are protected by law against violence more than in any time in the past. Paradoxically, a worsening of widespread violence against women in Guatemala in the post-war period has been concurrent to women's increased legal protection against various forms of violence and discrimination. Why, then, does violence against women persist? Why has violence increased as laws to prevent it have been concurrently passed? And, how far-reaching can the laws against violence toward women be in a context where the judicial system does not function effectively and impunity is rampant? The discrepancy between increased legal protection against violence and rising figures of violence against women suggests that the approval of laws for the reduction and eradication of violence toward women is not sufficient to address this social problem, and may only be a part of larger social changes required for its amelioration.

The laws passed in Guatemala aimed at reducing and eliminating distinct forms of violence toward women must be seen in relation to women's growing activism and lobbying. Without the efforts of individual activists and women's and feminist organizations such as Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres, Tierra Viva, the National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA), and the No Violence Against Women Network, among others, that have worked tirelessly to raise awareness surrounding women's subordination in both the private and public spheres, it is unlikely the present, laws would have even been proposed. The efforts

of these groups have made violence against women an issue demanding attention by members of congress, human rights groups, and segments of the Guatemalan population—hardly a simple task considering the extent to which violence against women in Guatemala is sanctioned both culturally, but also arguably by the State.

The achievements of the Guatemalan women's movement, particularly in relation to the laws on gender-based violence and the creation of institutions that work in this area, have significant historical roots. For example, an organized women's movement was already present in Guatemala in the 1940s, with the creation of the *Alianza Femenina Guatemalteca,* the first collective organization aimed at mobilizing women (Carillo 2004:156).[61] Yet, it is in the last three decades particularly that the movement gained significant momentum and visibility. During this time, the women's movement has expanded its organizational structure and increased its visibility (Berger 2006). Furthermore, the movement placed the eradication of all forms of violence, including violence against women, at the centre its political agenda. Though internally diverse and historically fractured along ethnic, class, and urban/rural lines, the women's movement has become a powerful player in shaping national policy (Berger 2006).

In their present struggles for social justice, more and more frequently Guatemalan women are utilizing the instruments of international conventions and law as part of multi-faceted efforts to advance their rights and promote gender

[61] Lorena Carrillo (2004:156) explains, in her analysis of the political participation of women in Guatemala in the twentieth century, that the *Alianza Femenina Guatemalteca* was the first collective organization in Guatemala that aimed to mobilize women. Though it proclaimed itself to be non-partisan its actions were guided by the Guatemalan Labour Party (Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo). Thus, the organization staged mobilizations in defense of the October revolution (Ibid.).

equality. As Sally Cole and Lynne Phillips (2008) point out in their analysis of violence against women campaigns in Latin America, women's groups have not only skillfully built alliances with broader social movements within their respective countries in their efforts to curb gender-based violence (GBV), but have taken up international efforts in proactive ways through international, national and regional collaborations and alliances. On the one hand, an international human rights movement has created spaces for women to articulate their demands for greater social equality. The last two decades especially have given rise to a shift in the ways in which marginalized groups throughout the globe, such as ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and women are making claims for their rights. Where nation-states are becoming weakened, or they assuage themselves of the responsibilities for providing for their citizens due largely to neo-liberal reorganization, collectivities increasingly seek social justice redress in international forums (e.g., see Niezen 2003; Merry 2006). Guatemalan women are utilizing the new opportunities emerging from international law and its forums for debate and exchange, such as meetings of the United Nations (UN), to advance their rights as women. On the other hand, women's rights are challenged by an international human rights framework that draws on Western liberal rights ideals, and promotes formal equality universally. Feminist scholars are critical of human rights discourses and practices precisely because of their universalist, as well as masculinist, orientations (e.g., Merry 2006; Molyneux and Razavi 2002:7). The promotion of liberal rights and universal equality is often at odds with appeals for the recognition of the specific

needs of particular peoples, such as women, and/or efforts to maintain cultural diversity (Merry 2006:131).[62]

Transnational processes, and “legal globalization” (Sieder 2004)[63], have nonetheless been an integral part of judicial reform in the area of gender based violence in Guatemala. In addition to national factors, the international context has been an important part of the emergence of laws on women’s rights in the country. Women’s groups in Guatemala that are working towards the eradication of distinct forms of gender-based violence have participated in information exchanges and networking with women’s groups in Mexico, across different Latin American countries, and beyond. Local efforts to draw attention to the grave dimensions of the problem of violence against women in Guatemala have both led to and been supported by international attention to the issue. For instance, in 2004 the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Yakin Ertürk, visited Guatemala to investigate the situation of women in the country. She produced a report (Ertürk 2005) outlining her findings and specific recommendations for the Guatemalan State

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[62]Others scholars have illustrated the various ways in which minority groups have used the instruments of international law and/or the technologies of globalization, particularly information exchange and networks of communication to consolidate cultural rights and thereby protect “local” culture and subsistence (e.g. see, Hernandez and Nigh1998; Niezen 2003). Niezen (2003) points out, however, that paradoxically through these means communities are altering the very cultural practices they seek preserve.

[63] Sieder (2004:1) indicates that legal globalization involves the “transnationalization of certain legal models, frameworks and ideas”. As such, she points out, legal globalization does not constitute a “new” phenomenon as the transportation of legal ideals and models was central to the functioning of imperial systems. However, the accelerated pace of transnational exchange of legal frameworks during later half of the twentieth century to the present is having a profound effect on States and their relations to their citizens (Ibid.).

and the international community for responding to the realities of Guatemalan women.

International flows of money into the country for “peace” and “democracy” building are also significant factors impelling judicial reform in Guatemala, and for understanding the emergence of laws against discrimination and violence toward women. In the post-Cold War era, judicial reform is a central component of State and internationally driven initiatives for post-conflict and post-dictatorship rebuilding and democratization. These efforts, as we can see in the Guatemalan case, are in large part donor-driven (that is, they stem from external pressures), not necessarily emerging from within the State itself. Prominent donors include the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Development Program, or country donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Such organizations invest in “democracy building”, legal reform, and promotion of human rights (Sieder 2004:3), even while they promote a neo-liberal market framework. Nonetheless, legal reorganization and reform of the State together with promotion of human rights are now central components of armed conflict rebuilding and transition (Ibid).

Judicial reform was a central component of the United Nations-brokered Peace Accords in Guatemala, which included an accord specifically focused on reforming the Guatemalan legal system. In particular, the Agreement for Strengthening Civilian Power and the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society (*Acuerdo sobre Fortalecimiento del Poder Civil y Función del Ejército en una Sociedad Democrática),* signed in September of 1996, outlined various

measures for decreasing and redefining the role of the military, which had previously gone unchecked, and increasing the role of legal institutions in promoting internal security (see Jonas 2000). The Agreement came after the Comprehensive Accord on Human Rights, signed in March of 1994. Unlike other Accords, that were to be implemented after the official signing of Peace, the Human Rights Accord would come into effect immediately (Jonas 2000:71). Under this Accord, the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) vowed to meet their obligations under international law. As Sieder (2004) observes, the Peace Settlement's focus on human rights meant that in the years following the signing of Peace, strengthening the rule of law was on the agenda of the government, civil society, and the international community.

Among the Peace Accords signed was a comprehensive accord on human rights, accords for addressing social and economic aspects of the agrarian situation, for strengthening civilian power, and an accord on the rights of indigenous persons. However there was no accord that directly addressed women. Women's rights are referred to by some as the "missing" accord (e.g. Jonas 2000:86). Susanne Jonas suggests that this elision was largely the result of "long standing lack of attention to gender issues by both negotiating parties and the late development of the women's movement in Guatemala" (Ibid.). Nonetheless, the peace negotiations, which saw the creation of the *Sector de Mujeres* (Women's Sector) as part of the National Assembly of Civil Society opened up spaces for a debate specifically around gender (Berger 2006:34-36). The participation of the Women's Sector in the peace process also facilitated the organizational structure of the movement, which has increasingly

come to work within governmental structures, not merely providing pressure from outside (Ibid.).

Given the transnational influence on judicial reform in Guatemala, the different laws aimed at reducing and eradicating gender-based discrimination and violence in the country draw upon international laws and conventions, in particular the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[64] and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), both ratified by the Guatemalan government —all of which frame women's rights in the language of human rights. The first of these laws, the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar* (the 'domestic violence law', approved in 1996), defines violence within the family as a human rights violation as its most basic premise. Article one of the Law's first chapter indicates that,

> Violence within the family constitutes a violation of human rights […] and should be understood as an action or omission that directly or indirectly causes physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic harm or suffering both in the private and public sphere, on the part of relatives, partner, or ex-partner or with whom children have been procreated (Congreso de la República*,* Decreto 97-96, Capítulo 1, Artículo 1).

This Law represented an important victory for Guatemalan women. In defining violence against women as a human rights violation, the law holds potential for legitimizing women's denunciations of abuses against them within their own homes, a violence that is all too often hidden and silenced. For instance, up until recently

[64] CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. (See for e.g., http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/; Merry 2006).

rape was not considered “rape” if it occurred in the context of marriage.[65] With the approval of the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar*, women gained the possibility of prosecuting their aggressors for harmful actions committed against them that previously may not have been legally considered forms of violence. Moreover, in addition to making it possible for women to denounce domestic abuse as a violation of their rights and as a crime, and calling on institutions to provide legal assistance to victims, the law makes “security measures” (*medidas de seguridad*) possible. The “security measures” are an important component of this law, making it possible for the accused aggressor to be ordered to leave the common residence immediately, have his/her weapons decommissioned, and child visitation rights suspended in cases of sexual aggression against minors (Artículo 7).

Although it represents a significant victory for women in Guatemala, the domestic violence law contains significant shortcomings. First among them is the fact that the law does not directly address domestic violence against women; its focus is violence within the family generally. In other words, it is possible under this law for a male spouse, grandparents, or children to be considered the victims of domestic violence. Through its use of gender-neutral language, constant throughout all articles, the law fails to denounce violence against women. Susan Berger (2006:46) argues that the gender neutrality of this law is not an accident. Women’s groups had pushed for and lobbied for a law that would address violence against

[65] Article 200 of the Guatemalan Penal Code, which established that criminal responsibility for rape could be waived where the victim was over 12 years old and the perpetrator married the victim was only suspended in 2005 (Amnesty International, 2007).

women specifically, as it was premised on international conventions for addressing the rights of women ratified by the Guatemalan State. However, Berger explains, proponents of the law could not garner enough support within the National Congress, and thus proposed in its place the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar*. The fact that in the end, the law was framed in a gender-neutral manner, and focuses on individual victims and aggressors, reflects the "de-politicizing" process that took place in its framing and approval. Gender imbalances with respect to who is likely to be a victim of domestic violence and arguably culturally embedded notions of a married woman as being the "property" of her husband, and therefore subject to his command, were systematically ignored. Furthermore, structural conditions such as the feminization of poverty, as well as social and historical factors that make women more vulnerable to domestic violence, were not addressed by the law.

In many ways the subsequent laws on women's rights and violence have built on and served as correctors of the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar*. For instance, the *Ley de Dignificación y Promoción Integral de la Mujer* (Law for the Dignification and Integral Promotion of Women), approved in 1999, was broader in scope than the domestic violence law, and directly addressed women. Its central objectives were, "to promote the integral development of women and their participation at all levels of economic, political, and social life in Guatemala" (Congreso de la República, Decreto 7-99, Artículo 2a). This law had the potential to be far-reaching as it emphasized not only eliminating violence toward women, but also eradicating different forms of social discrimination against

women, for instance in educational institutions or in the labour force. This law was also guided by the framework of human rights and had among its objectives promoting women's development in the different spheres of their lives as outlined in the Guatemalan Constitution, as well as International Conventions on Women's rights.

The most recent law, the Law Against Femicide, similarly corrects some of the shortcomings of the original law on violence within the family. While the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar* failed to specifically address women, and the *Ley de Dignificación y Promoción Integral de la Mujer* was general and hence difficult to apply, the Law Against Femicide is both specific in its terms of application and directly addresses women. The first article of the first chapter states,

> The present law has as its objective to guarantee the life, liberty, integrity, dignity, protection, and equality of all women under law, particularly when because of their gender within relations of power or trust, in the public or private sphere, the aggressor commits against them discriminatory or physically, psychologically, economically violent practices, or disrespects their rights. The aim is to promote and implement dispositions oriented toward eradicating physical, psychological, sexual, economic violence or any type of coercion against women, thus guaranteeing them a life free of violence, based on stipulations in the Political Constitution of the Republic and international instruments regarding women's human rights ratified by Guatemala (Congreso de la República, Decreto22-2008, Capítulo 1, Artículo 1).

The subsequent chapters and articles of the Law Against Femicide are detailed in outlining penalties for different crimes against women, compensation for the victims, and obligations of the State. The law is also significantly more detailed than preceding ones in defining violence against women and the different forms this

takes. One of the criticisms of the *Ley para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Intrafamiliar* I heard frequently from staff within institutions that offered services to victims of domestic violence (such as the Public Ministry's Office for Attention to Victims), was that the law still made it nearly impossible to try domestic abuse. I was told this was particularly the case when dealing with situations of psychological or emotional abuse, since the Guatemalan penal code did not contain necessary articles that would make such a crime possible to effectively prove in a court of law. Thus, women's legal representatives had to work diligently to find other articles available, such as on physical assault, to mobilize in a court setting. The added detail of the articles contained in the Law Against Femicide can thus partly be understood as a response to these criticisms. However, it remains challenging to prove crimes such as psychological abuse utilizing the current penal code that has not been change to reflect the new law.

A strictly legal, formal rights-based, framework such as the one ascribed to by the Guatemalan State, however, treats violence as an act involving *an individual* perpetrator and victim. This approach is problematic as it ignores the social conditions that give rise and sustain relations of domination. As the emergent body of social science literature on violence underscores, violence is contextual, therefore, the outcome of particular social, cultural, political, and economic structures and processes that sustain and legitimize the suffering of certain groups of people (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004; Caldeira, 2000; Das, Kleinman, Ramphele & Reynolds, 2000; Malkki, 1995). Moreover, the State's legal framing of violence against women not only ignores a woman's specific life history and context, but also

that of the “aggressor”. We could learn a great deal about the social problem of violence against women by considering *why* men resort to violent actions. Addressing violence toward women does not imply addressing only women’s lives, but the conditions of the relations between individuals (men and women) and between individuals and their communities.

(En)gendering Institutions: Changing Subjectivities?

An important question raised by the establishment of a formal body of law for addressing the problem of violence against women in Guatemala is whether the assembly of laws for legally addressing the issue is contributing to tangible ‘on-the-ground’ change. Feminist legal scholarship (e.g., Merry 2006; Molyneux et al. 2002) has highlighted the gap that oftentimes exists between the establishment of formal instruments for tackling gender-based violence and the abuse of women’s rights on the one hand, and ‘real’ change in women’s everyday lives on the other. These scholars, in particular, criticize liberal law making on the grounds that it disregards social justice through a focus on formal rights rather than substantive outcomes (Molyneux et al. 2002:8). For instance, they argue that while neo-liberalism is premised on the freedom of contract, if the subjects of rights lack the conditions and resources to exercise their rights, freedom of contract does not truly constitute freedom (Elson 2002; Nussbaum 2002). With the passing of laws in the area of gender-based violence, a woman in Guatemala now has the formal right to a life free of violence. However, what does this right mean if she is unable to freely walk around her neighborhood without fear of attack or leave her home without being subject to family and/or community control? Both of these issues appeared as

a source of concern frequently in my interviews and informal discussions with women.

At a minimum, the construction of a judicial framework for addressing violence in women's lives in Guatemala illustrates, as Berger (2006) points out, that the women's movement in Guatemala has put gender on the government's social, political, and economic agenda. Furthermore, there have been certain concrete results stemming from the passing of the laws, namely the building of institutions and programs for assisting women in situations of violence. Chief among them is the creation of the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violence Within the Family and Against Women (CONAPREVI), an organizational body that proposes and coordinates policy initiatives in the area of violence against women and oversees the implementation of the laws governing violence and discrimination against women in the country. CONAPREVI has mixed, government and civil society, representation and has developed the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence within the Family (PLANOVI 2004-2014). This ten-year plan establishes lines of action for addressing violence within the family and against women, including research and statistical analyses of violence against women; prevention activities such as educational campaigns; the provision of social, legal, psychological, and medical services to victims of violence; and the strengthening of institutions that work in the area of gender-based violence prevention.

CONAPREVI is one of a number of institutions that have been set up in the post-war era for assisting women in situations of abuse. Other public policy and justice institutions in this area include: the First Lady's Secretariat for Social Work

(SOSEP), Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (DEMI), Program for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Within the Family (PROPEVI), Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), Special Prosecutor for Women, Unit of Homicides Against Women within the National Civilian Police, the Women's Office within the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) and the Women Defender's Office of the Public Ministry's Office. Ostensibly complementing these women-specific judicial bodies are the General Administration of the Nation, Family Courts, the Office for Attention to Victims of the Public Ministry, and Popular Legal Offices (*Bufetes Populares*) of the University of San Carlos and Rafael Landivar University.

At the same time that several State institutions have been created with the purpose of providing services to women in situations of violence, there are numerous non-governmental organizations carrying out the same type of work: among them, Fundación Sobrevivientes (which began as a non-governmental organization, and now receives government support), the Guatemalan Women's Group (GGM), New Horizons House (*Hogar Nuevos Horizontes*), and Centre for Holistic Support for Abused Women (*Centro Integral de Atención a Mujeres Maltratadas*) of the Centre for Research, Training and Support for Women (*Centro de Investigación, Capacitación y Apoyo a la Mujer*, CICAM)[66].

The assistance model that institutions –governmental and non-governmental—use to serve their clients is one which encompasses four main areas

[66] CICAM was a very 'new' organization when I was conducting my fieldwork, operating with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The organization had funding for two years, after which their funding situation was uncertain – a problem for the stability and continuity of many programs aimed at making real changes of the situation of women in Guatemala.

of work: a social work department, a legal-assistance area, psychological support and medical attention. At least PROPEVI, Fundación Sobrevivientes, GGM, and CICAM, institutions I visited and whose staff I interviewed during my fieldwork used this model. CICAM had an additional component, namely, vocational training. Along these lines CICAM's victim support section coordinator explained to me the different kinds of workshops and training they provide. She mentioned a workshop they had carried out earlier in 2007 on jewellery making and the more recent, a beautician/hairdressing course. Indeed, where we held the interview happened to be the area of the centre where the beautician course had been given, and there were a few hairdressing chairs and mirrors off to one corner, items whose presence I initially did not understand until I was informed of their purpose.[67] Rather than attempting to part with stereotypical women's roles, CICAM was training women in "women's" vocations. Thus, as I describe further in this chapter, institutional work on combating violence against women does not necessarily challenge dominant ideals about "appropriate" women's versus men's social roles.

i. Creating Public Awareness

The range of civil society and governmental agencies mentioned above are all participating in raising awareness regarding the grave dimensions of the problem of violence against women in Guatemala today, particularly through national and provincial educational/public awareness campaigns. Many of the campaigns consist of billboards and advertisements in newspapers or on television and radio on the consequences of GBV. I was struck by the number of such advertisements in the

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[67]While it was beyond the parameters of my study, the 'real' impact of such trainings in terms of providing women with income generating skills would be an important line of enquiry to pursue.

print and television media as well as plastered throughout many public spaces in the city, including on the back of *camionetas* (public transport buses). In one instance, I heard a radio broadcast on a program of the Faculty of Medical Sciences Radio, where a staff member of the government agency PROPEPI was interviewed by the program host. I noted the radio interview in my field journal as an example of institutional work to combat violence against women in Guatemala, particularly through reaching a public audience. However, I also noted the radio interview as I was struck by the host's seeming disregard for the institution's work and for a gendered analysis of violence against women. I made the following entry into my field journal:

> I heard a radio program on the *Radio de la Facultad de Ciencias Medicas*. On the program, the host interviewed someone from PROPEVI. The male host of the show asked questions I found to be problematic. For example, he stated, "sometimes the woman is so jealous, she drives a man crazy. What happens in this case?". The PROPEVI representative responded that this indeed might be the case, and indeed occurs, but in most cases, violence in the home is committed by men against women. At another point the host of the radio program stated, "sometimes someone accuses someone else falsely". He seemed to be implying that laws against violence toward women can be troublesome since women or their families can 'falsely' accuse a man. In all, the host did not seem to see the value of PROPEVI's work. Only when the PROPEVI staff member agreed with him on one of his viewpoints, namely that domestic violence does not merely refer to violence against women, but includes violence against children and men, did he take her opinion as valid. (Fieldnotes, May 31, 2007).

That there are institutions being built for addressing violence in women's lives, does not mean that prevalent attitudes about a woman's subordinate position vis-à-vis men such as that their primary role should be one relegated to the domestic sphere, have dissipated in post-war Guatemala. Gender, as ethnic and national

identities, is never fixed (Nelson 1999); neither are gender ideologies about the "proper" roles of men and women. Not all Guatemalans have normalized violence. While violence may indeed be 'normal', implicitly and explicitly embedded in everyday processes, most Guatemalans reject the presence of violence on their streets and in their homes. Rejecting physical violence in the public or private spheres, however, does imply by extension a rejection of the performance of dominant gender roles or women's subordination either in the private or public sphere. The former did not stand synonymous with the later during my research stay in Guatemala. For instance, Roberto, a ladino father of two and a self-identified Christian evangelical, while positioning himself against the use of physical force against women, said to me,

> The bible and civic code both indicate that men have the obligation to work, not women. Women have been robbed of many rights its true, but the bible establishes women's role in the home. It does not say men should hit women or treat them like slaves. What I think is important is that a child not grow up in a home where he or she is without either parent. What I am saying is that the children should not be left unattended.

On the one hand, Roberto indicated that for him the use of physical violence was never justified. On the other hand, he viewed woman's role as one of having an obligation to be in the home and care after the children. His opposition to violence against women in the home was part of his vision of a "harmonious" nuclear family, where ideally the husband works outside the home and the woman cares for the children within the domestic sphere.

Like Roberto, others similarly adopted ideas about the "wrong" nature of violence within the home as part of their notions of how "harmonious" the ideal

family ought to be. Similarly, as a self indentified feminist woman explained to me PROPEVI, a State-initiated and supported agency promotes reconciliation within the family – rather than the empowerment of women and/or support for their independence. Indeed, the institution, created in 1998 by the First Lady's Secretariat for Social Work Office (*Secretaría de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente de la República*, SOSEP), and now with offices across Guatemala's twenty-two departments, indicates in its publications that, "[t]he program searches for ways of solving the problem [of domestic violence] that is causing disequilibrium within Guatemalan households" (PROPEVI Pamphlet). Furthermore, according to PROPEVI their work,

> represents an effort to contribute to a change in the culture of violence, inherited and transmitted through acquired cultural patterns, in order to promote a new system of values, a culture of peace that permits for family harmony and wellbeing. (Ibid)

For PROPEVI tackling the problem of domestic violence is part of a larger project to promote the ideal of the 'harmonious' hetero-normative nuclear family. Insofar as domestic violence threatened household equilibrium, efforts to address the issue through educational campaigns, support groups and individual therapy were aimed at restoring "balance", with the onus of the work placed primarily on women, the main clientele of the organization.

ii. Support Groups

In post-war neo-liberal Guatemala the onus of making the country 'better' – a country free of violence, corruption, and poverty – increasingly placed on individuals, relieving the State, the international community and multinational corporations of responsibility in these matters. For instance, in his ethnography

based in Guatemala City, Kevin O'Neill (2010) examines the kinds of citizenship promoted by neo-Pentecostal evangelical churches, and argues that they promote acts of self-governance through urging individual Guatemalans to adopt the 'right' attitudes and behaviours as part of the practice of Guatemalan citizenship. Further, O'Neill finds that the Christian churches, "place the moral responsibility for societal problems, such as unsafe streets and a faltering economy, on to the shoulder of the believer" (2010:4). O'Neill situates the discourses and practices of citizenship promoted by the neo-Pentecostal churches within a context of neo-liberalism, where the State governs at a distance, relying increasingly on the actions of individuals to care for themselves.

The work of various institutions in Guatemala conducting work in the area of gender-based violence can be analyzed in a similar light as the churches in O'Neill's study. PROPEVI, the state-funded program for addressing domestic violence, is part of strategy of governance where the institution's clients are instructed in the 'right' behaviours for ensuring a healthy family –such as improving communication and problem solving skills – and by extension working towards the building of a healthy nation. A culture of peace begins in the home, the organization's pamphlets reveal. Implicit here is the idea than, women as the *amas de casa* ('house wives'), must bear the weight of this work. A peaceful nation depends on their ability to mediate conflict in the home.

Like Pentecostal Christian Church cells in Guatemala that meet regularly and wherein participants share experiences and are instructed in 'proper' ways to lead their lives, support groups in Guatemala, available at various organizations assisting

women facing situations of abuse, serve an analogous purpose and too constitute a form of neo-liberal governmentality. Indeed, a sizable body of scholarship on humanitarian efforts, civil society, and non-governmental organizations in the context of globalization makes a strong correlation between increasing numbers of NGOs world-wide and the spread of neo-liberalism; NGOs are analyzed as constitutive of a new dominant neo-liberal form of governance (e.g., see Larner and Craig 2002; Smith-Nonini 2000; Semjoba and Therkildsen 1995). Following Michel Foucault's work on governmentality[68], analyses of NGOs have argued that these organizations are an integral part of neo-liberal (or even post-neoliberal) forms of governance (Larner and Craig 2002; Smith-Nonini 2000; Semjoba and Therkildsen 1995). In consequence, contrary to scholars such as June Nash (2001) who argues that NGOs are part of a system that undermines the power of the State, these researchers argue instead that the spread of NGOs and the fact that they now deliver many of the services that the State has traditionally provided (or should provide), does not necessarily mean a decrease in State power, but suggests rather a new way for it to govern (Smith-Nonini 2000; Semboja and Therkildsen 1995). The work of NGOs, and even government institutions as PROPEVI, may be considered a form of neo-liberal governance in Guatemala as their existence and practices make it possible for the State to continue to govern numerous aspects of people's lives while maintain some distance, and importantly avoid responsibility in matters of life and

[68] In *Governmentality* Foucault observes that in the period between the mid 16th century to the end of the 18th century new forms of political treatise developed (1994:201). The new form of government that emerges is concerned with governing almost all aspects of people's lives; it is concerned with everything from ensuring the health of the population to the running of 'proper' households and families. However, since this new art of government pervades almost all aspects of life it also requires that people begin to self-govern. In other words, the new art of government is concerned with the governing of other's behavior, but operates through a process of collective self governing.

death of its citizens. At the same time, NGOs can be seen as filling a gap in services where the State is unable or unwilling to provide them. Furthermore, we can see how NGOs that do not directly promote a neo-liberal agenda, and rather work to make better some of the problems resulting from free-trade globalization or even work to oppose it, nevertheless remain linked to that system whether it be through working to fix some of its effects. As I discussed above, non-governmental institutions as those pertaining to the No Violence Against Women Network partake 'raising awareness' and 'mobilizing shame' about certain issues (Gaer 2000). These issues can include the practices of corporations that, for instance, are breaking labour protection laws or exploiting their workers. For example, Jagdish Bhagwati, a critic of anti-globalization movements argues that a "good tongue lashing" from civil society organizations or the media would "advance progressive social agendas" rather than government sanctions (2002:6).[69] Frances Pilch (2003) provides an example of the 'successes' of NGOs in post-conflict contexts. He draws on research in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and argues that NGOs have greatly contributed to a genuine revolution in international law dealing with sexual violence during war-time. Pilch points out that these objectives have been achieved in large part because of NGO reports that have documented incidences of rape, locating the incidents in the framework of the conflicts that took place, and proposing legal interpretations of those crimes. Furthermore, Pilch maintains that the documentation of crimes of sexual violence "has not only raised public consciousness but also

[69] Thus NGOs are seen as politically optimal since both those who oppose neo-liberalism and free trade globalization as well as those, like Bhagwati, who favour it see an important role for these organizations in a globalized world.

provided invaluable information for criminal investigations" (2003:92). Finally, Pilch maintains that NGOs have also lobbied for gender-sensitive perspectives in the Tribunals and the International Criminal Court.[70]

The power of medico-legal apparatuses to shape subjectivities, bodies, and selves has been an interest of political philosophers (Butler 1990; Foucault 1973, 1980, 1988; Rose 1998). Given this power, in analyzing the legal and institutional frameworks for addressing violence against women in Guatemala, we might ask what sorts of subjectivities are being created through institutions aimed at addressing the problem? In her analysis of a global gender rights movement, and the social process that unfold when global ideals regarding women's human rights are implemented in particular local settings, Sally Engle Merry argues that often, "the adoption of rights consciousness requires a shift in subjectivity" (2006:186). A criticism of the ostensible universal nature of human rights ideals is that these are simply not "universal" as they premised on a particular—namely, Western—conception of an autonomous self. Ideals surrounding the human rights of women currently promoted by the Guatemalan State and local civil society organizations and international bodies as the United Nations have the potential for (and indeed are often geared at some form of) cultural change. For example, in her analysis of the

[70] In contrast to Pilch numerous analyses point to the problems with non-governmental organizations in post conflict contexts (e.g. see, Evans-Kent and Bleiker 2003; Green 1999; Malkki 1995,1996; Pandolfi 2000,2003; Richmond 2003; Uvin 1998). In an analysis of NGO contributions in post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Evans-Kent and Bleiker (2003) focus on three central challenges that limit the positive outcomes of NGO practices. The first challenge is the relationship of NGOs to their donors; the second is the divide between local and international organizations; and the third, is the lack of coordination among NGOs (Evans-Kent and Bleiker 2003).

work of United Nations committee charged with monitoring compliance of nations to CEDAW, Merry (2006) found that the committee's recommendations often included statements regarding the need of certain nations to reform "traditional" cultural practices harmful to women, emphasizing individual autonomy and physical safety, without considering the repercussions of women denouncing violence against them on family and community life.

While always an incomplete process, at minimum Human Rights provide an (alternative) framework for individuals to draw upon in the (re)construction of their everyday lives and social worlds, as well as in the fashioning of identities and sense of self. In his ethnography *The Origins of Indigenism,* Niezen (2003) examines the emergence and growth of the category of Indigenous Peoples and how it gained strength through the growth of a discourse of human rights, and through international forums attended by community representatives and NGO personnel. Niezen traces how indigenism became a global point of identification - bringing people from different continents to international gatherings, people who may not otherwise have adopted a common identification together to present grievances and advance collective rights on issues that had very local dimensions and implications. Niezen's analysis permits us to see how the category of indigenous peoples, despite frequently treated as an essentialized 'timeless' identity, was constructed through international forums. His examination of indigenism also underscores the power of certain social constructs. He demonstrates how the concept of indigenous people took on a life of its own as peoples from different parts of the world with similar (yet differing) sets of experiences adopted the concept, integrated into processes of self

and collective identity, as well as advanced collective claims based on this identification.

In her work on international law on gender violence and its implementation in five different countries (the U.S., Fiji, Hong Kong, China and India) Merry (2006), is interested precisely in what occurs in the space between such global ideals and localized individual and community practices. How do communities and individuals draw upon ideas of human rights in (re) fashioning their day-to-day lives? To what extent, and how do members of local communities weave international human rights ideals with parallel, or completing, discourses and thus negotiate often complex moral economies? This line of questioning informed Merry's work on gender-based violence (Merry 2000, 2006, 2009) and is useful in analyzing women's support groups in Guatemala.

The Guatemala City support group in which I participated at Fuerzas during my research is an important site of analysis for it is situated between different levels of practice: institutional and individual, as well as an international level (in the form of global frameworks for the eradication of gender-based violence) and local perspectives. Indeed, support groups are a central components of the work of many institutions conducting work in the area of gender-based violence in Guatemala. For example, Fundación Sobrevivientes, as Norma Cruz pointed out to me, essentially began as a supportive group of women meeting on a regular basis to exchange experiences and share their feelings.

Like Sobrevivientes, all of the organizations I visited during my fieldwork in Guatemala stressed the support group as playing a significant role in their work. As

I describe in Chapter 1, an important part of my fieldwork in Guatemala consisted of sitting in on a support group for women victims of violence and/or their relatives in downtown Guatemala City, where I was able to observe the support group's work first hand. The support group was among the various services that Fuerzas provided, the others being legal, medical, and social work services. Sitting in on the Fuerzas support group, which self-named itself "United by Change", allowed me to see how the staff of institutions—such as the group facilitators—play an important mediatory role as they are positioned between official institutional discourses on violence against women and direct interaction with women who seek out the services of such institutions.

Before I could sit in on the group's sessions, all of its members had to consent to my participation, which they formally did. The first time I attended the Fuerzas group, composed of twelve women, and facilitated by two psychologist and a social work student, it was the fourth time the group had met. The group met on a bi-weekly basis, typically on Sundays from 8:00 to 12:00 with a break in between or near the end in the Fuerzas building. The participants ranged in age from 25 to their late 40s, with the exception of one women in her 60s and who participated in the group along with her daughter in her 30s. The group's participants were of a lower socio-economic status; two of the women could not read or write. Of the twelve participants only one, Doña Celeste, was indigenous.

Initially, I was struck by the willingness of Fuerzas members to share their experiences with one-another, especially given the private nature of the issues they discussed, such as problems with spouses, physical, sexual and psychological

violence, alcoholism, and worry about their children. Thus, it seemed to me during the first session I attended that the participants of the group really valued the space the support group provided to come together and share the different areas of concern in their lives especially issues surrounding domestic violence. Some of the women expressed during the first and subsequent sessions how the group had helped them to deal with their issues (producing a kind of narrative that validates the support group and their participation in it). For instance, one woman, in her late forties, Raquel, indicated during one of the sessions that prior to attending Fuerzas she would bow her head (*agachar la cabeza*) before certain members of her family. However, after having participated in the group, she now is able to walk with her head high. This change, she told the group, had been noticed (and criticized) as her sister-in law now says to her, "*así que ahora entras con la cabeza para arriba*", as if to say "now you think you are so much, you enter with your head high". Raquel shared this story as proof of how she had gained self-esteem. Another woman, Karla, age 36, shared how she has learned through the group sessions how to deal with her anger in a 'better' way. Before, Karla told the group, she would never tell her husband why she felt angry, but would bottle it up for days. Now, she told the group, she says to her husband, "this and this has upset me…" and then "that is the end of the matter".

The sessions of the support group were typically organized around a particular theme, such as psychosomatic illnesses, stress, and building effective communication. During one of the weekly sessions, for instance, the facilitators led a group discussion on the topic of self-esteem: I made the following entries into my field diary the day following the session.

The session yesterday was centred on the issue of self-esteem. During the course of this session women also spoke about all sorts of matters. One woman, Doña Rosa, discussed her troubles with her husband, the physical abuse she has suffered at his hands.

She told us how her husband would frequently beat her to the point where she was left with bruises. Once, he hit her so hard that her scalp hurt her, she could not bear to comb her hair. This occurred until one day she waited for him with a large wooden stick and struck him back after he struck her. This was on the advice of a friend who told her that she had taken the legs off her kitchen table and used them to get back at (hit) her husband; this left her eating on the floor, she shared with humour, but allowed her to get back at him. Doña Rosa told us how after this incident her husband has not physically harmed her, though he turned abusive in other ways; e.g., psychologically and emotionally abusive. For instance, he taunts her with comments suggesting that he has many women, that he has "*muchos culos*" ("many asses").

The other women shared different experiences. For instance, Angelica described how her relationship to her son was not so great, that they have a bad relationship, and she doesn't know where it will lead. She indicated that she was very worried where the situation was heading, but did not share details. Another woman described how her husband left her because she stopped working.

After all of the women had shared something either related to self-esteem or simply stated any concern or issue they had experienced since their last meeting, one of the two psychologists, Andrea María, and co-facilitator posed the question: what has caused us to accept this type of treatment and these types of relationships? Some of the women answered, that it was the fact that they did not know any better. That, in the past, at that point in time they had not learned to value themselves. That this was how they were raised. Andrea María discussed how there is a cultural privileging of males, that teaches both women and men that men are superior, and women are there to serve them. It also teaches both sexes that men "have the right" to do what they like with women.

The work of support groups as "United by Change", which are situated at the intersection of different levels of experience, and with participants bringing unique personal experiences, cannot be reduced to a given effect. The impact of support groups on their participants are diverse, flexible, and at times even contradictory. For instance if we take the discussion of the support group offered above, on the one hand, the group's facilitator provides the group's participants with a cultural explanation for the violence committed against them, thus providing an explanation that shifts blame from the woman; in other words, it is not her fault she has endured abuse, her culture has taught her to accept it. On the other hand, the onus for changing relationships based on disrespect and violence is placed on women. With 'knowing better' comes the responsibility to *act*. That is, a woman is not responsible for what her culture has taught her, but she is responsible for changing the messages she passes on to her children. However, as I address in the section below, not all institutions place the onus of change on individuals. There are women's organizations that work to hold the State, and even multinational corporations, accountable for the violation of women's rights, and exert pressure on the State to rectify the situation.

Politicizing Violence: Building a New Citizenship?

At the same time that organizations working in the area of gender-based violence in Guatemala place the responsibility of the work of changing attitudes, practices, and cultural values surrounding violence in the country squarely on the shoulders of women, certain organizations are working to politicize the issue as they stress the social, historical, political, and economic circumstances that underlie insecurity in the

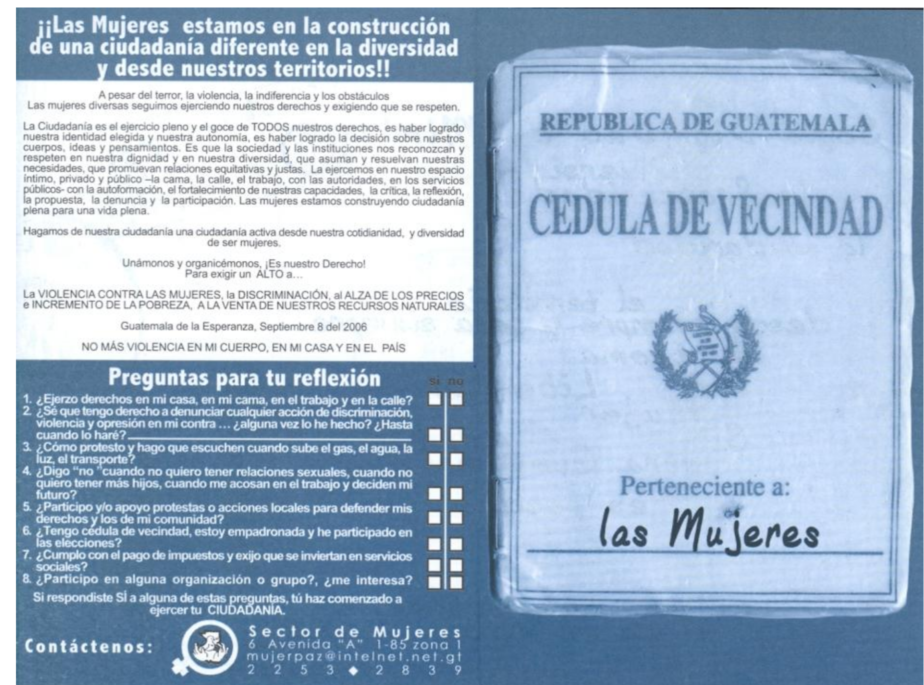
country and in the home. The women's movement in Guatemala, while historically fragmented along ethnic, class, geographical and political lines, has collectively organized around violence and worked to politicize gender-based violence and other forms of violence that affect women in Guatemala today. Thus, for instance the *Sector de Mujeres* (Women's Sector) which was part of the National Assembly of Civil Society that participated in the peace negotiations promotes the eradication of violence within women's lives as part of a strategy to build a new kind of citizenship.

Thus one of their pamphlets (see image below) contains on one side the image of a Guatemalan Citizenship card, indicating in hand written letters that the card belongs to "Women" (*las mujeres*). On the left side, the pamphlet reads, "Women are constructing a different citizenship within diversity and from our territories". The main text, which follows under the heading reads:

> In spite of terror, violence, indifference and obstacles, we, diverse women continue to exercise our rights and to demand that they be respected. Citizenship is the full exercise and enjoyment of ALL our rights, it is to the ability to chose our own identity and autonomy, it is to make decisions over our bodies, ideas and thinking. It is that society and institutions recognize and respect our dignity and diversity, that they take on and tackle our needs, and promote just and equitable relationships. We exercise it in our intimate spaces, private and public—the bed, the street, the workplace, with authorities, in public services—with the strengthening of our various abilities: critical abilities, ability to reflect, to propose, denounce and participate. As women we are constructing full citizenship for full lives.
>
> Let's make our citizenship an active citizenship from our everyday practice, and diversity we have in being women. Let's join together and organize, It's our Right!
> To demand a STOP to…

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DISCRIMINATION, the
RISE IN PRICES and the RISE in POVERTY, TO THE SALE
OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES.
Guatemala de la Esperanza, September 8, 2006

NO MORE VIOLENCE ON MY BODY, IN MY HOME OR THE
COUNTRY.



¡¡Las Mujeres estamos en la construcción de una ciudadanía diferente en la diversidad y desde nuestros territorios!!

A pesar del terror, la violencia, la indiferencia y los obstáculos
Las mujeres diversas seguimos ejerciendo nuestros derechos y exigiendo que se respeten.

La Ciudadanía es el ejercicio pleno y el goce de TODOS nuestros derechos, es haber logrado nuestra identidad elegida y nuestra autonomía, es haber logrado la decisión sobre nuestros cuerpos, ideas y pensamientos. Es que la sociedad y las instituciones nos reconozcan y respeten en nuestra dignidad y en nuestra diversidad, que asuman y resuelvan nuestras necesidades, que promuevan relaciones equitativas y justas. La ejercemos en nuestro espacio íntimo, privado y público –la cama, la calle, el trabajo, con las autoridades, en los servicios públicos- con la autoformación, el fortalecimiento de nuestras capacidades, la crítica, la reflexión, la propuesta, la denuncia y la participación. Las mujeres estamos construyendo ciudadanía plena para una vida plena.

Hagamos de nuestra ciudadanía una ciudadanía activa desde nuestra cotidianidad, y diversidad de ser mujeres.

Unámonos y organicémonos, ¡Es nuestro Derecho!
Para exigir un ALTO a…

La VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES, la DISCRIMINACIÓN, al ALZA DE LOS PRECIOS e INCREMENTO DE LA POBREZA, A LA VENTA DE NUESTROS RECURSOS NATURALES

Guatemala de la Esperanza, Septiembre 8 del 2006

NO MÁS VIOLENCIA EN MI CUERPO, EN MI CASA Y EN EL PAÍS

Preguntas para tu reflexión (si / no)

1. ¿Ejerzo derechos en mi casa, en mi cama, en el trabajo y en la calle?
2. ¿Sé que tengo derecho a denunciar cualquier acción de discriminación, violencia y opresión en mi contra … ¿alguna vez lo he hecho? ¿Hasta cuando lo haré?________
3. ¿Cómo protesto y hago que escuchen cuando sube el gas, el agua, la luz, el transporte?
4. ¿Digo "no" cuando no quiero tener relaciones sexuales, cuando no quiero tener más hijos, cuando me acosan en el trabajo y deciden mi futuro?
5. ¿Participo y/o apoyo protestas o acciones locales para defender mis derechos y los de mi comunidad?
6. ¿Tengo cédula de vecindad, estoy empadronada y he participado en las elecciones?
7. ¿Cumplo con el pago de impuestos y exijo que se inviertan en servicios sociales?
8. ¿Participo en alguna organización o grupo?, ¿me interesa?

Si respondiste SÍ a alguna de estas preguntas, tú haz comenzado a ejercer tu CIUDADANÍA.

Contáctenos: Sector de Mujeres
6 Avenida "A" 1-85 zona 1
mujerpaz@intelnet.net.gt
2 2 5 3 ◆ 2 8 3 9

REPUBLICA DE GUATEMALA
CEDULA DE VECINDAD
Perteneciente a:
las Mujeres

Figure 11: Front Side. *Sector de Mujeres* pamphlet.

DATOS PERSONALES

Nombre y apellidos: Soyla Dignidad de Mimisma

Nombre usual: Diversidad

Hija de: la fraternidad

(Nombre del padre)

y: la solidaridad

(Nombre de la madre)

Lugar de nacimiento el territorio

Fecha desde siempre y para siempre

Estado civil Autónoma

Nombre de la esposa Libertad

Profesión u oficio: Mujer

¿ Sabe leer? Si ¿ Sabe escribir? Si

Residencia otra Guatemala

(cantón o barrio)

es posible

(aldea) (caserío)

(finca)

¿Ha prestado servicio militar? no gracias

Grado que tiene el que me proponga alcanzar

POR MÍ POR NOSOTRAS, POR LAS OTRAS

Sector de Mujeres

Figure 12: Reverse Side. *Sector de Mujeres* pamphlet.

The Sector de Mujeres, like the No Violence Against Women Network, is working to politicize violence in the various dimensions of women's lives and situate its eradication within the construction of a citizenship that makes the needs of women central, while recognizing, the diversity that exists among them.

In post-war Guatemala bodies and lives of women figure prominently in contestations over citizenship. As women emerge as political actors and as their social efforts are driving important judicial reforms, violence is enacted against them in private and public spheres. Although a broad consensus exists around the acknowledged threat of violence against women, to women themselves, households and 'the family', as well as to society at large, there are disagreements with respect to how to best address the issue. For instance, there are divisions between political-feminist organizations such as the Sector de Mujeres and GGM who are politicizing

gender-based violence, situating it within a social and political context, and those institutions as PROPEVI that promote 'harmonious' relationships in the home rather than empowering women to stand up and exercise their rights as rights-bearing citizens, such as the Sector de Mujeres and GGM. Staff of the various State and non-governmental institutions I consulted and interviewed throughout my fieldwork also signaled to the lack of inter-institutional coordination as a source of frustration and an obstacle to improving services available to women.[71]

At the same time that the Guatemalan State is formally held responsible for eliminating the conditions that make violence against women proliferate in the country, as the result of the construction of the respective judicial and institutional frameworks, gendered systems of power are not being fully challenged. Instead one might say that only women's mechanisms for coping within the system are being addressed. The 'new' woman is still expected to embody feminine qualities and behaviours –such as by making a good home for her children – yet also to exercise her rights as a citizen of the Guatemalan nation. The post-war Guatemalan nation relies on the image of the harmonious family, where women work outside the home (albeit in "women's professions"), and are good mothers and wives within the home. A woman who is free of violence within the walls of her home or who walks the streets safely is the symbolic marker of a State that protects its citizens.

[71] Norma Cruz's story itself points to institutional and political divides that often stand in the way of provincial (departmental) and national coordination of services to women. Cruz has publicly spoken about the 'political isolation' she has felt, particularly from individuals or social organizations identified to the Left, as a result of coming forth to denounce her daughter's aggressor, a former guerrilla member. Cruz has stated that these individuals and groups have closed many work spaces and doors to her for having accused one of their own (e.g., Cabanas Diaz & del Cid Vargas 2003:53).

This work to achieve this situation still rests on the shoulders of women who must begin in their homes by educating their children in a culture of peace.

<u>Conclusions: Law, Institutions and Women's Everyday Experiences</u>

Given its emphasis on individual victims and perpetrators, a global human rights approach to addressing violence against women, with a tendency to ignore particularities of the local context and, fails to capture the multilayered, multi-causal and long-term experiences of violence of women in Guatemala in themselves a highly diverse segment of the population. Indeed, the need for the State to take into account, in institutional responses to violence against women, the various layers and lasting effects of violence in women's lives became starkly apparent to me during the course of my research. In the by-weekly sessions of the women's support group at Fuerzas, women not only discussed abuse suffered at the hands of their spouses, but also fears about other forms of violence either towards themselves or their children.

Fear of reprisals, was an issue of concern for women who had experienced crimes directed at them or their family members. For instance, this was of particular concern to doña Rosa. Doña Rosa shared with me how one day she came home after work to find her home surrounded by neighbors and police officers, one of whom coldly asked her, "Are you the mother of the girl that was raped?". Rosa described this as the worst moment in her life, as it turned out she was indeed the mother. Her then thirteen year-old daughter, Mildred, had been previously the victim of a vicious sexual assault by a man known to the family. Furthermore, because Mildred protected her nine year-old sister by hiding her in her arms, she

was cruelly beaten and nearly killed. Hers was one of those cases of femicide where the victim happened to survive—cases that often do not make the headlines or official statistics. Doña Rosa explained to me that today, seven years later, the aggressor has still not been sentenced, since his legal representatives have employed different legal measures to draw out his trial. As a result, Doña Rosa constantly worries that the aggressor may take revenge on Mildred or on one of her other five children.

The Guatemalan women's movement has effectively utilized instruments of international law to advance claims based on their collective identity as women and to push for the establishment of a national institutional structure of support. At the same time, the category of women is not a homogenous one, and the passing of laws against violence as well as the establishment of services to assist women may have different outcomes for women depending on their social locations in Guatemalan society. For example, women have unequal access to legal institutions in Guatemala depending on ethnicity, class, and geographical location. Doña Rosa's access to legal representation for her daughter's case was facilitated by her residence in the department of Guatemala, where most government and social services are found. Had Doña Rosa resided in rural Guatemala, accessing services of the State—however inadequate these are—would have proved particularly challenging. In a comprehensive study of indigenous women's access to justice in Guatemala, the *Defensoría de la Mujer Indigena* (DEMI) found that indigenous women encounter numerous obstacles when seeking out legal aid. These include their low socio-economic status; 77% of indigenous women are poor and 58.3%

illiterate (DEMI, 2007:28). Other obstacles identified include language barriers (the great majority of institutions work in Spanish not indigenous languages), discrimination and racist treatment, as well as insensitivity and the tendency for officials to blame women for their situations (DEMI, 2007). Doña Rosa experienced such official insensitivity when the police officer asked her about the rape of her daughter without concern to the pain such news might cause her as a mother.

What is more, as revealed by the experiences Doña Rosa, many Guatemalans have a deep suspicion of State institutions (Sieder 2004). In a context where the State has been extremely repressive against its citizens, where the military has controlled the judiciary and acted with impunity, and police forces routinely partake in illegal activities, it is not surprising there would be such prominent and pervasive sentiments of mistrust among the population.[72] Formal legal rights are one important step in women's larger struggles for social equality in Guatemala. However, within a context of rampant impunity, grave socio-economic disparities, and inequities in access to services, following institutional routes is perhaps only one of many "responses" to the problems of violence women could take in the in the lives. In the chapter that follows I examine complementary and/or

[72] Thus, in the last decade and a half Guatemala has seen the emergence of "parallel states" (Caldeira, 1996), and forms of justice, such as lynchings where groups have taken justice into their own hands and injured or stoned suspected individuals. The United Nations Mission for Verification in Guatemala (MINUGUA 2001:1) found that between 1996 and 2001, there were a total of 421 *linchamientos* committed. The *linchamientos* occur primarily in communities that were affected by the violence of the armed conflict (in the northern and north western Altiplano). Various explanations are offered for the *linchamientos* including the high levels of insecurity in Guatemala, the exclusion and lack of trust of the majority of the population in the judicial system, and the impunity prevalent in the country.

alternative ways in which women respond to, live with, resist, negotiate roles and reconstruct their daily lives in the midst of intersecting social processes of violence.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: LIFE, SURVIVAL AND HOPE IN GUATEMALA CITY TODAY

It's important to rescue the history of Guatemalan women, in the first place because it is an occult part of the country's history in general. Women have always been present. Nevertheless they remain absent in texts, and in the greater part of the history we know. The recovery of this history is necessary also so that women themselves – like men – know and recognize how, in what moments, for what reasons, and in ways women have had a presence in the important moments of the country's history. [….] If I had total amnesia and I hadn't absolutely any notion of my past, it would be really complete chaos to try to understand myself in the present moment and much more difficult to imagine myself ahead.

-Lorena Carrillo Padilla (1989)[73]

Chapter 5 illustrated the various ways in which the Guatemalan State as well as a range of non-State (civil society) organizations have responded to the problems of violence in the lives of Guatemalan women. I traced the development of a legal and institutional framework for addressing the phenomenon of gender-based violence (GBV) and underscored both local and global forces that have contributed to shaping its development. I showed women's activism and political engagement in Guatemala to be a propelling force behind the recent institutional building and judicial reform in the area of GBV in the country. Without the activism and lobbying of women's groups for the passing of laws in the area of women's rights as well as the creation of services to assist women facing situations of abuse, it is unlikely that the judicial and institutional reforms in this area would have been made.

[73] Cited in *Nuestras Utopías: Mujeres Guatemaltecas de Siglo XX* (Chinchilla 1997).

In Guatemala, as in other Latin American countries (see for e.g., Cole and Phillips 2008), overt political engagement represents one important vehicle for the consolidation of rights, institutions, and for gaining public support for the eradication of violence toward women. Either through pushing from without for reform of government structures or increasingly working within them for change, women have emerged as important political actors in post-war neo-liberal Guatemala (Berger 2006). However, laws and services in the area of GBV, when they are exercised or sought out by women, respond to a particular moment or situation of violence; they do not respond to the ongoing lived experience and consequences of violent processes that often have a life far beyond a single particular manifestation of violence. In a post-war context where "victims" and "perpetrators" need to be established, for instance to determine whether genocide took place, who will receive compensation, and today, establishing that femicide is occurring, efforts to define and categorize distinct forms of violence and their individual victims and perpetrators, are important. At the same time, however, it remains essential to re-conceptualize violence in broader social and structural terms, and to see its social unraveling in the lives of individuals and communities, which will require more attention on the part of academics and researchers to the everyday lives of women and men. Furthermore in their day-to-day practices, women employ a range of strategies for living with, coping, and/or resisting violence in their lives that do not necessarily rest in activism and protest politics. This chapter then asks: what are some of the quotidian strategies that women in urban post-war Guatemala employ for responding to the condition of intersecting violences in their lives? To begin

addressing this question it is worthwhile to first discuss the issue of women's agency.

On Agency, Suffering, and Voice:

Post-colonial feminist scholars have cautioned against the "romance of resistance" (Abu-Lughod 1990) and argued that rather than utilizing a submission/resistance binary to approach the study of women's agency, we instead look at the very ways in which agency is embedded and constituted through particular relations of power (Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2005; Scott 2009). Thus, Joan Scott eloquently writes that agency, "is not the innate property of an abstract individual, but the attribute of subjects who are defined by – subjected to – discourses which bring them into being as at once subordinate and capable of action" (2009:12). In other words, the systems of power that produce particular kinds of subjects endow individuals with the ability to exercise particular forms of agency.

In *The Politics of Piety* Saba Mahmood (2005) examines women's agency and Islamic politics particularly within the context of the women's mosque movement in Egypt. Mahmood argues that women's involvement in the Islamic movement poses challenges to Western liberal and feminist thought, which not only works with a cultural conceptualization of a universal autonomous self, but locates agency within a binary model of subordination and subversion. Working within this framework, argues Mahmood, Western thinkers have incorrectly approached movements such as the Mosque movement as representing the subjugation of women, a diagnostic of the social conservatism and "cultural backwardness" of

Islamic societies (2005:5). Mahmood extends her critique of a Western liberal conception of agency to post-structural feminists such as Judith Butler, who Mahmood argues, conceptualize agency as inherent in performance, a subversion or re-signification of societal norms, by which an actor resists domination. This scholarship, argues Mahmood elides dimensions of human action, such as those of the women in the Egyptian Mosque movement in cultivating religious and pious selves which do not map onto the logic of repression and resistance (2005:14). Therefore, Mahmood states, "agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits those norms" (2005:15).

There is a parallel between theoretical discussions regarding women's subjugation and agency and theoretical debates surrounding political violence, trauma (particularly stemming from sexual assaults) and the survivor's voice (whether they should "speak out" against crimes committed against them or "remain silent"). While there is work that raises the questions regarding whether or not to "speak out" and denounce sexual violence always has a therapeutic function (e.g. see, Atlani and Rousseau 2000; Cvetkovich 2003), a significant body of work supports the position that there are indeed beneficial outcomes for constructing and telling one's story (e.g. see Becker et al. 2000; Brody 1994; Herman 1997; Machado and Goncalvez 1999; Pennebaker 2000; Pennebaker and Seagal 1999; Weine, Kulenovic, Pavkovic, and Gibbons 1998; Weine and Laub 1995; Weine 1999). This literature indicates that constructing narratives of one's experiences, or giving one's

testimony in cases of political violence and sexual assault can contribute to an improved state of health and well-being.

Narratives and sharing one's experiences of violence or suffering, then, are largely held up as "healthy", "empowering", and an "exercise of agency". However, there are researchers who argue in relation to women's sexual assaults, that sometimes silence by the survivors may be preferable, especially in the absence of social networks of support (e.g., Atlani and Rousseau 2000). Furthermore, some authors argue that psychosocial trauma, illness and suffering sometimes possess qualities that extend beyond language (e.g., see Das 1997, 2000; Morris 1997; Scarry 1985), thus the sufferer may not be able convey the pain of violence done unto them and thus challenging a silence/"speaking out" binary. In her ground-breaking book *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World,* Elaine Scarry (1985) makes the argument that one of the most striking qualities of pain is its resistance to language. Scary points out how, "[p]hysical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds human beings make before language is learned" (1985:4). Thus, Scarry argues that one of the central qualities of pain is its "unsharability". However, Scarry also highlights that pain presents a particular conundrum; on the one hand pain leaves us without language to express it (as it cannot be shared and is thus unconfirmable), and on the other hand, its presence cannot be denied. For the researcher, this implies the difficult task of finding a language that acknowledges pain, even while pain resists language.

David Morris (1997) and Veena Das (1997, 2000) make similar arguments about the lack of an adequate vocabulary with which to express and subsequently theorize about pain. Nevertheless, these authors challenges researchers to take up that difficult task identified by Scarry (1985), of finding ways to "speak" of the aspects of suffering and pain that escape language. These "silences", Morris (1997) and Das (1997, 2000) argue may be read as loud cries for acknowledgement, coinciding with Scarry's (1985) pronouncement of pain as simultaneously inexpressible, yet yearning for recognition.

Bringing the work of Scott (2009) and Mahmood (2005) to bear in debates over suffering and voice we can reformulate the debate over silence versus speaking out which attributes repression/pathology to the former, and resistance/"health" (or agency) to the latter – to examine the various ways in which different social arrangements and relations of power may shape the narrative tools of women. In other words rather than presuming either domination or agency, researchers can examine how women speak in contexts where directly denouncing violence that has been perpetrated against them is dangerous or simply disadvantageous for them. Below I provide a segment of an interview with Doña Thelma, who, as I described in Chapter 3, is a K'akchikel woman displaced by the armed conflict and who now lives in María José on the outskirts of Guatemala City. Doña Thelma's narrative, describes the women of her community being asked to provide to the National Compensation Program testimony on their sexual assaults as part of María José's claim for compensation for losses during the war. Her narrative blurs distinctions between domination and agency, silence and voice.

> P.G. There are many women the María José community, who have undergone a lot [?].
>
> D.T. Yes, there are many women who do not want to say anything. You feel bad telling so many things that have happened to you.
>
> P.G. Do the husbands understand them? How do they live with their spouses?
>
> D.T. *Fijese,* those issues bring problems. This same year, we, those of us who were victims of sexual assaults were called upon to declare what had happened. But at that moment the *compañeras,* they knew what they had said, but they were not aware that they had to give a sworn legal declaration. I was one of the people that accompanied the women because I am on the María José committee, and the *compañeras* were asking me, "what is this meeting for?" and "oh, if we knew that this [legally declaring] was the reason they called us, we wouldn't have come". So from there, I think fear came once again. And that happened with many *compañeras* that do not speak, because it is very difficult to say what has happened to us. In the homes it is also very difficult for the person to say something. That remains, but it's very bothersome. It's like we know that there is something hidden but it cannot be said. That happened to me, because, I think the reaction can be a problem. And one *compañera,* at that moment said to me, "*yo no le digo a nadie*" (I don't tell anyone) she said to me.
>
> But, thank God, in my case that has already passed. Today we [my husband and myself] are as if nothing has happened. So, I said to the *compañera,* "if you want, you give your testimony, if you don't want to, you don't". I could not say to her, "go, go [give your testimony]" if she did not want to. Well, she didn't go up, and she told me, would you believe it? Her husband had been there when it happened and he abandoned her the following day, he left her on her own. "I don't want it to happen again" she said, "with my [current] husband we have another son. I rather have nothing [no compensation] than to have problems".

Opting to not come forward to legally denounce sexual violence perpetrated against them during Guatemala's internal armed conflict cannot be read simply as a

“passive” act demonstrative of women’s subjugation or as the outcome of a State repression. Even while an element of repression may be present, Doña Thelma’s narrative raises the question of whether disclosure and legal denunciation is always advantageous, thus challenging institutional channels (such as the work of truth and reconciliation commissions or legal trials), as always being the most appropriate means of redress for past injustices. Doña Thelma’s account of the events surrounding the process of women providing (or refusing to provide) testimony regarding the sexual assaults committed against them during the war to the National Compensation Program raises the question of whether there are instances where silence is preferable. Perhaps we can best examine these questions by turning to an example in the literature. Laëtitia Atlani and Cécile Rousseau (2000) analyze the experiences of sexual violence against Vietnamese refugee women during flight from their country, their community’s changing collective interpretations of those experiences, and the tensions between disclosure and silence. In this way, their analysis provides us with insight into what may be at stake in choosing between disclosure and silence, and that perhaps this is not a dichotomy, but a process of choosing what elements to disclose and which to simultaneously silence.

Atlani and Rousseau examine how Vietnamese refugees collectively interpreted and reinterpreted sexual violence experienced by women when they left Vietnam during the late 1970s and early 1980s. They describe how within the refugees’ framework of family and respect, it was thought necessary that a woman be a virgin when married. Thus, a victim of sexual violence would be considered a “spoiled” woman (Atlani and Rousseau 2000: 441). However, the authors explain,

these conceptions were transformed by the refugees before their departure, in response to their fears that sexual violence that might occur during their flight (Ibid). Atlani and Rousseau describe how girls and women were reassured before departure that should they be sexually assaulted by pirates on the boats, they would not lose their honour as women and as mothers. This would be looked upon as a sacrifice that served to protect the lives of others.

The authors point out, however, that while Vietnamese refugees anticipated the sexual assaults (hence their preparatory re-interpretation of rape), they had not anticipated being forced to participate in the acts of violence. According to several of Atlani and Rousseau's informants, they were forced to select women (preferably virgins and the young) to "hand over" to the pirates who sexually abused them in the presence of their family and community members. Being forced to participate in the abuses blurred the distinction between victims and perpetrators and complicated the task of assigning blame. Consequently, argue Atlani and Rousseau, the refugees once again re-interpreted the violent acts. Atlani and Rousseau explain how the refugees began to use Buddhist Law, which included a sense of the actions of one's ancestors impacting the lives of the living, to explain the rape of women during their exodus. Atlani and Rousseau indicate that,

> According to this conception of 'Buddhist Law', as the refugees reformulated it, the sexual abuse of boat people were punishments for previous actions. These are thought to have been perpetrated not by the victim in this life or in her previous ones, but by her ancestors. A rape victim has thus paid, through her assault, for a crime committed by her ancestors. [….] The consensus among Vietnamese refugees at the conclusion of this reformulation process seems to be that the pirate aggressors should not be considered guilty.

> Rape during flight is considered punishment for past actions of one of the victim's ancestor's *hon*. This misfortune must be hidden, since it reveals a past crime of the ancestors, unknown but unrefutable given the severity of the punishment. Refugees believe one must silence history and concentrate on the present. (2000:443)

Atlani and Rousseau's study highlights the fine balance between silence and disclosure that may need to be struck by the survivor and those around her. Given the specific cultural re-interpretation of rape – where the wrongdoings of the ancestors are being "paid for" in the present and how it is thought best to not expose the ancestors' harmful deeds – disclosure of the events may create more suffering for the woman. A Western psychosocial intervention model insisting on the "beneficial" outcomes of disclosing one's trauma may not be the most appropriate for assisting individuals such as the Vietnamese survivors of sexual assaults in Atlani and Rousseau's research. It is unclear whether for an individual woman disclosing an act of violence perpetrated against her is better than keeping it in silence. Indeed, women may suffer from mental health and other consequences from the serious transgressions committed against them, and may require psychiatric or other forms of assistance. Here, Atlani and Rousseau suggest that it may be important for UN psychiatric assistance programs to not miss the dynamic between group and personal coping strategies. The group's collective reinterpretation of the rape of women may help them to collectively cope. However, individual women may or may not be helped by such an interpretation (and thus the collective interpretation cannot be taken as the only valid interpretation). Nonetheless, Atlani and Rousseau point out, we should not rush to assume that they would not be aided by an element of silence. An important point emerging from this research is that

deciding between disclosure and silence or between individual and collective coping strategies is not always simple and straightforward and that there is not necessarily a clear agency/subordination divide. Furthermore, it may not be a matter of choosing one over the other, but of finding an appropriate balance, that may vary from one individual or community to another.

There is scholarly work that attempts to bridge the silence versus speaking out dichotomy by highlighting oblique ways to disclose experience. For example, some scholars (Green 1999; Perera 2001) discuss how within contexts of political violence and repression, the feelings and experiences surrounding that violence may be expressed through narratives that on the surface seem not to be about violence. For instance, persons may talk about one issue when wanting to refer to another. Indeed one of the aspects of narrative that has been highlighted as significant is that it enables persons to express thoughts, feelings and experiences with a great deal of creativity and the incorporation of metaphor[74] (Ochs and Capps 1996; Johnson et al. 2000; Ricoeur 1977). In analyzing how people in Sri Lanka spoke of the terror they had lived through during the period between 1988 to 1991, Sasanka Perera (2001) describes how through their stories of spirit possessions and ghosts, Sri Lankans were able to narrate their memories of political violence and feelings of fear, doubt and uncertainty that political violence had engendered. Perera argues that because people could not directly discuss the violence they had witnessed or experienced, the ghost stories enabled them to "construct a continual set of experiences parallel to the traumatic experiences of the immediate past" (2001:170) that could be vocalized.

[74] Indeed, Ricoeur (1977) held the metaphoric (like the poetic) in high regard, as a place where meaning could be constructed and existence understood through its interpretation.

Thus, through a mimetic-like process, but where the discussion was displaced onto another topic, individuals could comment on the social disorder and uncertainty they had endured.

In her study of Mayan war widows in Guatemala, anthropologist Linda Green (1999) found that while they did not openly discuss the terror of the war, women constantly spoke of physical pain and illnesses they suffered following the killings of their husbands and other loved ones. Green argues that these discussions of physical pain enabled the women to express the violence and suffering they had endured, in a context where open discussion of violence was dangerous. In other words, illness narratives stood in as narratives of political violence and its effects. Rather than discuss the crimes that had been perpetrated against them and their families in a direct manner, Green (1999) indicates that the women spoke of their aches and pains, and through these denounced the state of fear and impunity in which they lived. Green (1999) contends that speaking of their illnesses was the widows' way of expressing the transgressions committed against them. In the next segment of the interview with Doña Thelma that I present in this chapter, we can observe how her complaints of physical ailments – particularly an intense, recurring pain in her abdomen – represents an important means by which she is able to communicate with others her agonizing experiences and ongoing distress. Embodiment of trauma and speaking of illnesses are for Doña Thelma, and some of her counterparts, important means to communicate experiences and memories of war in a context where openly speaking of the violent sexual violations perpetrated against them during La Violencia could bring marital problems and/or social stigma.

Veena Das (1997) examines the consequences of the mass violence of the partition in India, where mass rape and abduction of women were commonplace, and analyzes the complex relation between pain and language. She begins her analysis by discussing her dissatisfaction with the language used within the social sciences to examine and write about pain. Das locates part of the cause in the fact that, "[i]n the register of the imaginary, the pain of the other not only asks for a home in language but also seeks a home in the body" (1997:88). She points out that the violence experienced by women has found a home in their bodies, like a "poison" that must be kept inside them not to be verbalized. Das contrasts the significant role of women in the mourning practice of lamentation in India to the silence with respect to their own experiences during the Partition. According to Das, not only did the women not openly share their experiences, but "none of the metaphors used to describe the self that had become the repository of poisonous knowledge emphasized the need to give expression to this hidden knowledge" (1997:84). According to Das this silence protected women and can be in some respects regarded as a sign of creative, self-protective agency rather than passivity. Whereas women's bodies had been used as surfaces for the inscription of texts (such as messages of nationalism), women moved this pain "from surface to depth" in such a way that these texts could no longer be easily read (Das 1997). However, Das also makes the observation that this pain (and its 'poisonous knowledge') also calls for acknowledgement and understanding, creating the challenge of acknowledging this pain while preserving the women's protective secrets.

A similar tension between silence and acknowledgment of violence described by Das (1997) is evident in the part of Doña Thelma's interview that follows. After describing the dilemma some women of María José confronted in deciding whether to give their legal testimony or not, Doña Thelma shared with me some of her own concerns regarding whether to share with others the sexual assault committed against her. At the same time, by sharing these worries she was "speaking out" about the traumas she had lived. She stated,

> I had a similar case [...] I am always sick, since **that** moment I have not been well, and when I got pregnant with my oldest daughter I was close to losing her, my husband starting asking why, and I am sure the doctor told him why, and since then he has felt very bad, and he would say all kinds of things to me, and I never said anything back to him, I never said anything back. Since then, I have remained unwell (*quedé mala*). I don't know if I have some sickness because they injured me a lot, I don't know. Until today, I still don't understand, and I am ashamed (*me da tanta pena*). I am so uncomfortable telling a doctor what happened to me, or what I may have. Sometimes I think, I will go to a doctor, tell him/her what happened, but will I return all better? No. All of this part [pointing to lower abdomen], I feel as if it is falling, but it is only for certain periods that I get this. Last year I was very bad, because I could not even get on or off the bus, and I felt as if it all were falling to the ground, but it wasn't. I don't know, I tell him, my husband, that my stomach hurts a lot, but just that.
>
> We suffered a lot, on top of losing our parents. In that moment you lose everything, even your mind, you feel great fear. In my case no one noticed, because it was night time. I don't see at night. They [my relatives] took off to a house, but I thought they headed to the woods. I really don't see at night, and that is when I felt someone grab me, I never thought it was something bad. I thought it was one of my relatives. And when I realized it was not, I was so scared, I don't even know what kind of fear entered in me. Everything was trembling. Because when someone grabbed me, I also grabbed them, that was when I felt it was not one of my sisters, I know them and their faces. I felt it was not any of them, and I felt a man's

> hand. He didn't say anything, and before I knew it he had my hands behind me, and then. But I never imagined that such a thing could happen at that moment. When the sun rose I realized that, I was all covered, my legs full of blood.
>
> And I said, well one thinks about so many things, I don't even know what was coming to my mind, but I did feel a lot of fear, and I could not scream. When I got to my house I was scared I would be beaten, but no one was home when I entered. The doors were unlocked, and I entered and I lay down because I was in such pain. But no one asked me what I had. I think that perhaps if someone had asked me, surely I would have told them, but no one said anything to me. When they would ask me, "what's wrong?" I would say, "I have a headache". When they would enter our home they would ask me what was happening with me and I would reply that I had a headache. "Okay" they would say and go on their way again. And that is how one day passed, and then another. And I, in pain, went on slowly recuperating. And it went away, but after that I did have such fear of men, I had a great fear. And that fear marked me for good. This happened at night to me. I was not going to get married. I don't know why I got together with my husband, because I did not plan to, I always thought I would never get together with someone because of everything that happened to me, and all the fear I felt. I am very scared of men. I get so scared, I shiver. And someone said to me, "not all men are bad". But for me it was so interiorized. But sometimes I realize that there are men that are good, but before I had this hate towards them inside me.

There is a yearning in Doña Thelma's narrative for recognition from others of what happened to her, "perhaps if someone had asked me, surely I would have told them" she states, thinking back to the days after the violent rape was perpetrated against her. At the same time there is a keen awareness on her part that voicing the crimes perpetrated against her might not alleviate her condition, and on the contrary could complicate her domestic and social life. Doña Thelma's narrative draws our attention to the labour of women in finding a language with which to speak of their traumas and pain –oftentimes involving the constructive use of silence. "*Quedé*

mala [I was left unwell]", states Doña Thelma, aware that the repercussions of the violent assault against her (its enduring physical, emotional, and psychosocial effects) are folded into her current everyday experiences – within her home, her community, and beyond. Her narrative also reveals her strong involvement and leadership in community life, for instance by accompanying women to testify before the National Compensation Program. In addition, her narrative also points to the fact that among themselves the women of María José are aware of one another's struggles, and they make very informed, thought-out decisions regarding sharing their experiences to their family members, spouses or wider community.

As Green (1999) and Zur (1998) found among war widows in rural Guatemala, in today's urban Guatemala women such as Doña Thelma and other survivors of war, continue to experience the ramifications of violence done unto them – in their bodies, and their experiences of self and community. The fear of being the potential victim of assault or attack, the visible presence of armed security personnel at the entrance of government offices, businesses, "closed neighborhoods" or private schools throughout Guatemala City, and abounding discourses and images of *maras* (gangs) and street crime all work to reawaken survivors' experiences and memories of war. Many Guatemalan's have internalized the feeling that that **no**where is one "safe" today, even that **today** violence and insecurity is the worse its ever been (see Chaper 3). Thus, for the women in my study their experiences of themselves were ones marked by great insecurity – for instance, the uncertainty of whether they would make it to work, school or home safely, whether they could keep

their children out of harm's way, and whether they and/or their spouses could earn enough to put food on the table.

Ver Más Allá/"Seeing Farther Ahead"

Although faced with a past mired with experiences and memories of war, present-day fear of crime on the streets and violence within the home, and economic and social insecurity, the women who I came to know through my fieldwork, demonstrated tremendous resilience and strength. They actively sought ways to "make better" their life circumstances and drew on resources such as family, friendship and/or community networks when they considered that doing so would help. These everyday strategies to live with, resist, and make the best of their harsh life conditions are important to acknowledge as it is to recognize women's political activism in the country. The narratives and experiences of Guatemalan women provide insight into how injustice is perceived, felt and lived by them, a crucial aspect of finding and proposing pathways for eradicating violence in Guatemala generally and against women specifically.

Among the personal resources women drew on to resist, manage, alleviate and/or comment on their conditions of poverty, insecurity and marginalization, was that humour. For example, I was particularly struck by Doña Rosa's jokes regarding different aspects of her life including her state of poverty as well as domestic violence, which she had experienced for years at the hands of her husband. Doña Rosa, as I discussed in Chapter 5 is ladina woman in her late 30s who participated in the Fuerzas support group; she is not only a survivor of domestic abuse, but is a mother whose eldest daughter had been the victim of a sexual assault

and an attempted femicide. In Chapter 5 I described the story Doña Rosa recounted to the support group about an incident that encouraged her to "stand up" to her own husband and put an end to this physical abuse against her. Doña Rosa told the group, interspersed with laughter, about a friend who told her that, one day when she had had enough and was fed up with her husband's physical abuse, took the legs off of her kitchen table and used them to hit her husband in response to his constant physical violence towards her. The joke was that her friend had to subsequently eat on the floor, she ruined her kitchen table, but had been successful in sending the message to her husband that his abuse was unacceptable. Donna Goldstein (2003), in her ethnography on contemporary class, gender, and race relations among women living in a shantytown of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, analyzes the use of humour as a tool of women's resistance as well as a way in which women could reconstruct their life worlds in the face of deepening poverty and social and political marginalization. Goldstein argues that the humor of poor women reveals a great deal of suffering that may have otherwise remained silenced. What may seem as apolitical action can serve as a window into how the downtrodden and marginalized perceive and experience hierarchies in which they are embedded (Goldstein 2003:37). Thus, the use of humour by women such as Doña Rosa can be read as one way in which women "speak of" their life circumstances in a context where their voices are not heard by the State and political authorities.

Another incident when I was struck by Doña Rosa's use of humour occurred when I attended a public event on the eradication of violence toward women sponsored by the cosmetics company AVON, where Doña Rosa was also present.

The event was part of the cosmetic company's campaign *"Alza la voz contra la violencia intrafamiliar"* (raise your voice against domestic violence). AVON had already run a similar campaign in Mexico and following the Guatemalan campaign ran a similar program in neighboring El Salvador. The central objective of the AVON program was to raise public awareness about domestic violence, targeting specifically women, the main victims of such violence as well as the main customers of the cosmetic company.[75] Billboards were erected throughout Guatemala City, and the company held public events as the one that Doña Rosa and I attended in a hotel of Guatemala's Zona Viva (Zone 10, popular for its nightclubs and boutiques). Speeches were delivered by spokespersons from AVON and a survivor of domestic violence herself who shared her struggle with domestic violence at the hands of her former spouse. The speaker also shared how "empowered" she felt when she finally took the decision to seek help and leave him. The survivor made it clear she was not a feminist, but an "ordinary" woman, and as such had one message for others, to stand up and "raise their voices" about violence within their homes. Workers of the AVON central office in Guatemala handed out pamphlets containing information on resources for domestic violence to the event's attendees. The pamphlets defined domestic violence and its different forms (physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, and even economic violence[76]), pointed to signs of abuse, why a

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[75] Although beyond the scope of this project, it would be important to analyze the "commercialization" of domestic violence and the role of national and international corporations in processes that target its eradication. Campaigns to eradicate domestic violence such as those of AVON are likely to reach a wide range of women who consume or sell their products, thus effectively drawing attention to the issue. At the same time these campaigns may be analyzed as creative "marketing", drawing in a clientele to consume their products.

[76] *Violencia Patrimonial* ("economic" violence) is said to occur for instance when a spouse fails to provide child support or forces the other to hand over her/his income.

woman might not seek support, and contained a listing of institutions such as Sobrevientes and PROPEVI that were available in Guatemala to assist women in need.

Doña Rosa as well as other women who had been part of the Fuerzas group were among the hundreds of attendees at the AVON event. Indeed I had been at the session of their support group when the facilitators informed the group of the evening's event. Since I was expecting to see the women from the group there, I brought with me that evening the photographs that I had taken of Doña Rosa's and her youngest daughters when I had visited her in her home a few weeks earlier. On that occasion, when she had given me permission to take the photos, I had promised to make copies for her. As the public event on domestic violence was wrapping up, I caught sight of Doña Rosa, I approached her and commented to her that I had her set of photos in my possession and wanted to give them to her. Doña Rosa was very happy and quite excited to take a look at them. I handed the photographs to her and looking at them she broke out into laughter immediately. I was puzzled at her laughter; I had not thought the pictures were funny. Laughing, Doña Rosa said to me, pointing at the one of the photographs, "I hadn't noticed how dirty (*tan sucia*) and barefoot (*descalza*) my little girl (*nena*) was". She giggled and said, "*tan pobrecita que se ve*" (She looks so poor). "*La próxima vez me avisa y las arreglo bien*" (Next time, give me advance notice [that you are coming and taking photographs], and I will dress them well") she said, all the while giggling about the pictures. Doña Rosa used humour to comment on poverty in her life. By indicating that her youngest daughter looked "so poor" and that next time she could dress her

well, Doña Rosa confirmed her little daughter's "appearance of poverty" while also indicating that this did not have to be the case. Doña Rosa's laughter confirmed while it resisted her condition of poverty.

In addition to humour, other resources that women drew on to mediate their harsh life circumstances or held up as sources of strength in the face of obstacles to their survival and well-being, were social organization, such as being part of committees, community and neighborhood organizations, involvement with the church –whether Catholic or Evangelical Pentecostal – and networks of friends and family. While violence broke and/or posed challenges to the creation of social networks, women found different ways of (re)building networks of support, or social spaces that gave them a sense of belonging, having a purpose, and a desire for "getting ahead" and "moving forward" (*salir adelante*) with their lives. For various women of the Villa Nueva settlement María José, participating in the neighborhood association was something they took pride in. Forming the association and having participated collectively in the invasions of the lands they now owned (that is, having won legal titles to the land), represented a significant source of strength. They indicated that forming part of a collectivity, the neighborhood association, helped them in the recent past. Therefore, in the present, they drew strength from being part of the association and its victories. Subsequently, Doña Tina indicated to me how being part of María José has given her the will to be more active in other aspects of community life, namely the Church and helping others. She stated,

> I lived almost 30 years with my pain. I would laugh, when I was on the street, when I spoke to others, I would smile. But I felt that inside there was something. Even in Church, I would hear people talk about love of God and everything, but

> inside I had something (*tenía algo*). It was not until November, when I was pulled into the executive of María José, and now I have become involved with them. And there I felt much better because, for those women, I tell you, you can not make them wake up. And then there were those women, who I would see, looking great in their *traje* and they would go protest in front of Congress or would demand meetings with this or that person. And so I would say to myself, why not me? That made me wake up. That made me get more involved, and it made me help people. […] It was because I got involved with María José that I was able to meet the psychology students from the university, and have also become involved with the church. For me it was much better and I can see *más para allá* [can see further, see beyond my current circumstances], I am always finding ways to inform myself, how to go here and there. I love to read, I would have loved to have continued my studies, and I have tried so hard to ensure my daughter studies.

While she herself was not protesting in front of Congress, Doña Tina was inspired by indigenous women activists she would see on the news. Seeing their struggles for a better life and social change inspired her to become involved with María José, as a member of their executive committee. Doña Tina credits her involvement with the María José community association as giving her the will to be more involved in her community.

Doña Tina shared how her involvement with the Catholic Church served as respite from her daily struggles and as a source of strength for working to make her community a "better" place. She told me that she greatly enjoyed volunteering with the Church as it enabled her to work with families in difficult situations. Assisting needy families in any way she could, made her feel a sense of joy and accomplishment. She saw her own struggles as being related to the disappearance of her father by military personnel during La Violencia and the subsequent "family

disintegration" it had caused. Helping other families possibly avoid conflict and hardships gave her a sense of purpose. She also indicated that she had to stay strong not to "give into" the sadness she frequently experienced, for the sake of her children. Doña Tina stated,

> I not only work with María José but also with the Church, so now I have become involved, maybe because I myself experienced the disintegration of my family (*des-unión familiar*). If you look at the problems in our neighborhood (*colonia*), you will see we are in a very bad situation and if you tell people where you live and you mention Villa Nueva, people will say to you, "what are you doing **there**"? Because it's bad, there are many gangs. I say to my husband, "why are there so many gangs? I think what needs to be addressed are families because that is where many problems such as alcoholism stem. I feel like I am doing social work because when I see a sad child I may say to him or her "what happened?". I see there are so many ugly things around, and I feel like I have to find a way to help others. So I may go up to the gangs in the corner, and I tell you there used to be many, and I say to them, "you are special to God, God made you in his image". And often they tell me, "you say that because you have not lived what we have lived". That's what one youth said to me. According to him I have not lived what he has, but in reality I have. Nevertheless he said to me, "you don't understand because you have not lived what I have lived". And I said to him, "of course I have, but I understood that God loves me". "I don't believe in that", he replied to me. And this is the type of response I get from young people. They say, "how does God love me if my father raped me? How do you want me to understand that God loves me?". So what I am saying is that we need to address the family unit. And I am looking for the way, in my personal life, and in my volunteer activities with the church and it gives me great hope.

Ana, a university-educated K'iche woman in her early thirties and resident of one of Guatemala City's red zones, El Limón pointed out that she found support from her family, other women and friends, being part of an indigenous woman's organization, and her spiritual beliefs. Thus she stated,

I believe that family is very important, even if some question it as an institution, but as a centre of social support it is important. I believe that it plays a role in emotional support, for example when I arrive home and share how my day has gone. Then there is someone with me, that I am not alone. I believe that for me, social organization is also important because there I find other support. Because of so many problems, with more reason, it is important today to be in this type of organization. Its important to continue addressing not only the problem of violence, but also discrimination and poverty. Of course, in the end violence is like an effect of structural problems in our country. However, because this is happening, it should not paralyze us. I think we have a survival consciousness. In other words, surely poor women that have to find food everyday, for them their greatest motivation is to eat tomorrow and they have to go out [to work] in whatever way they can. I also have survival motivations, motivations for surviving and eating, but I also have the ability to contribute, and there are other women who are fighting like me, I am not alone. Does this mean I should expose myself, no it doesn't mean I should walk outside at 10 pm. That is, I take precautions, so I can't give myself too much freedom as I would before. Before I would arrive home at 10pm or 2am, now I don't. Because I work I can afford to take a taxi, I can also decide to stay at a friend's or my partner's house, or we go out together. I think you start looking for certain connections or supports. I have a friend for example who I call and say, "this and this happened to me". We share and tell each other. Maybe we are not even aware that telling may help us, may take away some of the stress, and make us realize that some women have to expose themselves more to what is out there, so why should we worry so much? In other words, other women motivate you to not remain paralyzed, because in this country [where you have to go out to work] it is not a luxury you can give yourself. You cannot stay home, and say "since its violent out there I can't go out" or "because there is so much violence I will let myself fall into a state of depression". But we can't, we have to go out and make a living, to eat. You know, sometimes when I am on the buses I ask some women, "where are you coming from" or I may say "yesterday there was a killing, what do you make of it?". They respond, "it was horrible. What I do is light my candels (*poner mis candelas*)", they look for refuge in religion. I am not Catholic or evangelical, but I have my own indigenous

> spirituality, I think it is an important element, even though I am critical of many religious sects.

For Doña Thelma, in addition to community work, it was sheer survival, the fact that she had endured so much during the armed conflict that she used to give her hope for the future. I asked, "where do you find strength to go on (*salir adelante*)?" And she replied,

> Well, this is like a root for everything that is happening now. The military well they thought that surely they would end with all of those who acted, spoke of their rights, but on the contrary. Because what they did is to leave many roots, and so today we can all say what happened to us, and we are witnesses to what happened in the country, and no one can tell us "no, that did not happen". […] They can call us and we can say it was the military, or the guerilla that did harm to us, but it was the military that caused most harm. But this left its roots, they tried to finish us, but they didn't achieve it. What they managed was our organization, and here it is. The military had power, but it lost it. We say now publicly what happened to us.

P.G. What are your hopes for the future?

> D.T. [*Laughs*] Many things still. I have liked to support people, in whatever problem they are facing. My daughters ask me why I help if I feel so bad, and I tell them that that is what I like doing. There are problems in the school, I am there. In the future I hope to do many things, for example work with the entire *colonia.* We are about to organize an NGO. There are many needs, there are those of us who do not have housing, electricity, drainage systems, and there is the problem of schools. And so on in the entire municipality of Villa Nueva. We have been helped in the past […] so I say now, "if we can give a grain of sand, we can give it, right?".

Many women with children that I interviewed for this project mentioned despite the personal and community traumas they had undergone and/or the present-day climate of violence and fear in which they lived, they felt a need to stay strong and go on with their lives, for their children. When I asked doña Rosa where she found strength to continue everyday she mention her children. She responded,

> Sometimes some people ask me, "*¿por qué aguantas tanto*?" (why do you put up with so much?). I think it is my children. If I am no longer here, what will be of my children. If I leave and leave my children, what will be of them? Maybe later I will want to recuperate them, but I will not be able to for having abandoned them. They are my only reason for living because my life is hard. I don't know what else I have left, the only option I have left is to fight for them.

In their day-to-day practice women engage in the reconstruction of their lives amidst a myriad of social problems ranging from psychosocial wounds of war, civic insecurity and violence in their neighborhoods and homes, and deep poverty and ethnic discrimination. Whether it is through their humour, (re)building networks of support with family members and other women, becoming involved in community organizations or church groups, and struggling to make a life for the sake and future of their children, women demonstrate strength and resilience. Researchers need to be more attentive to women's everyday experiences to not only understand the insidious effects of violence but the very forms of life, hope and strength and that live despite an in its midst. Women are caught up in complex webs of power; their actions may support and resist power simultaneously (Abu-Lughod 1990). Yet women are social actors in the different spheres of their lives – individual, family, community and political spheres.

Contributions

This dissertation provides an examination of the various ways in which violence and fear of violence routinely effect women in the present-day urban context of Guatemala City. A contribution of this study is its focus on **women**. As Lorena Carillo (1989) states in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, women are too often missing in academic texts on Guatemala's history, politics and social life. This dissertation offers insight into the lives, experiences, perspectives and practices of Guatemalan women living amidst a multitude of social processes of violence and injustice. While this study has shown the deep impact of violence on women's lives – for instance in their recurring memories of war and violent assaults against them (only intensified by present-day insecurity), loss of loved ones and disrupted family and community lives, mistrust of other individuals and of government authorities, and constant fear of future violence and the restriction of movement–it has also shed light on the resources women actively draw upon to make a better life for themselves and their families. Women are collectively pressuring the State for increased protection under law, elimination of barriers to education and employment, and pushing for social justice more broadly. In their day-to-day action women are also actively reconstructing their lives. For instance, women also exercise agency by selectively choosing not to "see" violence[77], utilizing humour, or even silence, building personal networks of support and trust, and giving back to their communities (through volunteer activities and finding ways to help others). Women's perspectives will tell us a great deal about post-war Guatemala, not only

[77] For instance, see the example of Eva in Chapter 3.

about violence's reach, but about how life is remade in its presence. If we do not incorporate women's experiences, voices, feelings, hopes and aspirations into our analyses we may be missing a key ingredient for imagining alternatives for Guatemala.

Another contribution of this thesis is its focus on the **urban** setting of Guatemala's Metropolitan Area and on both the experiences of indigenous and non-indigenous women. Studies inquiring into the effects of war-time violence on civilian populations in Guatemala have tended to focus on indigenous populations in rural highland areas that saw the bulk of the massacres during the war. This project illustrates some of the ways in which urban residents of Guatemala experience the ramifications of war and of post-war insecurity. The inclusion of an urban focus in analyses of violence in Guatemala is necessary for various reasons. For one, there is centuries-long history of structural violence – the very founding of the capital city constituted a violent process with colonial usurpation of indigenous lands and the exploitation of their labour (as Chapter 2 illustrated) – that has undoubtedly played a role in cotemporary patterns of physical and social segregation and violence along ethnic, class and gender lines. There is also a more recent history of political repression in the capital (for instance, during the armed internal conflict when the State targeted certain urban residents such as activists and academics, and the arrival of displaced indigenous populations to the City) that weighs heavily in the experiences and memories of segments of the Guatemalan population (see Chapter 3). Finally, given the soaring crime rates that Guatemala City has experienced in the

post Peace Accords period, it is necessary to include an urban focus (as this dissertation has) in analyses of post-war violence. Understanding the toll of violence on individuals, families and communities is a necessary first step for proposing alternatives and paths towards its elimination. This study has illustrated the various ways in which violence is constructed by an array of social institutions and actors – for instance by the State, the media, non-governmental organizations and institutions, within families and by individual men and women. If violence is socially and culturally constructed, it can too can be deconstructed. Understanding how violence in Guatemala is individually and socially perpetuated is an important step towards understanding how it may be prevented.

This thesis highlights the need to rethink methodological and analytical frameworks for better understanding the interconnections and intersections of different forms of violence in the lives of women, as they are not only affected by gender-based violence, but are targeted and threatened too by pervasive civic insecurity and processes of structural and symbolic violence present at a broader societal level. Problems of violence in Guatemala are not simply about body counts and numbers but actively shape forms of sociality and the quotidian experiences of individuals. By studying women's lives more thoroughly we are able to observe the social life of violent processes thus reformulate conceptions of violence as constituting simply an individual "act" or event separate from the everyday to see instead how it is embedded in a complex network of social relations. In Guatemala violence is also entrenched in historical processes of inequality, and marginalization along ethnic, class, and gender lines, national and international economic interests

that rely on social inequities, militarization and political warfare as well as the unaddressed psychosocial consequences of war. Thus, femicide and gender-based forms of violence, while requiring specific attention, must also be seen in relation to the country's problems of civic insecurity. In this way, gender-based violence is not simply a problem affecting and involving women.

Finally, this dissertation has illustrated the value of the anthropology of violence. Through reframing violence in broader social and historical terms and with an eye to its "on-the-ground" effects on the lives of women who endured the internal armed conflict first hand, this thesis has shed light into some of the ways in which Guatemala's violent history, suffering and memories are being addressed not by its Truth Commissions or by the State, but by women themselves in their daily lives. As such, this dissertation highlights the gaps that exist between official frameworks and channels for commemorating victims of war and for addressing contemporary problems of insecurity and GBV with the day-to-day lived experiences of individuals. This project thus responded to the call within anthropological literature (Green 1995; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Nordstrom 1997) for the need to interrogate the effects and social consequences of war and violence on the everyday lives of those it reaches, rather than merely focusing on their tolls on the political and economic domains of societies they affect.

Directions for Future Research:

While this dissertation provided an ethnographic examination of the impact of violence on the lives of women, further research that includes the experiences and the perspectives of men—the gendered dynamics of their experiences—is necessary for understanding more fully how violence in the country works through gender. If

the voices of ('lay') women are often missing and excluded from institutional accounts of the social, political and economic toll of violence on the country, so are the voices and experiences of working-class Guatemalan indigenous and ladino men. Understanding the workings of gender in experiences of war and its aftermath will require attentiveness to the everyday lives of men.

Another area for future research is the "real" impact of the laws on gender-based violence, in particular the latest—the Law Against Femicide passed by the Guatemalan Congress in April 2008. Ten months following the approval of the law, in February of 2009, the first sentence was passed; Calixto Simón Cum was sentenced to five years in prison for threatening the life of his former spouse Vilma de la Cruz as well as repeated domestic violence towards her (Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA 2009:10). Survivor's Foundation assisted Vilma de la Cruz, and, since her aggressor's trial, has also been assisting other families in the quest to bring violators of the Femicide (and Domestic Violence) Law to justice. In another landmark case, in April 2010 Axel Noé Cho Aspuac, Luis Roberto Socoreque Mashán and Moroni Hared Silva were sentenced to 163 years of prison for the murder of three sisters, Heydy, Diana and Wendy Suruy, ages 7, 8 y 12 respectively. These cases and others like them (e.g., see http://www.sobrevivientes.org/) set a precedent in Guatemala.
Yet, they represent a tiny portion of cases of femicides in the country. In 2009 alone 708 cases of murdered women were reported nationally (Ibid.). And figures on femicide in Guatemala, as I indicated in Chapter 4, do not account for cases where the victim happened to survive. It remains to be seen how far the body of laws in

the area of women rights and against violence (see Chapter 4) can go in reducing rates of gender-based violence, especially when impunity is widespread in Guatemala. At a national level, less than 2% of murders of women end in conviction (Orantes 2008). Judicial reform thus far has been insufficient to halt increasing rates of violence against women; on the contrary, rates have significantly increased, parallel to the passing of laws on discrimination and violence against women. Nonetheless, judicial reform in relation to violence against women, and the spaces opened by the peace process (Berger 2006; Jonas 2000) could serve as a platform for broader discussions and more holistic efforts to find solutions for the problems of violence in post-war Guatemala. The complexities of women's lives and women's activism highlights that women's rights must be fought on multiple spheres.

In ending this dissertation, I reiterate a point I opened with. Namely, that experiences and memories of Guatemala's war remain a powerful force shaping the experiences of individuals and communities in its wake. February 26th 2010 marked a new chapter in the struggle to confront the country's violent past for residents of Guatemala City. On this day hundreds of *capitalinos* (city dwellers), and in particular many widows of war, showed up for the first ever exhumation of victims of war at La Verbena Cementary in Guatemala City, where it is believed that at approximately 3 000 unidentified individuals, *desaparecidos* (disappeared) were buried or thrown into deep wells during the 1970s and 1980s. Exhumations of those killed during the armed conflict in Guatemala are not new: for decades forensic teams have been digging up mass graves in the mountains and highland areas of Guatemala (e.g., see Sanford 2003) and even in municipalities located as close to an

hour from the Capital City such as San Juan Comalapa in the department of Chimaltenango (e.g., see Cofiño 2007). However, the exhumation at La Verbana marks the first exhumation of the war dead in the nation's Capital. What impact will the physical 'evidence' of State violence dug up in the Capital, in the "backyard" of government and with many of the victims being *ladino/as* have on commemoration of war in the country? What ethnic politics may urban exhumations of indigenous and *ladino* individuals incite in the face of efforts to prove that the State perpetrated genocide against the indigenous populations of Guatemala? Will digging up the remains of *ladino* victims mean the consequences of war may be taken more seriously by the State or will *ladino* bodies be used to discredit claims of genocidal violence made by indigenous communities in Guatemala? Will there be increased attention to specific needs of urban survivors of war? Will *capitalinos'* experiences of the city incorporate memory of war more readily or in new ways? As a final point, it will be important to follow women's involvement in the exhumation process, as well as its emotional and psycho-social effects on them, women's grieving processes, and their role in commemorating their loved ones. Without a doubt women will continue to be key protagonists in Guatemala's political and social life.

APPENDIX A

Basic Human Development Indicators for Guatemala

(Source: United Nations Development Program for Guatemala*, Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano 2007/2008*)

http://www.desarrollohumano.org.gt/contenido.php?id=informe_nacional_desarrollo_humano_2008

Cuadro 1.1
GUATEMALA (2000, c. 2006): Indicadores básicos del estado reciente del desarrollo humano

Años	2000	2005	2006	2007
Desarrollo humano				
Índice de desarrollo humano	0.634		0.702	
Índice de desarrollo relativo al género	0.609		0.684	
Índice de potenciación de género	0.460		0.442	
Pobreza				
Pobreza extrema (%)	15.7		15.2	
(millones de habitantes)	1.79		1.96	
Pobreza total (%)	56.1		50.9	
(millones de habitantes)	6.43		6.57	
Desigualdad				
Coeficiente de Gini de los ingresos familiares	0.570		0.562	
Coeficiente de Gini del consumo familiar	0.476		0.448	
Participación del quintil más alto (Q5) en el ingreso total	61.8		60.3	
Participación del quintil más bajo (Q1) en el ingreso total	2.8		2.9	
Ratio Q5/Q1	22.0		21.0	
Población				
Población (millones de habitantes)	11.2	12.7	13.0	13.3
Mujeres (%)	50.9	51.1	51.2	51.2
Esperanza de vida al nacer (años)	68.9			70.2
Hombres	65.5			66.7
Mujeres	72.5			73.8
Edad mediana (años)	18			19
Tasa de crecimiento natural (por cien mil hab.)	29.7			27.0
Población según estrato socioeconómico (%)				
Bajo extremo	15.7		15.2	
Bajo	33.8		34.4	
Medio bajo	35.1		36.5	
Medio	10.4		10.0	
Alto	5.1		3.9	
Educación				
Tasa de alfabetismo (mayores de 15 años)	68.2		74.8	
Mujeres	60.2		68.9	
Indígenas	50.1		59.6	
Tasa de alfabetismo (jóvenes de 15 a 24 años)	81.7		87.8	
Mujeres	76.3		84.8	
Indígenas	69.8		80.3	

Años	2000	2005	2006	2007
Escolaridad en jóvenes (15 a 24 años)	5.3		6.1	
Mujeres	5.0		5.7	
Indígenas	3.7		4.7	
Inasistencia a la educación primaria (%)	17.8		9.9	
Mujeres	20.5		10.8	
Indígenas	24.4		12.6	
Tasa neta de escolaridad				
Primaria		93.5	94.5	95.0
Básicos		33.2	34.7	36.4
Diversificado		19.0	20.0	20.7
Trabajo				
Tasa de participación económica (%)	59.3		58.8	
Tasa de desempleo abierto (% de la PEA)	5.6		1.8	
Informalidad (% de la población ocupada)	75.0		71.3	
Subempleo (% de la población ocupada)	8.4		15.2	
Población ocupada dependiente con salario inferior al mínimo oficial	26.3		50.1	
Población ocupada dependiente con salario inferior al valor de una canasta básica vital	89.1		87.0	
Población ocupada dependiente con salario inferior al valor de una canasta básica de alimentos	68.5		61.4	
Gasto público del Gobierno Central en sectores sociales prioritarios				
Salud y Asistencia Social	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.6
Educación, Ciencia y Cultura	2.7	2.9	3.0	2.9
Vivienda	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2

Fuente: Véanse los diferentes cuadros del anexo y el glosario estadístico para consultar las fuentes y definiciones.

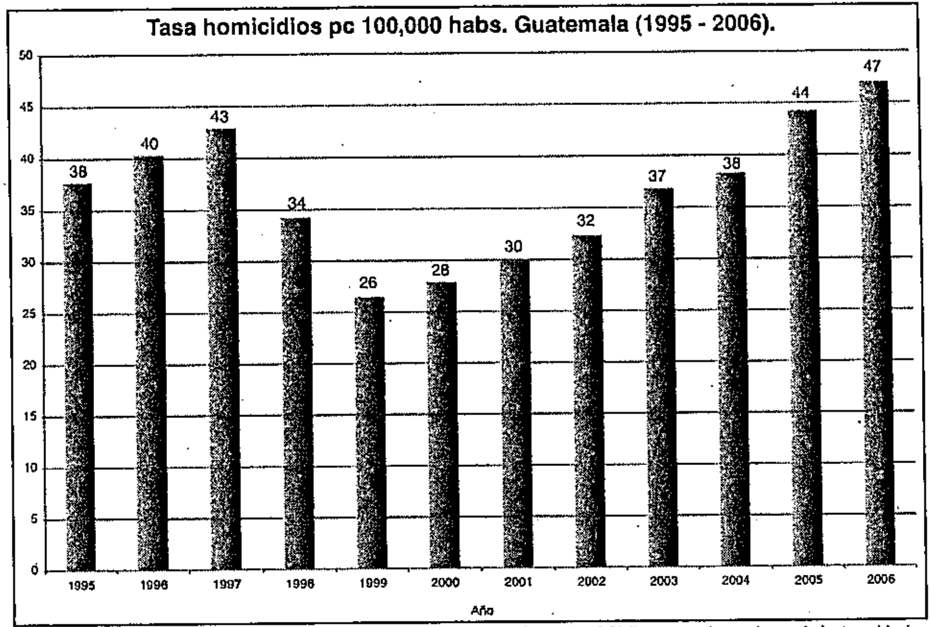
APPENDIX B

Statistics on Violence in Guatemala

(Source: United Nations Development Program for Guatemala (UNDP 2007), *Informe estadístico de la violencia en Guatemala.*

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/national_activities/informe_estadistico_violencia_guatemala.pdf

Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 2:



Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en datos de homicidios de la Policía Nacional Civil y proyecciones de crecimiento poblacional de los datos del Censo 2002 del Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas.

La importancia de la tasa de homicidios por cada 100,000 habitantes como indicador de violencia es que permite comparar los datos de un país o ciudad con los de otros países y ciudades. Básicamente lo que informa este indicador es la proporción de la población total que ha sido víctima de homicidio durante un período determinado (usualmente un año).

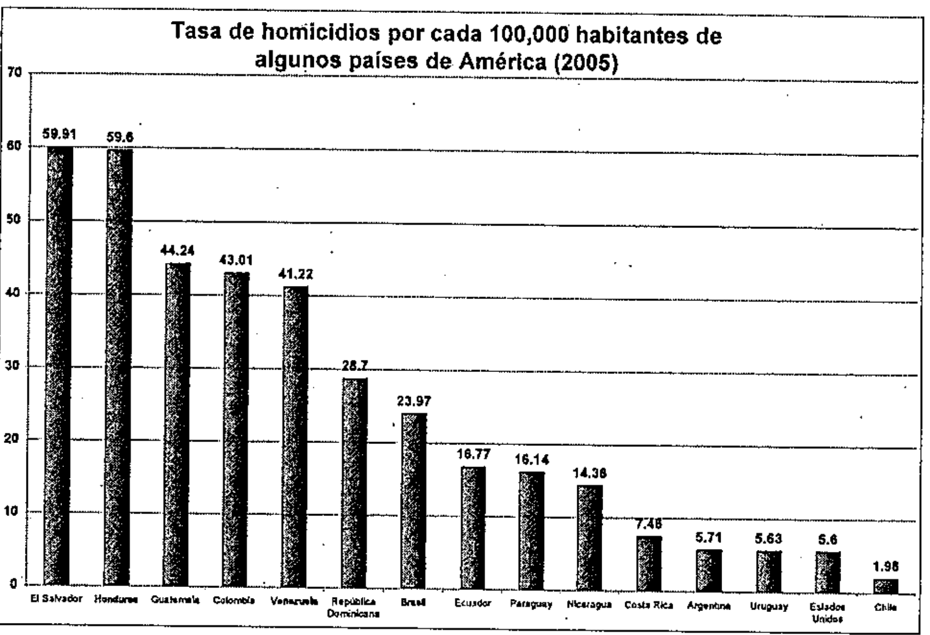
La tasa se calcula dividiendo el número total de homicidios registrado en una realidad social determinada (ciudad y país) durante un período de tiempo determinado por el total de la población de ese lugar y multiplicando por 100,000.

$$\text{Tasa de homicidios por cada 100,000 habitantes (thpcmh)} = \frac{\text{Número de homicidios X 100,000}}{\text{Población}}$$

Para hacer el cálculo de la tasa de homicidios por cada 100,000 habitantes de Guatemala se ha utilizado los datos de homicidios registrados por la Policía Nacional Civil y datos de población del Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas. Para los años anteriores al último censo (2002) se ha calculado el crecimiento anual de la población desde el censo anterior (1994) que ha permitido llegar al dato de 2002 (3.81% anual). Después de 2002 se ha usado una proyección realista de crecimiento poblacional de 2.6% anual.

Con este dato construido es posible comparar la magnitud de la violencia homicida en Guatemala con otros países. El Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 3 posiciona a Guatemala en relación con otros países del continente en cuanto a la violencia homicida.

Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 3:

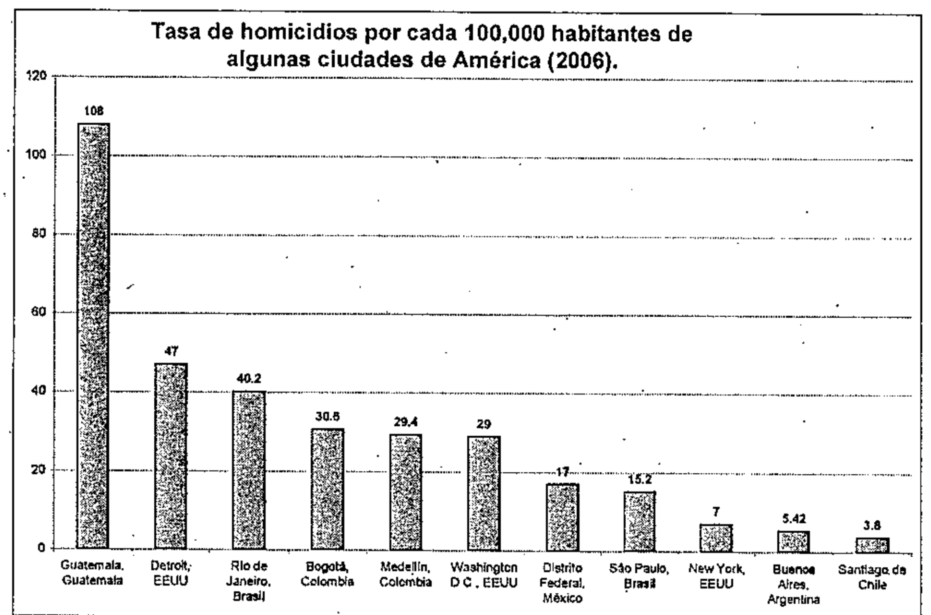


Fuentes: El Salvador: Policía Nacional Civil; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia. www.revistaseguridadydemocracia.org
Honduras: Observatorio de la Violencia. Edición No. 1, Mayo 2006. http://www.undp.un.hn/PDF/Observatorio_violencia/Observatorio_violencia.zip
Guatemala: Elaboración propia con base en datos de homicidios de la Policía Nacional Civil y proyecciones de crecimiento poblacional de los datos del Censo 2002 del Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas.
Colombia: Policía Nacional de Colombia; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Venezuela: Ministerio del Interior y Justicia, Departamento de Estadísticas, Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminológicas; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
República Dominicana: Procuraduría General de la República, Departamento de Estadísticas; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Brasil: Secretaría Nacional de Seguridad Pública; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Ecuador: Dirección Nacional de la Policía Judicial e Investigaciones; Sección Estadística, publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia. Paraguay: Dirección General de Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia. www.revistaseguridadydemocracia.org
Nicaragua: Policía Nacional; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Costa Rica: Poder Judicial, Departamento de Planificación, Sección de Estadística, Área de Estadísticas Policiales; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Argentina: Ministerio de Justicia, Seguridad y Derechos Humanos, Dirección Nacional de Política Criminal; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Uruguay: Observatorio Nacional sobre Violencia y Criminalidad; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.
Estados Unidos: *Crime in the US 2005. Federal Bureau of Investigations.* www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius
Chile: Ministerio del Interior, División de Seguridad Ciudadana; publicado en "Homicidios y violaciones en América Latina", Revista Seguridad y Democracia.

Se aprecia que Guatemala se encuentra entre los países más violentos del continente. De hecho el "Triángulo Norte" de Centroamérica (El Salvador, Honduras y Guatemala) presenta niveles de violencia considerablemente superiores a Colombia, el único país de la región que continúa viviendo un conflicto armado interno.

El mismo tipo de comparación internacional puede llevarse a cabo tomando como unidad de análisis ciudades. En el Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 4 pueden observarse las tasas de homicidios por cada 100,000 habitantes de algunas ciudades del continente.

Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 4:[11]



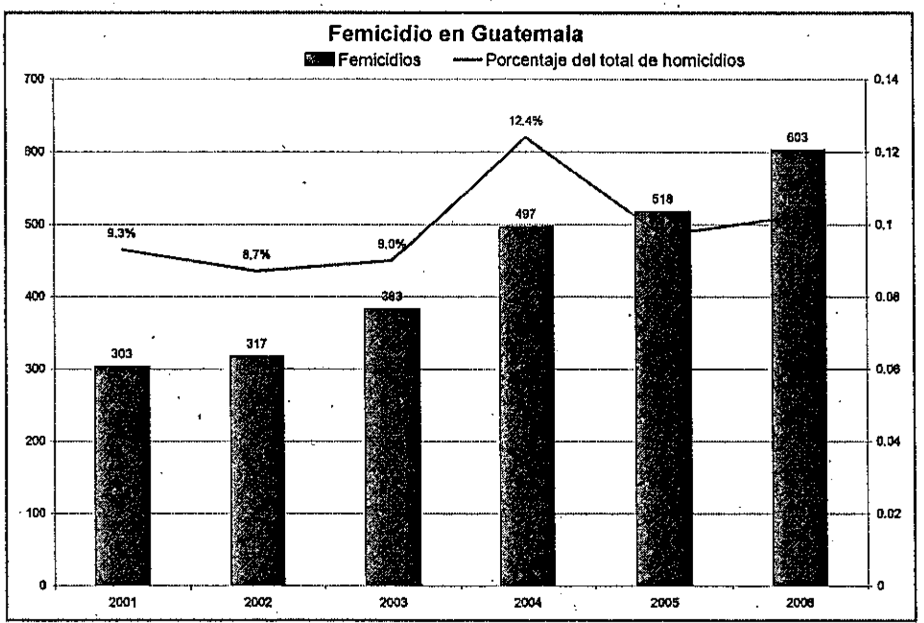
Guatemala: Elaboración propia con base en datos de homicidios de la Policía Nacional Civil y proyecciones de crecimiento poblacional de los datos del Censo 2002 del Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas.
Ciudades de Estados Unidos: *Crime in the US 2006. Federal Bureau of Investigations.* www.fbi.gov
Río de Janeiro: Centro de Estudos de SeguranÇa e Cidadania.
Bogotá: Sistema Unificado de Información de Violencia y Delincuencia de Bogotá.
Medellín: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana.
México D.F. 2006: Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios sobre la Inseguridad con datos del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública y CONAPO.
São Paulo: Secretaria de Estado da SeguranÇa Pública.
Buenos Aires (Provincia de Buenos Aires): Dirección Nacional de Política Criminal.
Santiago de Chile (Región Metropolitana): División de Seguridad Ciudadana del Min. del Interior.

[11] Los datos de Buenos Aires y de Santiago de Chile corresponden a la provincia de Buenos Aires y a la Región Metropolitana donde se ubica Santiago.

1.4 Violencia Homicida por Sexo

En Guatemala, como en otros países de América Latina, la violencia contra las mujeres reviste especial importancia y debe ser una preocupación central de las iniciativas de prevención y reducción del crimen y la violencia. De especial relevancia en este sentido es la violencia homicida contra las mujeres. A este fenómeno se le ha designado el neologismo 'femicidio' como una combinación de la palabra *femenino* y la terminación *-cidio* (muerte, asesinato).

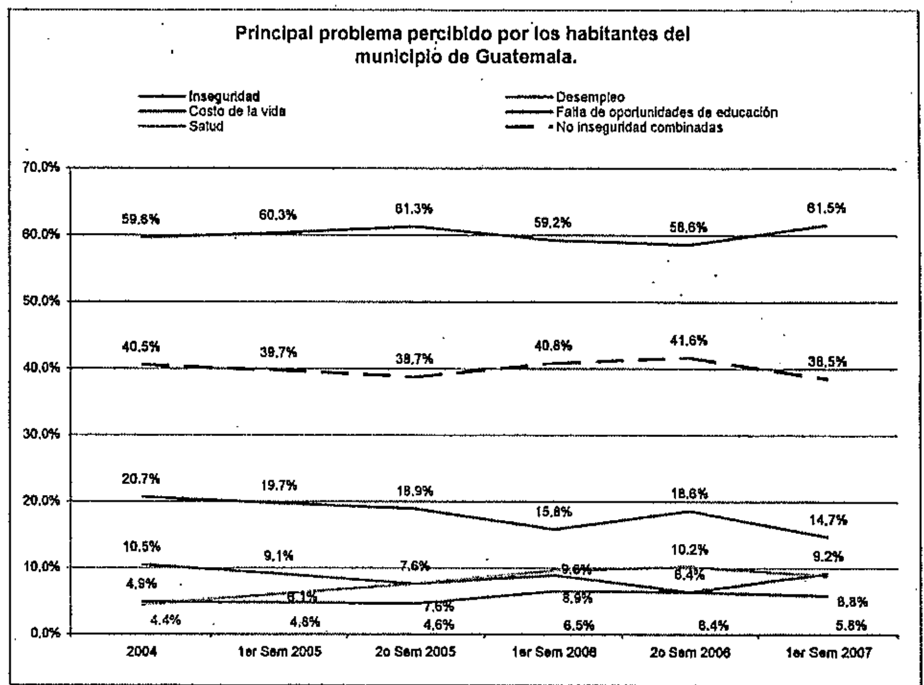
Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 7:



Fuente: Datos de la Policía Nacional Civil.

El Gráfico Victimización datos oficiales 7 muestra la evolución del femicidio en Guatemala en los últimos 6 años. Es factible apreciar un aumento sostenido en el número total de femicidios registrados. En 6 años los femicidios casi se han doblado, de 303 en 2001 a 603 en 2006. Las barras azules en el gráfico muestran este incremento sostenido. Esto ha ocurrido simultáneamente con el incremento en la frecuencia total de homicidios ya presentado (ver Gráfico Victimización 1).

Gráfico Percepción 1:



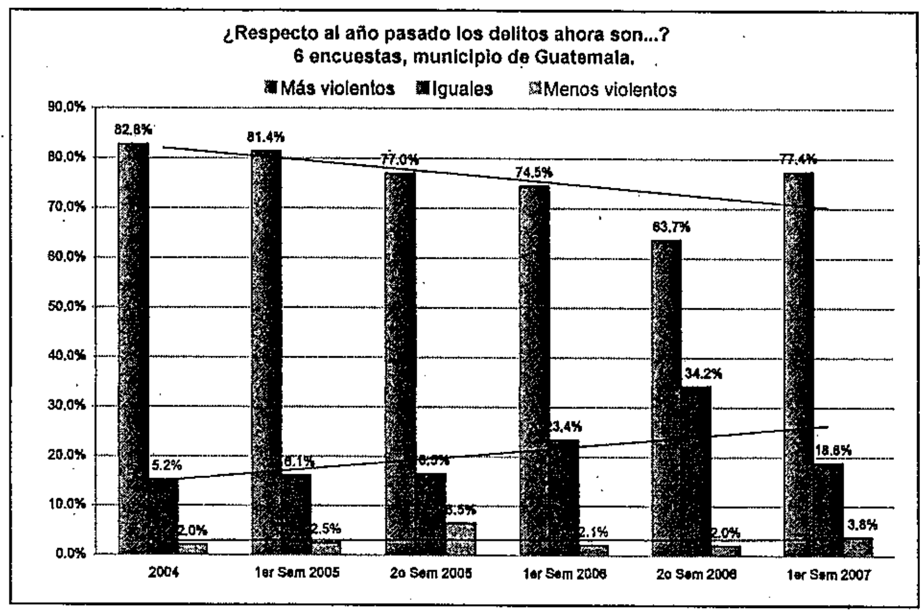
Fuentes: Encuestas de Victimización y Percepción de Inseguridad en el municipio de Guatemala, Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia, PNUD – Guatemala.

El primer indicador sobre la percepción de inseguridad usualmente es el orden de importancia en que las personas clasifican distintos tipos de problemas que les generan preocupaciones. Al presentarle distintas opciones las personas encuestadas en el municipio de Guatemala han respondido consistentemente que es la inseguridad su principal preocupación, por encima del desempleo, el costo de la vida, la falta de oportunidades de educación y la salud.

El porcentaje de respuestas que recibe la inseguridad como principal preocupación ha superado a las otras cuatro opciones combinadas, lo cual se representa en el gráfico por medio de la línea de guiones, en todos los cortes que han sido llevados a cabo. Este dato brinda una idea clara de la preeminencia de la inseguridad en la mente de los habitantes de la capital.

Es de mucho interés comparar estos datos con los resultados de la misma pregunta llevada a cabo en el casco urbano de Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa en una encuesta similar realizada por el PNUD en febrero de 2006. En esa cabecera municipal,

Gráfico Percepción 3:



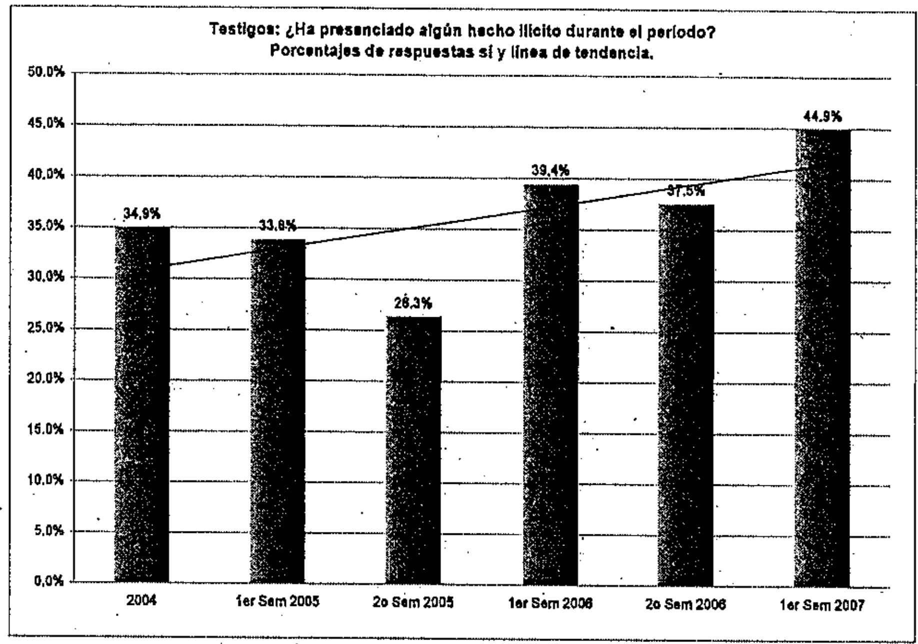
Fuentes: Encuestas de Victimización y Percepción de Inseguridad en el municipio de Guatemala, Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia, PNUD – Guatemala.

Otro indicador de mucha importancia para medir la percepción de inseguridad es la expectativa de ser victimizada/o en el futuro cercano. Es factible ver la creciente evolución de la respuesta sí a la pregunta ¿En los próximos 6 meses cree que será víctima de un delito? en el Gráfico Percepción 4.

La primera vez que se hizo esta pregunta la respuesta fue relativamente baja (28.4%), pero luego se ha mantenido en torno al 40% y ha alcanzado en el último corte uno de sus picos. Nuevamente este aumento reciente en la sensación de inseguridad puede tener relación con la presencia de la temática de la inseguridad en la discusión pública y en los medios de comunicación debido al proceso eleccionario.

Con esto no se quiere implicar que la situación de inseguridad objetiva no influya o que no sea grave, pero sí interesa señalar la necesidad de investigar con mayor profundidad aquellos factores que tienen efecto sobre la sensación de inseguridad más allá de los niveles de victimización que ocurren en los hechos.

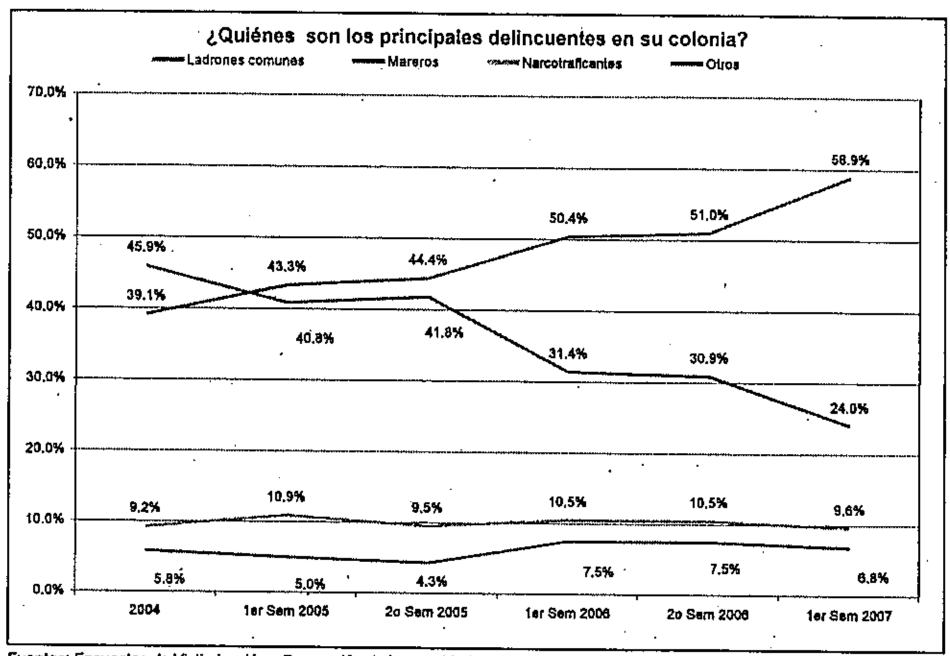
Gráfico Percepción 6:



Fuentes: Encuestas de Victimización y Percepción de Inseguridad en el municipio de Guatemala, Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia, PNUD – Guatemala.

La línea de tendencia del Gráfico Percepción 6 nos señala un aumento en el porcentaje de personas que responden haber presenciado la comisión de un hecho ilícito durante el período. Resulta de interés que, aunque se constata una disminución en el 2° semestre de 2006 (momento que ha mostrado los menores niveles de inseguridad), esta disminución no tiene la magnitud del cambio positivo en los indicadores de percepción previamente analizados.

Gráfico Maras 1:

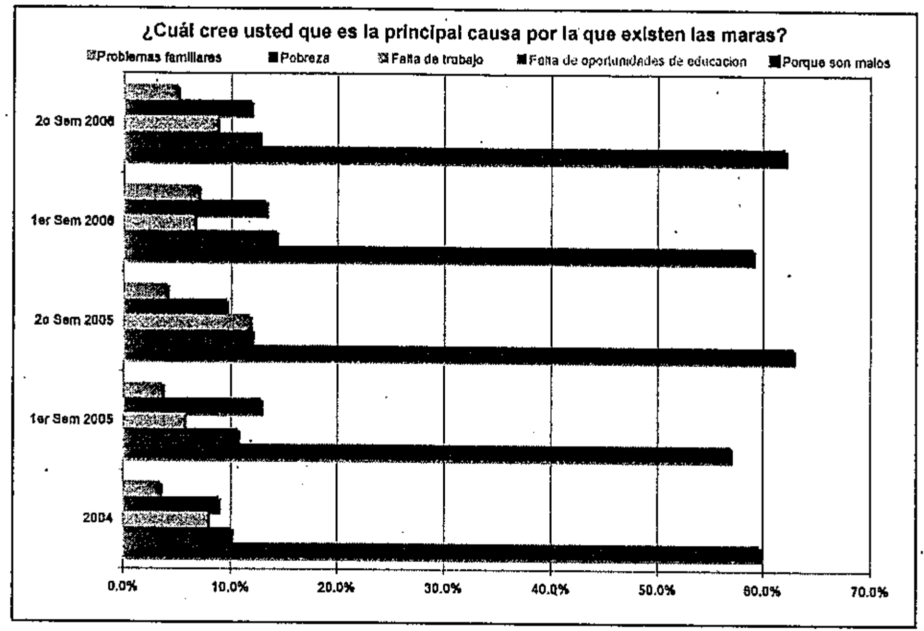


Fuentes: Encuestas de Victimización y Percepción de Inseguridad en el municipio de Guatemala, Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia, PNUD – Guatemala.

El Gráfico Maras 1 permite observar una clara evolución en la percepción de la población sobre la presencia de maras en su entorno. Vemos cómo en 2004 las personas percibían a los mareros como los principales delincuentes en su colonia. Después de ese momento la categoría 'ladrones comunes' superó a la de 'mareros' y en los últimos tres cortes la diferencia se ha ampliado hasta llegar a la dramática disparidad entre 58.9% para los 'ladrones comunes' y 24.0% para los 'mareros' en 2007.

Los resultados permiten ver que la presencia de las maras es un problema percibido entre la población de la capital, pero llama la atención la pronunciada caída en su consideración como la principal fuerza delincuencial en el nivel local, según pasan los años desde la primera encuesta realizada. Es posible que esto esté relacionado con las medidas tomadas por parte de las fuerzas de seguridad en disminuir su presencia, pero también puede tener que ver con la representación de los mareros como una amenaza creciente a la seguridad pública que estuvo especialmente vigente hacia 2004.

Gráfico Maras 3:



Fuentes: Encuestas de Victimización y Percepción de Inseguridad en el municipio de Guatemala, Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia, PNUD – Guatemala.

El Gráfico Maras 3 es un indicador de la riqueza del análisis que llevan a cabo los encuestados en cuanto a las causas de la existencia de las maras. Podemos ver que consistentemente los habitantes de la capital manifiestan entender que hay causas que van más allá de los problemas estructurales relacionados con la pobreza y la falta de oportunidades socioeconómicas para que ciertos jóvenes se integren a las maras.

A estas condiciones de dificultad deben sumarse problemas familiares para que los y las jóvenes terminen integrándose a las pandillas. Este factor es entendido por una significativa mayoría de la población como la principal causa para la existencia de las maras.

5. Clasificación brindada a instituciones nacionales

Para orientar sus esfuerzos las distintas instituciones que tienen que ver con la problemática impuesta por la inseguridad y la delincuencia deben retroalimentarse de la evaluación que de su trabajo está haciendo la población. Las encuestas del Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia del PNUD han

APPENDIX C

Homicide Rates for Guatemala 2007-2009

(Source: Fundación Sobrevivientes, *Base hemerográfica sobre homicidios en Guatemala.* http://sobrevivientesdb.com/index.php)

Frecuencia de homicidios por departamento
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 453 , año 2009

Departamento	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
ALTA VERAPAZ	0	6	1.32 %
BAJA VERAPAZ	0	2	0.44 %
CHIMALTENANGO	0	11	2.43 %
CHIQUIMULA	0	22	4.86 %
EL PETÉN	0	8	1.77 %
EL PROGRESO	0	2	0.44 %
EL QUICHÉ	0	1	0.22 %
ESCUINTLA	1	23	5.30 %
GUATEMALA	1	222	49.23 %
HUEHUETENANGO	1	3	0.88 %
IZABAL	0	9	1.99 %
JALAPA	0	18	3.97 %
JUTIAPA	0	14	3.09 %
QUETZALTENANGO	0	17	3.75 %
RETALHULEU	0	5	1.10 %
SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	12	2.65 %
SAN MARCOS	0	25	5.52 %
SANTA ROSA	0	10	2.21 %
SOLOLÁ	0	5	1.10 %
SUCHITEPÉQUEZ	0	16	3.53 %
TOTONICAPÁN	0	0	0.00 %
ZACAPA	0	10	2.21 %
Total 453	3	444	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por municipios del departamento de Guatemala
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes , año 2009

Municipio	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
AMATITLÁN	0	6	2.68 %
CHINAUTLA	0	8	3.57 %
CHUARRANCHO	0	0	0.00 %
FRAIJANES	0	2	0.89 %
GUATEMALA	0	92	41.07 %
MIXCO	0	31	13.84 %
PALENCIA	0	1	0.45 %
SAN JOSÉ DEL GOLFO	0	0	0.00 %
SAN JOSÉ PINULA	0	5	2.23 %
SAN JUAN SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	8	3.57 %
SAN MIGUEL PETAPA	0	6	2.68 %
SAN PEDRO AYAMPUC	0	4	1.79 %
SAN PEDRO SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	2	0.89 %
SAN RAYMUNDO	0	0	0.00 %
SANTA CATARINA PINULA	0	5	2.23 %
VILLA CANALES	0	8	3.57 %
VILLA NUEVA	1	23	10.71 %
Total	1	201	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por zonas del departamento de Guatemala
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 224 , año 2009

Zonas de Guatemala	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
0	0	94	41.96 %
1	0	16	7.14 %
2	0	2	0.89 %
3	1	7	3.57 %
4	0	7	3.13 %
5	0	8	3.57 %
6	0	23	10.27 %
7	0	5	2.23 %
8	0	2	0.89 %
9	0	1	0.45 %
10	0	4	1.79 %
11	0	5	2.23 %
12	0	10	4.46 %
13	0	2	0.89 %
15	0	0	0.00 %
16	0	0	0.00 %
17	0	1	0.45 %
18	0	31	13.84 %
19	0	1	0.45 %
21	0	1	0.45 %
24	0	2	0.89 %
25	0	0	0.00 %
Total 224	1	222	100%

Area de ocurrencia
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 453 , año 2009

Area de hallazgo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Rural	2	175	39.07 %
Urbana	1	207	45.92 %
Ciudad	0	9	1.99 %
Urbano-marginal	0	17	3.75 %
No especifica	0	36	7.95 %
Total 453	3	444	100%

Tipo de lugar de hallazgo
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 453 , año 2009

Lugar de hallazgo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Lugar de habitación de la víctima	0	65	14.35 %
Lugar de habitación del victimario	0	0	0.00 %
Otro lugar de habitación	0	33	7.28 %
Lugar de trabajo	0	21	4.64 %
Vía pública	1	63	14.13 %
Carretera	0	30	6.62 %
Camino vicinal	0	34	7.51 %
Camino de terracería	0	19	4.19 %
Descampado	0	0	0.00 %
Sitio o terreno baldío	0	9	1.99 %
Barranco	0	6	1.32 %
Plantaciones	0	9	1.99 %
Mercado	0	3	0.66 %
Pozo	0	2	0.44 %
Automóvil	0	12	2.65 %
Fosa	0	0	0.00 %
Fosa común	0	0	0.00 %
Otro	0	41	9.05 %
No especificado	2	82	18.54 %

Transporte public	0	14	3.09 %
Total 453	3	443	100%

Circunstancias
Motivo de la agresión en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 453 homicidios, año 2009

Motivo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Violencia intrafamiliar	0	0	0.00 %
Incesto	0	0	0.00 %
Sentimental/pasional	0	4	0.88 %
Acoso sexual	0	0	0.00 %
Violencia sexual	0	0	0.00 %
Robo/hurto/asalto personal	0	5	1.10 %
Robo/asalto a comercio	0	3	0.66 %
Robo/asalto en el transporte público	0	0	0.00 %
Robo/asalto a residencia	0	4	0.88 %
Robo de vehículo	0	1	0.22 %
Rapto	0	1	0.22 %
Secuestro	0	3	0.66 %
Ajuste de cuentas	0	6	1.32 %
Extorsión	0	14	3.09 %
Insolvencia (deudas)	0	0	0.00 %
Venganza	0	28	6.18 %
Vínculo con maras	0	2	0.44 %
Vínculo con crimen organizado	0	0	0.00 %
Vínculo con narcotráfico	0	1	0.22 %
Vínculo con adopciones	0	0	0.00 %
Ritos satánicos	0	1	0.22 %
Corrupción de menores	0	0	0.00 %
Prostitución	0	0	0.00 %
Conflicto armado	0	0	0.00 %
Misoginia (odio a las mujeres)	0	0	0.00 %
Androginia (odio a los hombres)	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia política	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia civil o limpieza social	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia a la diversidad	0	0	0.00 %

sexual			
Intolerancia religiosa	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia étnica o racismo	0	0	0.00 %
Xenofobia	0	0	0.00 %
Clasismo	0	0	0.00 %
Legítima defensa	0	0	0.00 %
Mental	0	0	0.00 %
Accidental	0	0	0.00 %
Riña	0	3	0.66 %
Caso fortuito	0	13	2.87 %
Otro	0	35	7.73 %
No establecido	3	318	70.86 %
Total 453	3	442	100%

Causa y subcausa de la muerte en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 453 homicidios, año 2009

Causa de la muerte	Sub causa de la muerte	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Herida de arma de fuego		2	285	63.36 %
Herida de arma blanca		0	30	6.62 %
Asfixia	Sumersión	0	2	0.44 %
	Ahorcamiento	0	1	0.22 %
	Intoxicación	0	0	0.00 %
	Sofocación	0	1	0.22 %
	Estrangulamiento	0	13	2.87 %
	No indica	0	3	0.66 %
Decapitación		0	5	1.10 %
Desmembramiento		0	8	1.77 %
Envenenamiento		0	0	0.00 %
Golpes o politraumatismo		0	9	1.99 %
Lapidación		0	2	0.44 %
Quemaduras		0	11	2.43 %
Trauma craneano-encefálico		0	0	0.00 %
Otro		1	37	8.39 %
No establecida		0	19	4.19 %
No indica		0	18	3.97 %
Total 453		3	444	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por departamento
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 468 , año 2008

Departamento	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
ALTA VERAPAZ	0	15	3.21 %
BAJA VERAPAZ	0	3	0.64 %
CHIMALTENANGO	0	5	1.07 %
CHIQUIMULA	0	18	3.85 %
EL PETÉN	0	20	4.27 %
EL PROGRESO	0	5	1.07 %
EL QUICHÉ	0	0	0.00 %
ESCUINTLA	0	25	5.34 %
GUATEMALA	0	245	52.35 %
HUEHUETENANGO	0	9	1.92 %
IZABAL	0	15	3.21 %
JALAPA	0	11	2.35 %
JUTIAPA	0	11	2.35 %
QUETZALTENANGO	0	19	4.06 %
RETALHULEU	0	2	0.43 %
SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	12	2.56 %
SAN MARCOS	0	15	3.21 %
SANTA ROSA	0	4	0.85 %
SOLOLÁ	0	1	0.21 %
SUCHITEPÉQUEZ	0	18	3.85 %
TOTONICAPÁN	0	2	0.43 %
ZACAPA	0	13	2.78 %
Total 468	0	468	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por municipios del departamento de Guatemala
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes , año 2008

Municipio	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
AMATITLÁN	0	10	4.08 %
CHINAUTLA	0	3	1.22 %
CHUARRANCHO	0	0	0.00 %
FRAIJANES	0	2	0.82 %
GUATEMALA	0	137	55.92 %
MIXCO	0	27	11.02 %
PALENCIA	0	1	0.41 %
SAN JOSÉ DEL GOLFO	0	0	0.00 %
SAN JOSÉ PINULA	0	4	1.63 %
SAN JUAN SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	10	4.08 %
SAN MIGUEL PETAPA	0	5	2.04 %
SAN PEDRO AYAMPUC	0	3	1.22 %
SAN PEDRO SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	0	0.00 %
SAN RAYMUNDO	0	1	0.41 %
SANTA CATARINA PINULA	0	4	1.63 %
VILLA CANALES	0	6	2.45 %
VILLA NUEVA	0	30	12.24 %
Total	0	243	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por zonas del departamento de Guatemala
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 245 , año 2008

Zonas de Guatemala	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
0	0	26	10.61 %
1	0	52	21.22 %
2	0	2	0.82 %
3	0	12	4.90 %
4	0	12	4.90 %
5	0	10	4.08 %
6	0	28	11.43 %
7	0	13	5.31 %
8	0	11	4.49 %
9	0	6	2.45 %
10	0	3	1.22 %
11	0	7	2.86 %
12	0	13	5.31 %
13	0	5	2.04 %
15	0	2	0.82 %
16	0	1	0.41 %
17	0	0	0.00 %
18	0	34	13.88 %
19	0	3	1.22 %
21	0	1	0.41 %
24	0	4	1.63 %
25	0	0	0.00 %
Total 245	0	245	100%

Tipo de lugar de hallazgo
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 468 , año 2008

Lugar de hallazgo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Lugar de habitación de la víctima	0	69	14.74 %
Lugar de habitación del victimario	0	0	0.00 %
Otro lugar de habitación	0	6	1.28 %
Lugar de trabajo	0	15	3.21 %
Vía pública	0	98	20.94 %
Carretera	0	38	8.12 %
Camino vecinal	0	27	5.77 %
Camino de terracería	0	11	2.35 %
Descampado	0	0	0.00 %
Sitio o terreno baldío	0	21	4.49 %
Barranco	0	12	2.56 %
Plantaciones	0	13	2.78 %
Mercado	0	2	0.43 %
Pozo	0	1	0.21 %
Automóvil	0	22	4.70 %
Fosa	0	0	0.00 %
Fosa común	0	0	0.00 %
Otro	0	53	11.32 %
No especificado	0	64	13.68 %
Transporte publico	0	16	3.42 %
Total 468	0	468	100%

Motivo de la agresion en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 468 homicidios, año 2008

Motivo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Violencia intrafamiliar	0	9	1.92 %
Incesto	0	0	0.00 %
Sentimental/pasional	0	11	2.35 %
Acoso sexual	0	0	0.00 %
Violencia sexual	0	3	0.64 %
Robo/hurto/asalto personal	0	12	2.56 %
Robo/asalto a comercio	0	5	1.07 %
Robo/asalto en el transporte público	0	4	0.85 %
Robo/asalto a residencia	0	11	2.35 %
Robo de vehículo	0	0	0.00 %
Rapto	0	1	0.21 %
Secuestro	0	18	3.85 %
Ajuste de cuentas	0	3	0.64 %
Extorsión	0	8	1.71 %
Insolvencia (deudas)	0	0	0.00 %
Venganza	0	35	7.48 %
Vínculo con maras	0	3	0.64 %
Vínculo con crimen organizado	0	0	0.00 %
Vínculo con narcotráfico	0	5	1.07 %
Vínculo con adopciones	0	0	0.00 %
Ritos satánicos	0	2	0.43 %
Corrupción de menores	0	0	0.00 %
Prostitución	0	0	0.00 %
Conflicto armado	0	0	0.00 %
Misoginia (odio a las mujeres)	0	0	0.00 %
Androginia (odio a los hombres)	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia política	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia civil o limpieza social	0	1	0.21 %
Intolerancia a la diversidad sexual	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia religiosa	0	0	0.00 %

Intolerancia étnica o racismo	0	0	0.00 %
Xenofobia	0	0	0.00 %
Clasismo	0	0	0.00 %
Legítima defensa	0	0	0.00 %
Mental	0	0	0.00 %
Accidental	0	0	0.00 %
Riña	0	1	0.21 %
Caso fortuito	0	10	2.14 %
Otro	0	30	6.41 %
No establecido	0	296	63.25 %
Total 468	0	468	100%

Causa y subcausa de la muerte en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 468 homicidios, año 2008

Causa de la muerte	Sub causa de la muerte	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Herida de arma de fuego		0	325	69.44 %
Herida de arma blanca		0	25	5.34 %
Asfixia	Sumersión	0	0	0.00 %
	Ahorcamiento	0	1	0.21 %
	Intoxicación	0	0	0.00 %
	Sofocación	0	2	0.43 %
	Estrangulamiento	0	25	5.34 %
	No indica	0	1	0.21 %
Decapitación		0	4	0.85 %
Desmembramiento		0	0	0.00 %
Envenenamiento		0	0	0.00 %
Golpes o politraumatismo		0	13	2.78 %
Lapidación		0	4	0.85 %
Quemaduras		0	5	1.07 %
Trauma craneano-encefálico		0	3	0.64 %
Otro		0	11	2.35 %
No establecida		0	15	3.21 %
No indica		0	34	7.26 %
Total 468		0	468	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por departamento
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 393 , año 2007

Departamento	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
ALTA VERAPAZ	0	10	2.54 %
BAJA VERAPAZ	0	1	0.25 %
CHIMALTENANGO	0	10	2.54 %
CHIQUIMULA	0	25	6.36 %
EL PETÉN	0	14	3.56 %
EL PROGRESO	0	1	0.25 %
EL QUICHÉ	0	4	1.02 %
ESCUINTLA	0	15	3.82 %
GUATEMALA	0	213	54.20 %
HUEHUETENANGO	0	6	1.53 %
IZABAL	0	12	3.05 %
JALAPA	0	13	3.31 %
JUTIAPA	0	8	2.04 %
QUETZALTENANGO	0	14	3.56 %
RETALHULEU	0	4	1.02 %
SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	10	2.54 %
SAN MARCOS	0	9	2.29 %
SANTA ROSA	0	7	1.78 %
SOLOLÁ	0	5	1.27 %
SUCHITEPÉQUEZ	0	2	0.51 %
TOTONICAPÁN	0	0	0.00 %
ZACAPA	0	10	2.54 %
Total 393	0	393	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por municipios del departamento de Guatemala
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes , año 2007

Municipio	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
AMATITLÁN	0	3	1.41 %
CHINAUTLA	0	6	2.82 %
CHUARRANCHO	0	0	0.00 %
FRAIJANES	0	1	0.47 %
GUATEMALA	0	115	53.99 %
MIXCO	0	26	12.21 %
PALENCIA	0	2	0.94 %
SAN JOSÉ DEL GOLFO	0	1	0.47 %
SAN JOSÉ PINULA	0	0	0.00 %
SAN JUAN SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	7	3.29 %
SAN MIGUEL PETAPA	0	11	5.16 %
SAN PEDRO AYAMPUC	0	2	0.94 %
SAN PEDRO SACATEPÉQUEZ	0	1	0.47 %
SAN RAYMUNDO	0	3	1.41 %
SANTA CATARINA PINULA	0	2	0.94 %
VILLA CANALES	0	6	2.82 %
VILLA NUEVA	0	23	10.80 %
Total	0	209	100%

Frecuencia de homicidios por zonas del departamento de Guatemala
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 213 , año 2007

Zonas de Guatemala	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
0	0	9	4.23 %
1	0	76	35.68 %
2	0	3	1.41 %
3	0	4	1.88 %
4	0	11	5.16 %
5	0	11	5.16 %
6	0	21	9.86 %
7	0	14	6.57 %
8	0	12	5.63 %
9	0	7	3.29 %
10	0	3	1.41 %
11	0	5	2.35 %
12	0	8	3.76 %
13	0	2	0.94 %
15	0	0	0.00 %
16	0	3	1.41 %
17	0	1	0.47 %
18	0	16	7.51 %
19	0	0	0.00 %
21	0	2	0.94 %
24	0	4	1.88 %
25	0	1	0.47 %
Total 213	0	213	100%

Tipo de lugar de hallazgo
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 393 , año 2007

Lugar de hallazgo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Lugar de habitación de la víctima	0	62	15.78 %
Lugar de habitación del victimario	0	0	0.00 %
Otro lugar de habitación	0	8	2.04 %
Lugar de trabajo	0	16	4.07 %
Vía pública	0	99	25.19 %
Carretera	0	21	5.34 %
Camino vecinal	0	24	6.11 %
Camino de terracería	0	11	2.80 %
Descampado	0	3	0.76 %
Sitio o terreno baldío	0	16	4.07 %
Barranco	0	10	2.54 %
Plantaciones	0	7	1.78 %
Mercado	0	0	0.00 %
Pozo	0	1	0.25 %
Automóvil	0	48	12.21 %
Fosa	0	0	0.00 %
Fosa común	0	0	0.00 %
Otro	0	35	8.91 %
No especificado	0	32	8.14 %
Transporte publico	0	0	0.00 %
Total 393	0	393	100%

Motivo de la agresion en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 393 homicidios, año 2007

Motivo	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Violencia intrafamiliar	0	8	2.04 %
Incesto	0	0	0.00 %
Sentimental/pasional	0	10	2.54 %
Acoso sexual	0	0	0.00 %
Violencia sexual	0	1	0.25 %
Robo/hurto/asalto personal	0	14	3.56 %
Robo/asalto a comercio	0	2	0.51 %
Robo/asalto en el transporte público	0	7	1.78 %
Robo/asalto a residencia	0	6	1.53 %
Robo de vehículo	0	3	0.76 %
Rapto	0	3	0.76 %
Secuestro	0	10	2.54 %
Ajuste de cuentas	0	0	0.00 %
Extorsión	0	9	2.29 %
Insolvencia (deudas)	0	1	0.25 %
Venganza	0	31	7.89 %
Vínculo con maras	0	2	0.51 %
Vínculo con crimen organizado	0	0	0.00 %
Vínculo con narcotráfico	0	0	0.00 %
Vínculo con adopciones	0	0	0.00 %
Ritos satánicos	0	1	0.25 %
Corrupción de menores	0	0	0.00 %
Prostitución	0	0	0.00 %
Conflicto armado	0	0	0.00 %
Misoginia (odio a las mujeres)	0	0	0.00 %
Androginia (odio a los hombres)	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia política	0	2	0.51 %
Intolerancia civil o limpieza social	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia a la diversidad sexual	0	0	0.00 %
Intolerancia religiosa	0	0	0.00 %

Intolerancia étnica o racismo	0	0	0.00 %
Xenofobia	0	0	0.00 %
Clasismo	0	0	0.00 %
Legítima defensa	0	0	0.00 %
Mental	0	0	0.00 %
Accidental	0	0	0.00 %
Riña	0	1	0.25 %
Caso fortuito	0	12	3.05 %
Otro	0	9	2.29 %
No establecido	0	261	66.41 %
Total 393	0	393	100%

Causa y subcausa de la muerte en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 393 homicidios, año 2007

Causa de la muerte	Sub causa de la muerte	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Herida de arma de fuego		0	256	65.14 %
Herida de arma blanca		0	24	6.11 %
Asfixia	Sumersión	0	0	0.00 %
	Ahorcamiento	0	0	0.00 %
	Intoxicación	0	0	0.00 %
	Sofocación	0	2	0.51 %
	Estrangulamiento	0	23	5.85 %
	No indica	0	9	2.29 %
Decapitación		0	3	0.76 %
Desmembramiento		0	0	0.00 %
Envenenamiento		0	0	0.00 %
Golpes o politraumatismo		0	20	5.09 %
Lapidación		0	3	0.76 %
Quemaduras		0	1	0.25 %
Trauma craneano-encefálico		0	2	0.51 %
Otro		0	5	1.27 %
No establecida		0	4	1.02 %
No indica		0	41	10.43 %
Total 393		0	393	100%

Causa y subcausa de la muerte en casos de homicidio
Dado en valores absolutos y porcentajes sobre 393 homicidios, año 2007

Causa de la muerte	Sub causa de la muerte	Hombre	Mujer	Porcentaje
Herida de arma de fuego		0	256	65.14 %
Herida de arma blanca		0	24	6.11 %
Asfixia	Sumersión	0	0	0.00 %
	Ahorcamiento	0	0	0.00 %
	Intoxicación	0	0	0.00 %
	Sofocación	0	2	0.51 %
	Estrangulamiento	0	23	5.85 %
	No indica	0	9	2.29 %
Decapitación		0	3	0.76 %
Desmembramiento		0	0	0.00 %
Envenenamiento		0	0	0.00 %
Golpes o politraumatismo		0	20	5.09 %
Lapidación		0	3	0.76 %
Quemaduras		0	1	0.25 %
Trauma craneano-encefálico		0	2	0.51 %
Otro		0	5	1.27 %
No establecida		0	4	1.02 %
No indica		0	41	10.43 %
Total 393		0	393	100%

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