

Managing the threat of violence in Guatemala

Violence as part of women's everyday lives



Anja Karin Nielsen

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree
Master of Philosophy in Anthropology of Development
Department of Social Anthropology
University of Bergen

2014

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank all the women who shared their stories and opened their lives to me throughout fieldwork. Their love, strength, and sense of humor even in difficult times were truly inspiring. This thesis would not be possible without them and I am forever grateful. A special thank you goes to the Wayak' shelter and Lorena Treichler; without your trust and assistance fieldwork would have been much more difficult.

My supervisor, Margit Ystanes, deserves a warm and heartfelt thank you. Her encouragement and practical assistance have been invaluable throughout this process.

I wish to thank Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) for allowing me to be included in an inspiring academic environment and my sincere gratitude goes to Iselin Åsedotter Strønen and the rest of the Gender Politics cluster at CMI for taking time to read and comment on drafts.

Conversations and discussions with my fellow students at CMI and the University of Bergen have been both inspiring and helpful. I am particularly grateful to Veronika Rokne, Yngvil Lien and Johana Castilla Magnus in my study group, for giving me useful feedback, moral support and for making this phase more enjoyable. Veronika Rokne deserves a special thank you for encouraging me and providing much needed help throughout the writing process.

I am very appreciative to my family and friends who have been both supportive and patient and I hope to be able to make up for my absence and aloofness.

Lastly, a special thank you goes to Marco Ramírez for being my rock throughout this process. I could not have done this without your help, moral support, and patience. There have been many hard times while writing up the thesis, but you have continuously brought me back to sanity and for that I am forever grateful.

Thank you all!

Abstract

In this thesis I explore the prevalence of violence against women in Guatemala. Violence is considered a part of everyday life because it has become normalized. By “normal” I refer to both the frequency of the act and its perceived legitimacy. Due to this normalization, much violence is considered something women should simply endure. Although women suffer different types of violence, I argue that they must be seen within the same framework and I show how violence in public and private sphere cannot be separated. Violent practices have become normatively supported, largely based on gender expectations, such as women’s morality. Gender inequalities have not only enabled normalization, but to a large degree societal acceptance of violence. The result has been that women have often been blamed for violence perpetrated against them, particularly those who transgress moral and physical gender boundaries. There is a widespread notion that violence rarely happens to “good women”. Gender ideology permeates much of Guatemalan society, both on the street, in the home, in the courtroom, and at the scene of the crime. Impunity has reigned in cases of violence and women’s (perceived) morality has affected the outcome of investigations. I explore how some women have not been considered “worthy” victims (as opposed to others), largely based on morality, class, and ethnicity.

I show how there is a continuum of violence in women’s lives. Violence is not only prevalent, but women experience several types of violence on an everyday basis. Because both the home and the “street” present palpable dangers to women, and because violence in the street penetrates the perceived safety of the home, there are no “safe-zones” in women’s lives. What becomes important, then, is managing the constant threat of violence and fear. I explore women’s fear as political fear because societal structures have enabled normalization of violence against women.

Contents

- Acknowledgements i**
- Abstract iii**
- Introduction 1**
 - The importance of studying violence against women in Guatemala 1
 - Main arguments presented..... 3
 - Definitions of violence against women and theories employed 4
 - Violence, normalization, and women’s fear 6
 - Class, race, and violence 9
 - The field sites 10
 - Methods, ethical concerns and adaptations 12
 - Methods applied 14
 - Sources of information 16
 - Personal difficulties 17
 - Safety measures and anonymity 18
 - Outline of the thesis..... 19
- Chapter 1: *En Guatemala, la vida no vale nada: Violence as a part of everyday life* 21**
 - Background: Violence during the war..... 21
 - Impunity 23
 - Impunity today 25
 - The omnipresence of violence in “peacetime” Guatemala..... 26
 - Security measures..... 28
 - The police force and its limitations 29
 - Alternative measures 31
 - Talk of violence and prevalence of violence in the media 32
 - News media 33
 - Fear as a way of life 34
 - Fear: Mechanism of control..... 35
 - Fear and non-intervention..... 37
 - Conclusion to the chapter 38

Chapter 2: Gender relations and violence	39
The “good woman”	39
Ideal vs real	41
Machismo	42
Financial dependency	45
Change in gender power relations	46
Jealousy	47
Conclusion to the chapter	47
Chapter 3: “<i>He probably just had a bad day</i>”: Normalization of violence against women	49
Sexual violence.....	50
Sexuality and self-control.....	51
Being where they are not supposed to be	54
Domestic violence	56
“ <i>The government doesn’t care about us</i> ”	59
Impunity and legitimization	63
The “worthy” victim and grievable life.....	65
Conclusion to the chapter	67
Chapter 4: Violence in the public sphere and a continuum of violence.....	69
Continuum of violence as an analytical tool	69
Julia’s story.....	70
Fear of violence in the public sphere.....	73
Robberies.....	73
Extortions and kidnapping.....	77
Blurring of private and public	78
The absence of “safe-zones” in women’s lives	80
Conclusion to the chapter	81
Chapter 5: Managing fear	83
Fear versus reality	84
Unequal access to security: Negotiating danger differently	85
Physical segregation	86
Managing fear in the public sphere	87
Adapting to violence	87
The threat of sexual violence.....	89

Surveillance of others	92
Managing fear in intimate relationships	93
Self-surveillance	95
Women's fear of violence as political fear	97
Concluding remarks	101
References	105

Introduction

My first visit to Guatemala was in 2009 as a Spanish student and a volunteer. I absolutely fell in love with the country and I ended up staying on and off for three years with only brief interruptions to return to Norway for work. My interest in the matter of violence and insecurity spurred shortly after arriving. It was clear that the subject was a pressing one, as it frequently emerged in conversations. People would often speak about how a friend or family member had been assaulted or killed in the street. With daily body-counts and graphic images of murder victims in the news media it was practically impossible to avoid hearing about the high level of violence. In addition, both my friends and I experienced acts of violence. What was most notable, however, was the change that had taken place from my first visit in 2009 to my last in 2012. When I came back in 2012 I could no longer walk alone to the organization I was affiliated with, but had to be escorted by an assigned guard, and there was a general perception that violence had increased not only where I lived in Antigua, but in the whole country.

This thesis is the result of six months fieldwork in Guatemala from July 2013 to January 2014. The main focus of the thesis is how violence and insecurity affect several aspects of women's lives. Some of the women have been direct victims of violence while others have not. While their stories are as diverse as the women themselves, they have one thing in common: They live in a country which has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world.

The importance of studying violence against women in Guatemala

Insecurity in Guatemala affects and alters the lives of both men and women (see for instance UNDP 2013). Although the majority of violence is perpetrated by and towards men (violent murders of men greatly exceed those of women), the country has become infamous for its high level of violence against women during the last decade. Since 2000, over 8000 women have been murdered in Guatemala; 758 in 2013 alone (GHRC 2009; INACIF). According to the Public Prosecutor's Office (*Ministerio Público*, MP), violence against women is the most

reported crime, with over 56,000 reports in 2013 (Orantes 2014). Although I acknowledge that the increasing rate of much violence against women in Guatemala is directly linked to the increasing rate of general violence, I highlight the importance of studying violence against women. As Menjívar (2008) has pointed out, in Guatemala the gender of the victim becomes a significant factor, influencing the motive and the kind of violence inflicted and the manner in which authorities respond. The violent murders of women, for instance, often called *femicides*,¹ have been characterized by both brutality and impunity. The majority of victims are killed by firearms, but also by bladed weapons, blunt objects, and by asphyxiation. Their bodies show up in the streets, garbage dumps, wells, roadside and forest areas and often show signs of torture, rape, and mutilation. Although the majority of the murdered women are from poor backgrounds, it is commonly understood that violence affects all women in the country – despite age, class, and ethnicity. Carey Jr. and Torres (2010) argue that the current femicide epidemic is less an aberration than a reflection of the way violence against women has become normalized. This is an important point, which runs throughout the thesis: Various forms of violence against women in Guatemala have become normalized. By “normal” I refer to both the frequency of the act and its perceived legitimacy. An anthropological approach to the subject might contribute to an understanding of *how* violence becomes a normalized part of everyday life. Since statistics say little of people’s personal experiences, I hope to contribute to an understanding of how living with the constant threat of violence affects women’s lives in numerous ways.²

As we will see, most of the crimes against women in Guatemala are carried out with impunity. For instance, of the 5,027 femicides from 2000 to 2009, only eleven perpetrators were convicted (Carey Jr. and Torres 2010). Moreover, women victims of violence are routinely stigmatized, blamed, and even punished for violent acts perpetrated upon them. In recent years Guatemala has approved a number of laws and set up institutions to deal exclusively with violence against women, such as special tribunals and police task forces. The

¹ Femicide (or as used by some, feminicide) is a term by feminist sociologist Diana Russell which refers to “the killing of females by males because they are female” (2001: 3). A now recognized political term it holds responsible not only the male perpetrators but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny (Sanford 2008).

² Due to the limited scope of the thesis I will not focus on the medical consequences of living with different forms of violence on an everyday basis, such as illnesses (both emotional and bodily pain) like *susto* (Green 1999) and *nervios* (see for instance Scheper-Hughes 1993), although it is common to hear that victims of violence suffer *crisis nerviosa* (nervous shock or breakdown).

fact that these measures have not been sufficient in stemming the violence makes it a subject in need of exploration.

An anthropological perspective is comparative. Violence against women has in recent years received increased attention worldwide and is now considered a pervasive public health and human rights issue. It has been estimated that more than one-third of women worldwide experience violence over the course of their lives (WHO 2013). High - profiled cases have contributed to making violence against women an important subject on the agenda of both human rights organizations and governments worldwide. Countries such as India and South Africa have seen an increase in brutal gang-rapes; acid attacks on women in Colombia have become alarmingly frequent; and Mexico and the northern triangle of Central America – Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala – have the highest levels of femicides in the world. Although it is a global phenomenon, its manifestations are highly variable, depending on local systems of meaning, kinship structures, gender inequalities, and levels of violence in the wider society (Merry 2009). Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004: 3) claim that cultures, social structures, ideas, and ideologies shape all dimensions of violence: “Torturing and killing are as cultural as nursing the sick and wounded or burying and mourning the dead”. In a similar vein, others have argued that violence follows culturally specific forms that require symbolic analysis in order to be understood (see for instance Taylor 1999; Broch-Due 2005). Drawing on these researchers, I argue that it is important to look at the cultural and structural frameworks that make violence become normalized in order to avoid pathologizing.³

Although there has been previous research on the subject of violence against women in Guatemala, I highlight the importance of an anthropological contribution to highlight how violence against women has been considered a normal part of everyday life, how it affects women’s lives, and the measures they are forced to take.

Main arguments presented

Despite increased awareness and implementation of laws I argue that violence against women in Guatemala is so prevalent because it has become normalized. Violence against women has

³ In this thesis I do not emphasize psychological or biological dimensions of violence, rather cultural and structural. By this I mean that I explore the cultural and structural frameworks that enable or contribute to violence against women.

become a normal part of everyday life and I explore the cultural and structural frameworks that have enabled a normalization of violence. I explore how gender inequalities and historic impunity have contributed to normalization and, to a large degree, societal acceptance of much violence. Normalization of violence affects not only the choices women make in everyday life, but also their faith in the legal institutions designed to assist them.

I argue that the constant threat of violence, both in the public and private sphere, and the actual violence, which gives the threat credibility, affects women's lives in a variety of ways; mobility in the public sphere; social relationships, and sense of trust between both individuals and towards Guatemalan authorities.

Because women experience several forms of violence, in public and private sphere, I maintain that there is a continuum of violence in their lives.

Much literature on violence tends to distinguish between violence in the public and private sphere. My findings, however, show that in Guatemala these are intertwined. Because both the street and the home present palpable dangers to women; because violence in both spheres has become normalized; and because much violence in "the street" penetrates the (perceived) safety of the home, violence in public and private sphere cannot be separated. Therefore I argue that there are no "safe-zones" in women's lives. Fear, then, become a part of everyday life and is something that needs to be managed.

Definitions of violence against women and theories employed

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women termed violence against women as

any act of gender-based violence⁴ that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (UN General Assembly 1993).

⁴ Violence against women is often termed "gender-based violence" because it partly stems from women's subordinate status in society. The term distinguishes between "sex" (biological distinctions) and "gender" (social construct). Because gender has often been used synonymously with women, in a way that ignores that men are also gendered, I prefer the term "violence against women" which will be used throughout the thesis.

The declaration states that violence against women can be perpetrated by the family, the community, or the State. An important aspect of the declaration is that women are vulnerable to various types of violence, not solely physical assaults. Sexual harassment, threats of violence, and deprivation of bodily liberty are other forms of violence that can greatly affect women's lives. Nussbaum (2005) reminds us that it is important to recognize that many apparently non-violent practices count as forms of violence because they have the same crippling effects on women's capabilities as actual bodily violence. She claims that violence and the *threat* of violence interfere with every major capability in a woman's life.⁵

While discussing violence against women in Guatemala I find it problematic to separate different forms of violence, as they are often intertwined. For instance, many of the country's femicides happen within intimate relationships. According to Norma Cruz, director of the Survivor's Foundation (*Fundación Sobrevivientes*), 56 percent of the violent deaths of women take place in the private sphere (LA Ruta 2010). In addition, sexual violence is prevalent in both public and private spheres. The processes that have enabled normalization are consistent in several forms of violence. Various forms of violence against women, then, must be seen within the same framework.

By domestic violence (*violencia intrafamiliar*) I focus on physical-, sexual-, and psychological violence in addition to economic control in the home. Although domestic violence most often refers to violence between married or cohabiting couples, it sometimes refers to violence against other members of a household, such as children. It is primarily thought to affect women and girls, although men and boys are also victims. Sexual violence refers to any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone's will. I find Liz Kelly's definition useful as it attempts to reflect both the extent and range of sexual violence including women's perceptions within it:

Sexual violence includes any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact (1988: 41).

I do not use one overarching theory throughout the thesis, as violence is a complex subject that cannot be easily reduced to one definition. However, I use theories by researchers from

⁵ For a comprehensive discussion on how violence affect women's capabilities, see Nussbaum (2000).

various backgrounds that I find useful in understanding the multifaceted phenomenon that violence against women in Guatemala constitutes. Although I use theory from several feminist researchers it is important to note that research is not simply feminist because it is about women and, equally, feminist research need not have individual women as its subjects (Kelly 1988: 4). I am influenced by feminist scholars as it is the research I have found to be most useful and descriptive concerning violence against women and women's fear of men's violence.

In the following section I will present a brief overview of the theoretical approaches in which I base my analysis throughout the thesis.

Violence, normalization, and women's fear

Galtung (1969; 1990) distinguishes between three main types of violence; *direct violence* (personal) where there is an identifiable subject who commits the violent act; *structural violence* (indirect) where the violence is built into the social structure, and *cultural violence*. Direct violence refers to anything from threats and psychological abuse to rape, murder, and war. Structural violence refers to political or economic structures that result in violence, most commonly seen as the deprivation of basic human needs (see for instance Farmer 2004a; 2004b) and unequal power relations.⁶ Cultural violence is aspects of culture, such as religion, ideology, and language, which can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence (Galtung 1990). This form of violence is usually "invisible"; it is often accepted as a "normal" part of how we see the world. These three types of violence – direct, structural, and cultural - constitute what Galtung refers to as a "*violence triangle*".

His violence triangle is relevant for my analysis as it emphasizes that the three types are causally connected to each other. Guatemalan women experience various forms of violence on a daily basis and as researchers working on Guatemala have pointed out (Green 1999; Menjivar 2008; 2011), the multiple forms of violence Guatemalan women experience almost never occur in isolation.

⁶ Rodgers and O'Neill (2012) claim that infrastructure constitutes an often ignored material channel for structural violence. They refer to "infrastructural violence" in which class relations get built into urban plans and architecture, inscribing unjust relations into city streets, fences and walls (see also Caldeira 2000).

In a similar vein, the concept of a *continuum of violence* is useful while discussing how various types of violence, in both public and private sphere, permeate Guatemalan women's lives. I borrow the concept of a continuum of violence from sociologist Liz Kelly (1988). Kelly's use of a continuum is based on two of its meanings in the Oxford English Dictionary: "A basic common character that underlies many different events" and "a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and which cannot be readily distinguished" (1988: 76).

Although she does not specifically focus on Guatemala, I find feminist philosopher Judith Butler's notion of *normative violence* useful while discussing the extent to which violence has become normalized in the country. Building on Foucault, Butler argues that what is seen as general truth, as common knowledge, is naturalized through the workings of power.⁷ In Butler's terms, normative violence is the violence of the norm, not physical violence per se. However, she argues that it is normative violence which makes physical violence possible, and simultaneously invisible. Invisible violence is violence that is socially not understood as violence because of its normalization; it is tolerated and normalized because it is perpetrated in response to social transgressions (Boesten 2010a:5). This notion of "invisible" violence is salient in the Guatemalan context, as we will see. Normalized violence, then, is in general not perceived as violence but is invisible because it has been accepted as a normal part of everyday life. In a similar vein, Menjivar argues that it is the forms of violence embedded in everyday life that becomes normalized and "it is through this normalization that dehumanization becomes possible and suffering becomes invisible" (2008: 133).

While discussing gender inequalities (and how this affects the process of normalization of violence against women), I find Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic violence* relevant. Symbolic violence is the "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004: 272). This type of violence involves misrecognition; the fact of recognizing a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such (ibid.). In other words, where violence is symbolic individuals see their domination as natural, as taken-for-granted. For Bourdieu, gender domination is the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence.⁸ It is important to mention that I do not imply that all women accept and

⁷ Foucault (1995 [1977]) demonstrated how violence could be embedded in social and material structures, thus was taken-for-granted as normal or natural.

⁸ In a later work, Bourdieu (2001) explores the pattern of masculine domination across centuries, thus argues for the universality of sexism. He explores why both men and women accept a symbolic order that renders gender differences and men's domination over women natural – what he calls the "paradox of doxa".

condone subordination and violence. However, I highlight how unequal gender relations, produced and reproduced by both men and women, lay the ground for much violence against women.

Eva Lundgren's concept of a "*normalization process*" is central while discussing domestic violence. She argues that as a result of normalization, much violence becomes internalized. In this process boundaries are being shifted and acts of violence gradually take on new meaning. She describes domestic violence as a dynamic process where the violence becomes normalized, both by the man and the woman.

I build on all of the above approaches to normalization of violence as they, to a certain extent, interrelate and overlap. Using a plethora of approaches provides me a better understanding of *how* violence becomes normalized.

When I discuss *women's fear of violence* I use the definition from Shorter Oxford English Dictionary which defines fear as "the emotion of pain or uneasiness caused by the sense of impending danger, and as a state of anxiety derived from the concern for the safety of a person or thing" (Bannister and Fyfe 2001). As a subjective emotional state, fear is problematic to study.⁹ Moreover, as Furedi (2007) has argued, an *increase* in the quantity of fear is difficult to measure. However, with a large increase in overall violence and crime in Guatemala, one can expect that fear itself has risen subsequently. Relying on women's narratives, my findings show that show that women are increasingly afraid, more so than in the past due to increasing levels of violence and crime.

As I am mainly concerned with women's fear of men's violence I particularly draw on feminist researchers, such as Kelly (1988) and Stanko (1985; 1987; 1990; 1995). In addition, I find Robin's (2004) approach to political fear useful while discussing women's fear. His approach to political fear opens for a broader understanding of the concept than generally employed. He differentiates between private fears and political fear and following his argument, women's fear of men's violence must be seen as political fear because it emanates from society or have consequences for society.

⁹ However, much has been written about what has been termed "cultures of fear", particularly the formation and normalization of fear in the context of war and terrorism (see for instance Linke and Smith 2009), or Western societies preoccupation with risk and fear (Furedi 2002 [1997]; 2007, Robin 2004).

Class, race, and violence

Talking about violence in Guatemala inevitably evokes notions of class and race. Not only due to the country's history of horrendous human rights violations against the indigenous population during the civil war, but in regards to post-war violence as well.

According to official statistics, about 40 per cent of Guatemala's inhabitants are indigenous, including Maya, Garífuna, and Xinca peoples (MRGI 2011). Guatemala is a highly stratified society, where the indigenous population is marginalized economically, socially, and culturally. The majority of wealthy Guatemalans are non-indigenous ladinos¹⁰ and many among the upper class openly display their wealth (and, I claim, un-indigenoussness) through cars, houses, and mode of dress. Twenty-two of the most important families of the Guatemalan oligarchy have retained political and economic power for close to five hundred years through strict endogamy sustained by racist ideology (Casaús Arzú 1992 in Nelson 1999: 212). This separation between poor and rich based on ethnicity is evident in many parts of society. That having a lighter skin color is considered favorable is evident on television shows, commercials, on billboards as well as in powerful positions and in political representation.

Nelson (1999) has explored how bodies in Guatemala are marked by race in ladino discourse and claims that bodies are still markers of difference. Also Hale (2006: 216) observes that despite a formidable change that affirms indigenous people as equals, and respects and celebrates indigenous culture, racial hierarchy remains virtually unchanged. Discrimination is particularly salient for indigenous women. It has often been observed that indigenous women suffer a three-fold discrimination: for being a woman; for being indigenous; and for living in a rural area. Sieder has claimed that the historical marginalization of indigenous people has reinforced patterns of discrimination against women, meaning that their access to the means to defend their most basic human rights is severely limited (2013: 110).¹¹ The result has been a limited access to security and justice, in which the color of your skin might affect not only the violence perpetrated against you, but the public attention your case will get, and even the outcome of the investigation.

¹⁰ Ladinos refer to people with mixed Spanish and native ancestry yet is a problematic term. See Nelson (1999); Hale (2006) for further discussion on the subject.

¹¹ See also Sieder (2011) for a description of the responses to insecurity and lack of access to justice of indigenous peoples in the department of Quiché.

The field sites

I chose to conduct multi-sited fieldwork in the cities of La Antigua Guatemala (from now on, Antigua), Quetzaltenango and Guatemala City. The rationale behind this approach was to get a variety of perspectives from women on the threat of violence as there is tremendous variation at the department level.¹² By conducting fieldwork in three cities that vary greatly in size, population, and rate of crime and violence I aimed to acquire a better understanding of violence against women and how women from various geographical areas and social spheres experienced the threat of violence.

The fact that I chose to do fieldwork over three different sites and that I only had six months to do it, had both positive and negative aspects. It allowed me to talk to numerous women from various backgrounds, some of whom I got to know very well and some that I only met once. In addition, it gave me the opportunity to talk to women's rights organizations in various cities. In retrospect, the downside of juggling three different sites in such a short amount of time was that it did not allow me to create deep relationships with *all* of my research participants. I still feel, however, that I gained a holistic understanding of the various forms of violence Guatemalan women experience on a daily basis and how this affects their lives in several ways.

The old colonial capital of Antigua is the capital of the Sacatepéquez department. It is famous for its beautiful architecture and old ruins and draws a myriad of both national and international tourists. While doing fieldwork in Antigua, and during previous stays in the country, I lived in a house with my boyfriend and some of his family members. This form of living arrangement - adult children living with their parents - is quite common in Guatemala and in other Latin American countries. Living with a Guatemalan family provided me a unique way to gain insight into Guatemalan "way-of-life".

Although only situated about 30 miles from the capital Guatemala City, Antigua has largely escaped the rate of violent crime present in the capital and other cities. During previous stays in the city, I often heard *Antigüeños* (people from Antigua) state that "violence only happens in the capital." Violence and crime had been something they only heard about in the national news and from friends and relatives living other places in the country. However, this is

¹² Guatemala is divided into 22 departments (*departamentos*). Each department has a capital, and divided into municipalities.

changing rapidly as the city has seen a recent increase in violent crime and people are concerned that the “safe-zone” of the country is losing its status. By 2013, when I was conducting fieldwork, violent crime had increased dramatically and was a subject that permeated day-to-day conversations. Many say that people are now so used to being robbed and that they are so scared that even when the robbers do not use weapons, people give up their belongings. Because they know that the threshold for using violence is so low, they give up their things without making any problems. Many *Antigüeños* feared that the city would turn into Guatemala City, which is notorious for its violent crime.

Guatemala City, the capital and largest city of Guatemala and the capital of the Guatemala department, is considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world. I was originally not planning on doing fieldwork there, but I quickly realized that it would be necessary in order to get a thorough understanding of the country’s violence, as it is considered the most dangerous city in the country. I rented an apartment through some friends in *zona 1*,¹³ the *Centro Histórico* (Historic Center), one of the zones that are struggling with high level of violent crime.

Quetzaltenango is the second largest city in the country and differ from the other sites as the majority of the population is indigenous. It is the capital of the Quetzaltenango department, which is one of the departments with most reported domestic violence. The National Civil Police (*Policía Nacional Civil*, PNC) in Quetzaltenango receives on average six formal complaints of domestic violence a day (Rodríguez 2013). To learn more about domestic violence, I conducted fieldwork in one of the country’s few domestic violence shelters, which I call *Wayak’*.¹⁴ I stayed at a hostel in the historic center of Quetzaltenango during fieldwork.

¹³ Guatemala City is divided into 22 zones or *zonas*. The various *zonas* vary greatly in size and level of violent crime. The zones with highest levels of violence are often referred to as *zonas rojas*, “red zones.”

¹⁴ *Wayak’* is the mayan word for «to dream» and is a pseudonym for the shelter. In Guatemala the shelters are referred to as CAIMUS – Centros de Apoyo Integral para la Mujer Sobreviviente de la Violencia. The *Wayak’* shelter is run by a non-governmental organization, but work in coordination with other local, national, and international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Methods, ethical concerns and adaptations

My fieldwork in Antigua and Guatemala City revolved around the experiences of mostly, but not exclusively, ladina women in urban or semi-urban areas. Some had been victims of violence and others had not. In Quetzaltenango, the majority of my research participants were women, both ladina and indigenous, at the Wayak' shelter. In addition, research participants included women's rights advocates from three non-governmental organizations and one governmental organization. Although my focus is on women's experience of violence, I have included some men's observations and perceptions of violence against women.

It has been important for me not to portray the women victims of violence as one unified mass. For many women, the only thing they had in common was just that, they had been victims of violence. Moreover, women are not merely "acted upon" – Guatemalan women are increasingly aware of their rights and exercise them. Their agency take various forms; some report their husbands, some divorce, some join women's rights organizations, some take on tedious legal battles against their perpetrators and some make the conscious decision to avoid intimate relationships altogether.

Due to the relatively recent history of violence during the civil war, I was initially apprehensive about talking to Guatemalans about violence. In addition, many have claimed that the long-lasting war led to a "culture of silence", which makes the study of violence complicated (see for example Moser and McIlwaine 2001; Giles and Hyndman 2004). This culture of silence refers both to the attempt to silence political challenges to military dictatorship during the war and to the reluctance to speak of the atrocities in the communities affected in the aftermath of war. Moser and McIlwaine (2001) found that people were reluctant to discuss violence, which that fundamentally affected their research project. This obstacle for gathering data differs from what Menjívar's (2008) experience. Menjívar did not ask the women questions about violence, as the objective of her project was another. However, the topic of violence was frequently brought up by her research participants. My experience is similar to that of Menjívar. Sometimes I asked the women directly about violence and their perceptions and experiences of it, but other times I did not. However, the subject of violence was frequently brought up, as it is a prevalent in day-to-day conversations. The reluctance to talk about violence that Moser and McIlwaine encountered might have been because the

research was conducted in 1999, just a few years after the signing of the peace accords. In addition, they found that the “culture of silence” was most evident in communities that were directly affected by the war, and particularly among the indigenous population. I did not find great difficulties talking to people about violence and was often surprised by the willingness of women to talk about not only violence in general, but their own personal experiences. I was invited into their homes and their lives through their narratives and was continuously astounded by their warmth, openheartedness, and genuine wish to help me during fieldwork. However, Ystanes (2011) rightfully argues that ladinos are extremely protective of their personal lives and I recognize that the unproblematic approach to the subject of violence I encountered may have been circumstantial. First of all, I spoke fluent Spanish, which I believe was important in order to gain trust (instead of relying on a translator). Second, while I conducted fieldwork at the Wayak’s shelter, the women might have felt more comfortable talking to me because they were used to, in fact, encouraged to, talk about their experiences. In addition, some of my main research participants were women I met through friends or acquaintances, thus there was a higher level of trust. It was unproblematic to find interviewees among non-governmental organizations, as they expressed a desire for more attention to the subject of violence against women. I also conducted interviews with some of my Guatemalan friends, although these are not my main research participants. I still considered their narratives of great importance: Due to my close relationship with them, it was easier for me to really gain an understanding of their experiences of living with violence on an everyday basis and the constant fear many of them felt.

However, as Broch-Due (2005) has highlighted, experience cannot be accessed directly through narration. The experiences shared between fieldworker and local people are never egalitarian. The positionality of an anthropologist (their own social position in relation to the people they are working with) may influence aspects of the study, such as the types of information collected, or the way in which it is interpreted. Being a female anthropologist made it easier for me to gain women’s trust and gather information about violence against women. However, it is important to mention that not only gender affects one’s positionality as a researcher, but also “class”, ethnicity and religion, to mention some. Yet I believe that if I was a man, talking to women about violence (perpetrated by men) would be more problematic. In turn, if my main focus was men’s experiences of violence, my findings might have differed from those of a male anthropologist.

Nordstrom and Robben (1995) problematize “writing violence” and ask what legitimacy anthropologists have to speak for others, in particular, for the victims of violence. This touches upon the much debated issue in postmodern anthropology – the problem of representation and “speaking” for others. Others, such as Talal Asad and James Clifford, have sought to locate ethnography as a textualized construction. Asad (1986), for instance, highlighted a comparison between ethnography and “translation” of other cultures. I concur with Green (1999: 21) who insists that anthropologists are in a unique position to address the darker side of the human condition – violence, poverty, war, sexism, racism – based on the lived experiences of the people with whom we work. An anthropological account of living with violence allows us to really “see” the lives behind the statistics. A just portrayal of the effects of violence in a country cannot only include the number of annual murders, but must acknowledge the violence that lurk within the walls of the home, in structures and institutions. Nordstrom and Robben (1995) also claim that anthropologists can make an important contribution to the study of violence, mainly because of the method participant observation. While in Guatemala, I did not merely stand “outside” and wrote about statistics and violent events. I lived there, among women, trying to get a better understanding of their experiences. I got to know them very well, played with their children, listened to their stories of despair and heart-aches. Although I was in a favorable position where I could leave at any time if I desired (and also was going to leave after some months), I still experienced how it is to live as a woman in Guatemala. I felt how it is to be constantly afraid while walking outside after dark or traveling by bus. However, I was never forced to travel by night in order to get home from work, or hide in a woman’s shelter due to fear of my own family. I could only reflect upon the stories women told me in addition to my own experiences as a woman. Thus, the true experience of living with fear on a daily basis is something I will never be able to completely comprehend.

Methods applied

Long-term fieldwork is the main factor that sets anthropology off from other disciplines. Doing qualitative fieldwork for a longer period of time allows the anthropologist to gain a better understanding of the complexities of social life. During the fieldwork I used mainly the core anthropological methods, such as participant observation and different forms of interview.

As I had a broad data collection, from multiple fields and from both individuals and from various organizations, I used both structured, in-depth interviews and informal interviews. In structured interviews I had planned the interview beforehand with the participant and had prepared a set of questions. Unplanned, informal interviews, however, were most common during my fieldwork, and could evolve out of any conversation. In the beginning of my fieldwork I was not sure which type interview would be preferable in order to obtain information without making the participants uncomfortable. However, I quickly noticed that when I did formal interviews (interviews that were planned with the participant beforehand) I would get quite stiff answers. It seemed obvious that the participants told me what they thought I wanted to hear. This was the case both with women victims of violence, non-victims and NGO workers. Thus, I quickly realized it was much more valuable to focus on informal interviews. Informal interviews would occur for instance over the dinner table, while talking to people in stores or on the bus, or generally talking to people in more informal settings. At the shelter most interviews were conducted in informal settings; while sitting outside on the patio and chatting about anything, or during jewelry making or other activities, the women would sometimes start talking about their own experiences or violence in general. This was a subject that often came up and therefore it was possible for me to conduct informal interviews. Had the women been more closed about their thoughts and experiences - as I initially thought they would be - this type of interview would have been hard to execute and I would most likely have been forced to focus on formal interviews. But instead the women often talked about both their own experiences with violence and about violence in general. I would ask questions that would lead the conversation further. These informal interviews felt much more natural and I also believe they were less disturbing for the women, considering their situations. However, this method of collecting data meant a lot of waiting around; the informal interviews were more time consuming than conducting formal ones. Although there could sometimes be days without me writing in my notebook, I felt that through informal interviews I would get a better insight into their thoughts and experiences, thus get the "real story" as opposed to what they thought I wanted to hear. At night when I was back in my room, I would transfer the field notes to my computer. I underestimated how long this would take, and often wrote until late at night.

I never insisted upon talking about violence if I noticed that people were reluctant to. For instance, I interviewed several victims of extortions while in Guatemala, but in Antigua people generally preferred not to talk about the subject, despite an increase in extortions of

both business- and homeowners. When I heard that our neighbor, a woman hotel-owner, had recently been a victim of extortion I was hoping to be able to talk to her about her experience. When I found out that she had not told anyone (except the one person who had told me), nor the police, and that she was extremely frightened, I decided it was best to leave the case alone.

My role as a participant observer changed dramatically from one field site to another. Antigua was a city I was already familiar with, which had both positive and negative effects. Fortunately, I had a big network of family and friends there and could use this to get a more holistic approach to my subject; by being familiar with the city and many of its people I could gather data from people from various backgrounds. I could easily “fit in” in and had the opportunity to talk to a wide range of people. For this same reason, however, did I also have some difficulties: Many of my friends and acquaintances did not really understand my role as an anthropologist and it was sometimes difficult to be taken seriously. As I did not have a large amount of time in Guatemala City, nor did I know as many people as I did in Antigua, I mostly conducted interviews in order to acquire data. In Quetzaltenango, I spent most of the time at the Wayak’ shelter and could acquire qualitative data through participant observation. I was fortunate to join a psychology intern when she worked. She organized weekly group therapies as well as sessions of occupational therapy. During the more formal group therapies the women had the opportunity to express their feelings and share their expectations, as well as discussing current happenings in their lives. The occupational therapy sessions were more informal and often filled with laughter. These could include arts and crafts workshops, physical activities such as yoga and relaxation techniques, among others.

Sources of information

Having to rely on statistics of violence against women is problematic, not only because of high rates of under-reporting, but due to divergence between sources. For instance, statistics from the National Institute of Forensic Science (*Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Forenses*, INACIF) often differs greatly from those of the National Civil Police (PNC). In addition, women’s rights organizations often operate with different statistics. Despite this, I have included some statistics from various governmental- and nongovernmental organizations, mainly INACIF.

Besides women's narratives, I used national newspapers as a secondary source of information to gain information about violence against women. Violence permeates Guatemalan news media which also affect how people talk of violence. I was interested in seeing not only the prevalence, but how violence against women was talked about and the extent of news coverage their cases received. I went thoroughly through several newspapers every day, yet focused mainly on the most widely circulated ones, *Nuestro Diario* and *Prensa Libre*. Although time consuming, I found this a very useful source of information. In addition, I used posts from online social media to see how cases of violence against women were talked about in the aftermath of violent incidents. Although I have only included a few cases, I found this to be a good source of information.¹⁵

Personal difficulties

Conducting fieldwork is a complex endeavor, particularly for researchers who study violence and conflict zones (see for instance Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Kovats-Bernat 2002; Begley 2009). Studying violence against women was emotionally much harder than I first expected. It was particularly hard at the women's shelter for various reasons. I established a close relationship with many since I had a longer time to get to know the women and I spent every day at the shelter. The fact that I could attend group therapies as well as have informal conversations with them provided me with a deep insight into their past experiences of violence and injustice. It was often hard to listen to their stories and many times I struggled to sleep at night after long days of talking about violence. At night in my room I would have to revise my field notes which added to the emotional stress. In addition, the fact that the women's children also were at the shelter presented another obstacle. I had not planned to study the experiences of children and the fact that young children were present made the fieldwork there more emotionally difficult. The children were often very sad and some had behavioral problems; they missed their families and some struggled with severe traumas from their past. Many of the older girls had been sexually abused by family members and were struggling with various traumas. I developed a close relationship with the children there as I interacted with them every day. However, I was very conscious about not getting "too close"

¹⁵ Due to the changing nature of social media, referencing is problematic. Some of the cases I use have direct references, while others none.

to them, as I knew I was leaving after a short period of time. Working in a field site where children were present definitely presented more dilemmas than I had first imagined.

Begley (2009) highlights the importance of receiving adequate “support” in the field and upon return. In her view, support can be anything from academic guidance from supervisors, colleagues, etcetera, as well as emotional support from friends, family, and psychologists. In my case, talking to fellow students and my boyfriend was essential in maintaining a clear head and a positive spirit. I also made sure to take breaks after particularly hard periods during fieldwork where I went on shorter vacations to reboot. Although something I was unfamiliar with, I found writing a diary helpful to sort out emotions and reflect upon difficult experiences.

Safety measures and anonymity

I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis, both for research participants and the women’s shelter. It is important to protect the anonymity of all my research participants, mainly due to the delicate subject. Being victim of violence is a highly private matter that many do not want to share with others, particular when it comes to domestic violence. In addition, anonymity is essential to protect the physical safety of my research participants, particularly the women at the shelter. The shelter was situated on a secret location due to the threat of retaliation from former spouses. This entailed that only the women and children who lived there, staff, and volunteers were familiar with the location. The organization which ran the shelter had previously experienced threats and acts of intimidation at their office in the city center, thus the threat of attacks at the shelter was considerable.

Doing fieldwork in Guatemala as a woman entails several challenges, particularly when it comes to security. Having lived in Guatemala before, I was obviously aware of the potential dangers. This also affected many of the choices I made during the fieldwork, for instance where I chose to live and which geographical areas I could enter. Fortunately I could often rely on friends when needed, and for instance some of my male friends would give me rides when I had to travel to Guatemala City. Admittedly, I was quite nervous before I relocated to the capital for my last part of fieldwork. Fortunately my boyfriend was able to go with me and

in retrospect I realize that if it had not been for him I would have had to take many more precautions while in the city and may have ended up with different kind of data.

Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1 contextualizes violence in Guatemala and serves as an illustration of how violence permeates society.

Chapter 2 portrays how gender relations and inequalities lay the ground for much violence against women.

Chapter 3 explores how violence against women has become normalized. I will show how violent practices have become normatively supported, largely based on gender expectations, such as women's morality. In addition, I will discuss how violence against *some* women, mainly poor and indigenous, has been particularly legitimized.

Chapter 4 continues the discussion on how violence permeates women's lives from chapter 3, only in this chapter I focus mainly on violence in the public sphere. Because of the prevalence of many forms of violence, in both spheres, I highlight that there are no "safe-zones" in women's lives.

In *Chapter 5* I expand on the previous chapters to discuss how women, from various social strata, deal with the constant threat of violence. Through an analysis of women's strategies in dealing with the threat of violence, both in public and private spaces, I discuss how women manage fear.

Chapter 1:

En Guatemala, la vida no vale nada: Violence as a part of everyday life

“We’re programmed to not do anything, you know, because this happens so often”

- David, 25, witness to sexual violence against women during a robbery on an urban bus.

In Guatemala it is common to hear people say that “life is worth nothing” (*“la vida no vale nada”*). This was a phrase I often heard during all my stays in the country, but particularly during fieldwork in 2013 because of my focus on violence. In this chapter I will show how violence has become a “normal” part of everyday life, which will serve as a beginning of the further discussion on how much of the violence in Guatemala has become normalized, both by the victim, the perpetrator, by bystanders and by the State. With this I do not imply that people are apathetic, but merely that violence has become so prevalent that it constitutes a part everyday life. Violence permeates much of society, not only on the street and in the home, but in day-to-day conversations and the media. I will present the main characteristics of direct, physical violence in Guatemala, including structures that either enable or attempt to stem it. The prevalence of violence in Guatemalan society is an essential starting point for the further discussion on how people manage living with the threat of violence on an everyday basis.

Background: Violence during the war

The Guatemalan civil war¹⁶ lasted from 1960 to 1996 when the Peace Accords were signed. More than 200,000 people were killed or “disappeared”, 1.5 million people displaced, 626 villages massacred, and tens of thousands of women were raped (ODHAG 1998; CEH 1999).

¹⁶ In Guatemala the civil war is usually referred to as *el conflicto armado interno* – the internal armed conflict.

The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) found that the military was responsible for 93 percent of human rights violations during the war, 92 per cent of the arbitrary executions and 91 percent of forced disappearances. The indigenous population was systematically targeted during the war and the view of the Mayan population as the “internal enemy” became the *raison d’être* of State policies for several decades (CEH 1999). The CEH concluded that the identification of Mayan communities with the insurgency was intentionally exaggerated by the State, which, based on traditional racist prejudices, used this identification to eliminate any present or future possibilities of the people providing for, or joining, an insurgent project (CEH 1999: 23). Also the report by the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala (the Project to Recover the Historical Memory, REMHI), concluded that the majority of human rights violations were committed by the military. The forced recruitment into the rural Civil Defense Patrols (PACs) resulted in people committing atrocities against their neighbors, sometimes even against their relatives. Schirmer (1998) ascertains that nowhere else in Latin America has an army managed to mobilize and divide a population against itself to such an extent.

The majority of the atrocities were committed during the campaigns of the early 1980s. One of the most violent stages of the war was under the dictatorship of army general and de facto head of state Efraín Ríos Montt from 1982-1983.¹⁷ Up to 42 percent of massacre victims during this period were women (Sanford 2008) and 48% of rapes occurred during 1982 (De Cicco 2013). According to the CEH, approximately a quarter of the direct victims of acts of violence and human rights violations during the war were women. However, it is likely that this number fluctuated. In addition to direct violence, thousands of women lost their husbands, leaving them the sole breadwinners for their children with often little material resources as a result of scorched earth policies. A large number of children were also direct victims of arbitrary executions, forced disappearance, torture, and rape. One testimony revealed:

What we have seen has been terrible, burnt bodies, women impaled as if they were animals ready to be cooked, all bended and massacred children chopped by machetes. Also women murdered like Christ (ODHAG 1998: 35, my translation).

¹⁷ For more information on the role of Ríos Montt during the war and what led up to the trial in 2013, see the documentaries *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983) and *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011).

Public torture, exposition of bodies, and the appearance of bodies with visible signs of torture were not uncommon. The soldiers would advertise a rape by placing a stick in the vagina of the mutilated corpse (Franco 2006). Women's reproductive organs were often mutilated and testimonies reveal how pregnant women's bellies were cut open and in one incident the soldiers played soccer with the fetus (ODHAG 1998).

Impunity

It is relevant to acknowledge the violence during the civil war when discussing violence in post-war society because the conflict lasted for such a long time and ended so recently. In addition, the legacy of civil war is prevalent in Guatemalan politics today. For instance, both excavations of mass graves and trials of former military officials are still going on. Impunity – freedom from legal sanction or accountability – has been a significant feature of both pre- and post-war Guatemala. The recent trial of Ríos Montt illustrates this: On 10 May 2013, following a long legal process, he was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity and sentenced to 80 years in prison. The trial was one of the most polemic trials Guatemala had ever seen; it was the first time a former head of state was convicted of genocide in a national court. However, ten days later the ruling was annulled and the case has been reset to where it stood on 19 April 2013. The trial will resume in January 2015.

Current President Otto Pérez Molina is a retired general and ex-chief of intelligence who was stationed in the Ixil area,¹⁸ a region that saw some of the conflict's worst human rights violations against civilians. During the Ríos Montt trial, a witness (a soldier who was a mechanic in an engineering brigade in the area) told the court that “the soldiers, on orders from Major ‘Tito Arias’, better known as Otto Pérez Molina ... coordinated the burning and looting, in order to later execute people” (The Guardian 2013). Perez himself has acknowledged that “Tito Arias” was his pseudonym during the war and that he was assigned to Nebaj in 1982. In addition, many have argued that a videotape of Pérez Molina during the war is a clear evidence of his participation in the violence. In the videotape a journalist interviews the general as he stands over the battered bodies of four insurgents.¹⁹ Although it is

¹⁸ Ixil area refers to three municipalities in the department El Quiché, home to Maya indigenous Ixil.

¹⁹

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEN9OBmLdcE&oref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DIEN9OBmLdcE&has_verified=1.

widely recognized that genocide occurred during the civil war, many Guatemalans - including Pérez Molina - have denied this.

The Sepur Zarco case, the first major case of sexual violence during the war to reach Guatemalan courts, is another case worth mentioning as it illustrates impunity in cases of violence against women. In September 2012, over three decades after the atrocities were committed, fifteen Maya Q'echi' women and three men witnessed in the High Risk Court in Guatemala City. The women were victims of sexual slavery in a military base near the village of Sepur Zarco, Izabal, between 1982 and 1986. Contrary to the Ríos Montt trial, the case has received little national attention. However, it has been important because the case is framed as sexual violence that constitutes genocide (De Cicco 2013). The fact that the women were organized in shifts, provided with contraception, and that sexual violence was also used as torture to obtain information, proves that the sexual violence was planned and administrated by the military (ibid.).

I was fortunate to be able to conduct an extensive interview with a representative from one of the legal organizations leading the case for the women. Alejandra, a young lawyer at the organization, discussed the difficulties regarding going up against the military in Guatemala. She stated:

It's been a complicated case because the only proofs we have are the women's testimonies. It's been very difficult to access documents of the military and they're still doing excavations of the mass graves in these areas, so the only proofs we have are the testimonies.

It has not proven easy to convict powerful people in Guatemala, especially not members of the military oligarchy. As a human rights lawyer claimed in reference to the Ríos Montt trial: "There is really nothing you can do to really take away the privileges from the privileged people" (Granito: How to Nail a Dictator 2011). The impunity perpetrators of the atrocities during the war have enjoyed and the recent resolution approved by the Guatemalan Congress denying any existence of genocide during the civil war,²⁰ reflects a widespread racism where violence against the indigenous population has not been recognized as such.

²⁰ On May 13, 2014 the Guatemalan Congress approved a non-binding resolution denying existence of genocide.

Impunity today

Still today, the Guatemalan justice system has proved largely incapable of curbing violence and containing criminal gangs and mafias and impunity levels have been almost total: 93 percent in general and up to 98 percent in cases of femicides (CICIG). Widespread corruption, inefficiency, and lack of resources characterize parts of the Guatemalan justice system. Corrupt judges that are linked to organized crime are a frequent problem in the country.²¹ Corruption, however, is not exclusive to the courts. According to Édgar Gutiérrez, director of the University of San Carlos Institute for National Problems the main responsibility lies with the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP); when cases retain weaknesses, incoherencies, and incomplete investigations, a corrupt judge will find ways to avoid justice (Sactic 2014). The Public Prosecutor's Office, which includes several entities such as the Women's Office, Office of Human Rights, and Crime Against Life and Personal Integrity Unit, is also responsible for the investigation of femicide cases (GHRC 2009).

Unable to face the challenges in the Guatemalan judicial system, The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, (*Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala*, CICIG), was ratified in 2007. By supporting the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP), the National Civil Police and other state institutions, the commission's main objective was to strengthen the country's capacity to deal with clandestine networks that used their close contacts in the government to ensure impunity. The commission has received appraisal for exposing major corruption scandals and convict high-profile drug traffickers. Since it began in 2007, impunity levels have dropped 23 percent, from 93 percent to 70 percent in 2013 (according to their own statistics). Among other things, the commission helped establish a high-risk court, a special court to try high impact and dangerous cases; has dismissed thousands of corrupt police agents and dozens of corrupt judges. However, according to former leader Francisco Dall'Anese the commission is constantly encountering obstacles from branches of government, including "from a small minority of very powerful corrupt judges" (Pacheco 2012). The commission's first director, Carlos Castresana, resigned in frustration in 2010, claiming that the Guatemalan government had not shown enough political will and had failed to implement key CICIG recommendation (WOLA 2010).

²¹ In 2012 The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) released a 95-page report titled "The Judges of Impunity" which named 18 judges it accused of working in the interests of organized crime.

The high level of impunity undoubtedly affects how people experience the threat of violence in the country. According to a recent report, less than 15 percent of Guatemalans have trust in the justice system, while almost 55 percent have little or no faith in the system (UNDP 2013). This is similar to my findings; a large majority of research participants claimed that they had little faith in government institutions to deliver justice.

McSherry and Mejía (1992) characterize three dimensions of impunity: structural-, strategic-, and political/psychological impunity. I particularly find the last dimension useful for my research. The authors argue that political/psychological impunity serves to truncate the aspirations and possibilities imagined by the affected population; if people believe there can be no justice they resign themselves to political realities, adapt, and adjust in order to survive (1992: 14). Impunity, then, serves to perpetuate the reign of terror and silence. Their argument is central to my thesis, as impunity in Guatemala is widespread. The high level of impunity affects how people experience the threat of violence as it is widely recognized that nothing will be done if they report violent incidents.

The omnipresence of violence in “peacetime” Guatemala

One day my friend José told me he had seen an elderly woman shot in the head on his way to work by bus in Guatemala City. The woman had been sitting on the side of the road, holding a piece of clothing full of blood to her head, and was clearly in a state of shock. A few people were standing around her and yelled that she had been shot. I was surprised to hear that an elderly woman had been shot in the head on a busy Guatemala City street in the middle of the day, and was curious to hear what had happened to the woman. José told me that he did not know since the bus had passed shortly after. I was surprised to hear that none of the passengers had gone off the bus to help her. “There was already someone helping her”, José said, and argued that this was something people witnessed every day.

Because it has become so common to witness violent incidents, including roadside bodies (particularly in the capital’s “red” zones), it is considered a part of everyday life in Guatemala. If you are on a bus, the bus is not likely to stop, but continue on its route. Because it has become so normal, people generally mind their own business and go about on their day.

Armed robbery has become a great concern throughout the country. Typically, two men on a motorcycle approach a pedestrian or the driver of a car and demand their cell phones and other belongings. The robberies often turn violent and delinquents holding up drivers at gunpoint have become a common sighting, particularly in the capital.

In “peacetime” Guatemala state-sponsored violence has largely been replaced with new patterns of violence and with over 16 murders per day Guatemala is considered one of the most violent countries in the region (Benson *et al.* 2008; INACIF).²² In fact, there has been a higher rate of killings overall in the time of peace than during the time of war (McNeish and Rivera 2012). There is a generalized perception that crime and violence has increased in the country; “*nowadays you get killed for a cell-phone*”, a friend of mine told me while talking about violence in the country. He had recently witnessed a man being shot in *zona 10*, one of the up-scale zones of Guatemala City, when he refused to give up his cell phone to the robber. Cell phone robbery is one of the most common crimes in Guatemala and is considered a major threat to citizen security. Over 10,000 phones are stolen every month (Corzantes 2013), and many victims get injured or killed during the robberies.

Extortion and murders of public transport workers are an increasing problem in Guatemala. According to Group of Mutual Support (*Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo*, GAM), 87 bus drivers and 53 *ayudantes* (drivers’ assistants) were killed in 2013, in addition to 49 taxi drivers and 68 *tuk-tuk* (auto rickshaw) drivers (Acan-EFE 2014). Extortionists demand a regular payment from the drivers in exchange for their lives. The commonality of violence against transport workers is considered a major concern, and also passengers are frequent victims. Extortions are usually attributed to street-gangs (*pandillas*, or more commonly, *maras*), such as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 (M-18). Illegal activities by *maras* as well as Mexican drug-cartels, in particular the Zetas, have contributed to an increase in violence in the country. These groups carry out violent attacks against rivals and those who defy their control, such as those who refuse to pay extortion money. *Maras* also present a serious threat to women, as rapes, robberies, and murders of women are prevalent within gangs (see for instance *Alma: Hija de la violencia* 2013).

Both the Guatemalan government and non-governmental organizations have highlighted the correlation between the increase in violence against women in the region and the fact that the

²² Benson *et al.* (2008) argue that even in post-war Guatemala politically motivated (and perhaps, state-sanctioned) killings continue and they point to the assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera in 1998 and campaign-related killings in elections: at least 50 during the 2007 elections.

Central American countries have become the principal corridors for transporting drugs into the United States and Europe. In Mexico, which struggles with rates of female killings similar to Guatemala, many of the bodies have been found with the marking “MST” or just “S” carved on the body, the signature of Mara Salvatrucha (Olivera and Furio 2006). However, the authorities frequently categorize all criminal activity, including murders of women, as gang-related. Although much of Guatemala’s violence, both against men and women, can be attributed to gangs, these have become easy scapegoats. With 80 per cent of homicide victims in the country under the age of 30, it has been particularly easy for the Guatemalan government to blame the majority of the violence on the *maras* (McNeish and López Rivera 2009). Menjívar (2008) argues that pointing a finger to the *maras* for everyday crime distracts attention from the structures of violence within which these gangs have flourished, thus making it seem necessary to eliminate them.

Security measures

Increasing gang activity has been the *raison d’être* for *mano dura* or “iron fist” policies. During the 2011 presidential election, Otto Pérez Molina and his conservative *Partido Patriota* (Patriotic Party) won thanks to their promise of a *mano dura* approach to crime in the country. However, despite the party’s promise of taking a hard line on crime in Guatemala, the country has not seen much of an improvement. For instance, the frequent use of motorcycles in robberies and killing bus drivers – victims of extortion – led to revision of the country’s transit law in 2013. Some of the new regulations included obligation to use blaze vest and helmet with license number, in addition to the prohibition to zig-zag between cars, make stops, or approach cars. Although the regulation was designed to lower the rate of motorcycle-related crimes, many Guatemalans have argued that the law will have minimal effect as it overlooks structural problems such as the reasons for increasing level of crime and an abundance of weapons in the country. In addition, critics claim that the law will not reduce traffic-related crimes because of lack of police to enforce it. Benson *et al* (2008) claim that rather than address the root causes of violence, the *mano dura* approach reorganizes violence as something that the state and private security forces can legitimately use to establish a sense of security.

During a presentation of a UNDP Human Development Report in Guatemala in January 2014, it was stated that the *mano dura* approach was failing - not only in Guatemala, but also in other Latin American countries (UNDP 2013). According to the report, the conviction that punishment is the solution to crime; combating crime by stricter sentences,²³ lowering the age of criminal responsibility, and placing more troops on the streets had failed. Instead, the result of this approach is overpopulated prisons where the prisoners will eventually get back to the streets with even more expertise. Guatemala's prisons are notoriously overpopulated and many of them have practically become administrative centers for gangs where they can organize and strategize criminal activities such as extortion and kidnapping. Their near total control of the facilities give them easy access "privileges" such as cellular phones; according to the country's Task Force against Extortion, 60 percent of the extortions are done by gang members from inside the country's prisons (Lara 2013a).

President Pérez Molina has increasingly deployed the military as a part of his *mano dura* policy. Since the beginning of 2012, he has opened at least five new military bases and outposts and has sent soldiers to fight drug cartels, to protect historic sites and nature reserves, and to back up the police during evictions and protests (Alford-Jones 2013). Soldiers have also been deployed en masse to reduce crime in Guatemala City's poorest neighborhoods. However, critics of the remilitarization of Guatemalan society claim that the presence of soldiers is not to provide security for citizens, but to protect the interests of the country's elite. During my fieldwork I noticed that the military presence had increased greatly since last time I was in the country. The large presence of military on the streets serves not only as a reminder of the country's current violence, but of past human rights violations – thus may constitute what a research participant termed "visual violence". Rocío, director of a women's rights organization, argued that the constant presence of the military served as a form of intimidation; a way to control the population without the use of direct, overt threats.

The police force and its limitations

The police are a part of it. They didn't do anything to stop the robberies – the gangs could just roam free as long as they paid off the police. They would just say: "señor,

²³ For instance, as a response to increasing cell-phone robberies the Congress passed a law in September 2013, making cell phone theft punishable from six and up to 15 years prison without possibility of parole.

no pasa nada aquí (sir, nothing is going on here)” and offer them a handshake to give them some money.

This quote is from a woman research participant who had worked at one of Guatemala City’s many produce markets and is similar to many stories I heard while on fieldwork.²⁴ There is a general discontent towards the National Civil Police and a strong majority of the people I talked to are not satisfied with the work they do. I was often told that the fact that police officers make minimum salary, have little training before entering the force, and carry lethal weapons make for a dangerous combination. However, people claimed that the biggest problem was that the police was inefficient; they did not care about stemming violence and crime in the country. During fieldwork I lived close by a police station in Quetzaltenango. After a series of robberies and murders in the streets surrounding the station, one of the neighbors complained to a newspaper that: “People get robbed, assaulted and murdered right under the noses of the police. Illegal acts are committed in plain daylight” (Ventura 2013). Many argued that although violent crime on the same block as the police station should present a great concern to the police, their inaction to stem the violence prove otherwise. The police are often considered not only inefficient, but also highly corrupt. This sentiment is not unreasonable: there are frequent arrests of agents from the National Civil Police as well as much proof of police leadership linked to crime and even drug trafficking. In 2013, over 300 officers were detained for various crimes, including murder, kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and drug-related crimes (AGN 2013). For instance, while I was on fieldwork, six police cadets from the PNC and their instructor were captured while they were trying to rape two underage girls (Prensa Libre 2013a). In addition, sexual abuse of women detainees in police custody and the country’s prisons is common (Artigas 2008; Sieder 2013).

President Pérez Molina often claims that his government has made progress in the security situation in Guatemala, due to the implementation of thousands of new police agents. The National Civil Police was recently increased by 5000 agents so that the country would have 35 000 police agents in 2014. However, Édgar Gutiérrez, director of the Institute of National Problems at the University of San Carlos,²⁵ has argued that the problem with Pérez Molina’s government is that they have increased the number, but not the quality of police agents (Sactic 2014). As a measure to create more faith in the police, the police uniforms were changed from black to blue color in order to generate more trust. According to Guatemala’s Interior

²⁴ I will return to this case in in chapter 4.

²⁵ El Instituto de Problemas Nacionales de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, IPNUSAC.

Minister, Mauricio López Bonilla, the color blue is preferable because black looks intimidating to the public (Monzón 2014). Deputy Minister of Security Edi Juárez Prera claimed that it was a change of image because “blue is a color that comes across less strong [than black] to the public, so it is a color that invokes more confidence” (MINGOB 2012, my translation). However, as with the questionable argument that more police agents will help solve the problem with insecurity in the country, it is hardly the color of the uniforms that generate mistrust among the public – rather the actions (or inactions) of parts of the police force is what generates both mistrust and frustration among Guatemalans.

Alternative measures

Due to high crime rates and a police force that is unable to curtail it, the private security business is increasing in both size and scope. By 2012, it was estimated that the number of private security guards in Guatemala was between 100.000 and 150.000, about five times more than the country’s police officers (Bevan 2012). Heavily armed private guards are present not only in high-end shopping centers and gated communities, but outside fast-food restaurants such as Taco Bell and McDonald’s.²⁶ The highly visible security measures serves as a constant reminder of the prevalence of violence in the country.

As a response to high levels of crime in the country, lynching (*linchamientos* or *justicia por mano propia*) has increased dramatically in recent years. According to the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office there were 47 deaths and 441 injured as a result of lynching by November 2013, thus a double increase in deaths from the year before (Patzán and Sactic 2013). A recent report found that 65 percent of Guatemalans agree with vigilante justice (UNDP 2013), due to the inefficiency of the Guatemalan security force. After contributing to the lynching of an alleged kidnapper and rapist in Quiché, a village elder stated to a reporter:

This matter is now closed, there’s nothing more to say. Justice was done and it’s our business. The only thing I can tell you is that here we take a tough line [*tenemos mano dura*] and we know that the police, human rights and the judges are all corrupt (Sieder 2011: 3).

²⁶ In Antigua, for instance, it is not uncommon to see parked armored SUVs surrounded by numerous suit-clad security guards guarding the whole area either around a restaurant, hotel or a church (in the case of weddings, baptisms, and the like).

The increase in lynchings is often used as an argument for the alleged desensitization of violence in the country, both by the government and by NGOs. Several scholars, however, have argued for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (see for instance Girón 2007; Sieder 2011).

Talk of violence and prevalence of violence in the media

Because of the high prevalence of violence in the country it permeates much of day-to-day conversations and the media. I often felt that violence was an inescapable part of everyday life; not only the constant threat of violence and the precautions one is forced to take in the public sphere (particularly as a woman), but the high prevalence of violence in the media and in day-to-day conversations.

The majority of people I talked to had experienced some form of violence in their life. In addition, people often spoke about indirect experiences of violence – the experiences of friends and acquaintances, thus violence was considered to affect “everybody”. People commented on the increasing level of violence and crime and many felt scared on a daily basis. According to a survey published in *Prensa Libre*, 52 percent of Guatemalans believe that insecurity is the greatest problem that affects the country, even more so than poverty, unemployment and low salaries (Corzantes 2014). Carlos Martínez, an analyst at the Institute of National Problems at the University of San Carlos, claims that people are constantly afraid on the street, whether in public transportation or in private cars: “There is no area of human and social life that is not affected by security. Any field, those who study, work, go out to have fun, and make transits” (Corzantes 2014, my translation).

Violence on the street and on public transportation is considered a serious threat to people’s safety and is a subject frequently discussed. Particularly *asaltos* (assaults, here understood as mugging or robberies) are considered a threat to both men and women’s safety in the public sphere. Most people have personal experiences of, or have family members who have, of being robbed on the street or on buses. Because the threat of violence is constant, precautionary advice is common. Advice about where to go; which street is considered most dangerous; which buses to avoid and which personal belongings to bring while in the public sphere is prevalent in conversations. The first time I was in Guatemala I was often advised to

carry around a small amount of money “in case I got robbed”. I was told that if I carried an amount of money it could prevent that potential robbers would get angry (and thus turn to physical violence). A few times I heard comments from people who thought concern about violence was exaggerated: “*One can’t go around and be afraid all the time,*” a journalist in Quetzaltenango claimed. He was originally from Guatemala City and when I told him about my own concerns about doing fieldwork in his hometown he chuckled and believed I was overly paranoid. Although he recognized that there was much violence in the country, particularly in Guatemala City, he felt that one could not be afraid all the time (ironically, a few weeks later he was robbed of all his belongings on the bus when he was going home for a weekend).

News media

Violence permeates the Guatemalan news, particularly in the so-called “red news” (“*nota roja*”), mainly in the newspaper *Nuestro Diario*. The “red news” is characterized by daily body counts and graphic images of murder victims. Front pages are often covered by images of blood-soaked linens covering bodies on the street. Focusing on women victims, Guatemalan anthropologist Gabriela Torres (2005) has argued that one of the principal means through which fear was generalized during the civil war was the display of images and descriptions in newspapers of cadavers and public assassinations. The constant presence of tortured and violated female bodies began to anesthetize readers; instead of being exceptional, violations against women became common and ultimately normal (Carey Jr. and Torres 2010: 160). The authors argue that the murders of women during the war and today are similar because of the tradition of public display of their violation and the sensational quality attached to re-viewing victims. After several newspapers revealed that the bodies of two girls, ages 6 and 12, were found dumped on a Guatemala City street in January 2013, the director of a human rights group stated in an interview:

We believe that these crimes stem directly from organized crime that seeks to paralyze society through a fear so large that it puts us in a place of becoming used to such brutal crimes, and seeing them as something normal (Romo 2013).

During fieldwork, many research participants pointed to the newsprint media’s role, particularly the “red news”, in contributing to a process of normalization of violence. A

picture of a dead body in Guatemala City and people playing soccer in the background as if nothing has happened, spurred much debate and experts termed it *insensibilidad social* - social insensitivity (Viato 2013). When I asked people what they felt about these kinds of news, I would get mixed responds. Some argued that graphic images of bodies and constant talk of murders and assaults in the newspapers ultimately led to desensitization: “*We’re so used to it [violence] here*”, one woman told me, “*you can just open the newspaper and there it is – everyday.*” Others would argue that the “red news” were a just portrayal of Guatemalan society; this was how violence affected the country, so why hide it?

Fear as a way of life

With extremely high prevalence of violence fear becomes a part of many people’s everyday life. The title of the section of course refers to the accomplished work of anthropologist Linda Green (1999) on Mayan widows in rural Guatemala. One of her main foci is how fear configured women’s lives in the aftermath of war. Her findings evidenced that violence and fear suffused women’s lives, even in post-war Guatemala. Fear is a response to danger, and Green argues that rather than an acute reaction, fear is a chronic condition in Guatemala. Because there is a generalized perception that crime and violence in the country have increased, it is a constant concern in many people’s lives - a concern both for their own lives and those of their loved ones. Thus, fear becomes a part of everyday life. Philip Alston, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, states while referring to Guatemala that:

The killing of women, the execution of selected individuals by elements within the police and military, gang and crime-related killings, social cleansing, and other acts of violence have created a widespread sense of insecurity among the population [...] And the death toll is only the beginning of the cost, for a society that lives in fear of killing is unable to get on with its life and business in the ways that it wants. The rich can protect themselves, up to a point, but the rest of the society lives with the fear that a random killing could affect them or their loved ones at any moment (Alston 2007: 5).

Fear: Mechanism of control

Fear has been used as a way to control the population, not only during the war but also in today's society. Repression, mostly in the form of intimidation through threats or acts of physical violence, continues in Guatemala even after the war (UNDP 2006). Powerful criminal organizations contribute significantly to violence and intimidation in order to sustain their political objectives and economic interests (Peacock and Beltrán 2003; Human Rights Watch 2013). Peacock and Beltrán (2003) claim that illegal armed groups, so-called clandestine groups, in Guatemala do not act on their own but work for members of an interconnected set of powerful Guatemalans. This network constitutes what the authors call the "hidden powers" of the country. Members of these groups include active and retired military personnel and police, private security companies, common criminals, and gang members, while the leaders are believed to be former military officials. The hidden powers protect themselves from prosecution through their political connections, through corruption, and when necessary through intimidation and violence. The report states:

In addition to reaping huge profits, the hidden powers in Guatemala use their connections, with political actors and with the military and police, to intimidate, or even eliminate, those who get in their way, know too much, offer competition, or try to investigate their activities (2003: 6).

Often concealed behind the veil of common crime, the clandestine groups are believed responsible for attacks against human rights advocates²⁷ as well as against journalists, trade union activists, indigenous and peasant leaders, and forensic anthropologists involved in investigations of massacres. During my fieldwork there were numerous threats and attacks against journalists. By September 2013, four journalists had been murdered throughout the year in addition to countless threats and attacks, such as the death threat by a police sub-inspector against two members of the press (Prensa Libre 2013b). UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression, Frank La Rue Lewy, claimed that in 2013 alone there was more aggression towards the press than during the last decade, which marked the beginning of a period of aggression towards those who denounce corruption or who publicly criticize government policies. (Lewy 2013). According to La Rue the major cause of violence towards the press is impunity and he asserts that even worse than claiming that these incidents are

²⁷ The most well-known cases of attacks against human rights advocates are the murder of anthropologist Myrna Mack Chang in 1990 and Monsignor Juan José Gerardi Conedera in 1998.

results of common crime is the fact that there is a clear lack of interest from the government in initiating investigations.

Several forensic anthropologists, who have assisted in excavations of mass graves from the war or testified in trials of former military officials, have received death threats (see for instance *Granito: How to nail a dictator* 2011; Amnesty International 2011). The legal organization mentioned previously, which represented female victims of sexual slavery during the civil war, claimed that several of the women had received threats. In addition, the women's rights organizations I interviewed during fieldwork, even a Public Ministry Women's Office, had experienced threats and acts of intimidation. Threats towards women's rights activists are not uncommon: In 2001, a group of armed men entered the offices of a women's rights organization in Guatemala City and beat and raped the women (Sanford 2008).

Discussing the commonality of intimidation through threats or acts of physical violence is central to my subject, as it greatly contributes to people's fear. It is commonly understood that speaking your mind in Guatemala is a dangerous endeavor and threats and violence is a way to stop people from pushing for justice. This relates to what Zur (1994) calls the psychological impact of impunity. She claims that fear, suspicion and paranoia not only result from impunity but are the psychological mechanisms which help to maintain it (1994: 13). For instance, witnesses of atrocity and relatives of victims are afraid of making accusations due to the risk of their own personal safety.

Robin's (2004) perspective of political fear is relevant to my thesis. He sees political fear as a political tool, deriving from forces in society that have much to gain from fear. It is an instrument of elite rule who gains something from it, either because fear helps them to pursue a specific political goal, or because it reflects and lends support to their moral and political beliefs. This is similar to Altheide's argument that "fear does not just happen; it is socially constructed and then manipulated by those who seek to benefit" (Altheide 2002 in Furedi 2007: 2). I particularly find Robin's second mode of political fear useful.²⁸ This fear arises from the social, political, and economic hierarchies that divide a people: "[I]ts specific purpose or function is internal intimidation, to use sanctions, or the threat of sanctions to

²⁸ His first mode is how political leaders identify a common threat to the population's well-being, then interpret the nature and origins of that threat and propose methods for meeting. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, I find this mode similar to how the Guatemalan government has used increased gang-activity as the *raison d'être* for implementation of *mano dura* policies.

ensure that one group retains or augments its power at the expense of another” (Robin 2004: 19). However, it is not necessary to make threats or overt acts of coercion in order to arouse fear:

[F]ear can, and usually does, hover quietly about the relationship between the powerful and the powerless, *subtly influencing everyday conduct* without requiring much in the way of active intimidation (2004: 19, my emphasis).

This can be related to Green’s (1999) contention that silencing is a powerful mechanism of control enforced through fear in Guatemala.

Fear and non-intervention

I often heard stories of people failing to interfere (and potentially impede) violent acts and many would attribute this to apathy; people simply did not care about what happened to others. Although violence has become a part of everyday life, my observations show that many people are not merely indifferent, but afraid to interfere. Often people do not want to get involved in violent incidents, even if it involves helping out a victim. The quote from David, in the beginning of the chapter, illustrates my point. During a robbery on an urban bus, the perpetrators had sexually harassed and touched female passengers on the bus, as well as robbing the majority of the passengers at gunpoint.²⁹ When I asked David if the other passengers had interfered, he responded that nobody had done anything:

People are usually quiet when these things happen - they know that the robbers won't hesitate to shoot. One older lady was crying loudly and screaming for God, but the others were quiet. We're programmed to not do anything, you know, because this happens so often.

Also another case during fieldwork illustrates how many people avoid interfering because of fear. One night after coming out of a salsa club, a group of my friends and I (two men and two women) decided to take a taxi home. Nancy, a local salsa teacher who worked at the club, always took a taxi home even though she just lived about five blocks from the club. She said she never walks home anymore – Antigua has become too dangerous at night. A motorcycle with two men approached us and continued to drive in a slow speed past us, clearly observing

²⁹ I elaborate on this specific case in chapter four.

us. We all thought the same – they were looking for people to rob, but none of us said anything. The man in the back of the motorcycle put on his hoodie and we figured they were going to stop to rob us, yet they continued around the corner. When we were finally in the taxi and on the way home we saw a police patrol and asked the taxi driver to stop so we could inform them about the (presumed) robbers. However, the driver was reluctant to stop. After pressuring him to stop the car, we asked the police to have an eye out for the motorcycle and we continued to drive home. Only a few blocks later we saw the motorcycle parked and the two guys robbing two men on the street. We told the taxi driver to honk the car horn to scare the robbers off. The taxi driver refused to do that and said: “*In Antigua it’s illegal to honk*”, referring to the law that prohibits honking in the city. Even after arguing that this was an exception and that we had to help the victims, would he honk. When we shortly after passed a police patrol we asked him again to honk, or at least to flash the lights in order to warn them. The driver refused to do so. “*No hay que meterse*”, he said (“one should not get involved”). We kept pushing him to signal the passing police patrol, yet he refused to do so.

Conclusion to the chapter

In this first chapter I have shown how violence permeates Guatemalan society. It has served as an introduction to my subject, as increasing violence against women is directly linked to the increasing rate of general violence in the country. However, as the next chapters will show, various forms of violence against women have been particularly normalized. This has affected not only the type of violence women experience, how the violence is regarded and the way their cases are treated in the criminal-justice system, but how women need to manage the threat of violence.

Chapter 2:

Gender relations and violence

It has become axiomatic to say that violence against women in Guatemala is linked to gender inequalities. The majority of my research participants attributed violence against women to machismo and an entrenched patriarchic system; this is thus a subject in need of elaboration. This following chapter explores gender inequalities in Guatemala, focusing on machismo, patriarchy, and the ideal of the “good woman”.

The “good woman”

Anthropologists who began to focus on women in the 1970s were primarily concerned with explaining women’s universal subordination to men (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Merry 2009). However, many have argued that it is problematic to talk about a universal subordination of women (see for instance di Leonardi 1991; Leacock 2008). It is equally problematic to talk about one over-arching conception of “Latin-American gender” (Melhuus and Stølen 1996). Even within Guatemala there is great cultural diversity, and it is thus problematic to conceptualize gender relations as something static and all-embracing. However, as Stølen (1996) has highlighted, the power of gender ideas and stereotypes is not just in people’s minds, but that they have a material reality. She argues that the gender discourses that are rooted in Catholic beliefs and practices are particularly powerful in contexts where the Catholic Church is the most important producer and transmitter of gender ideology. The term *marianismo* depicts women in light of the Virgin Mary as semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men (Stevens 1973). It refers to the ideal of women as modest, virtuous, and sexually abstinent until marriage—and then being faithful and subordinate to their husbands: “Good” women do not enjoy coitus, but endure it when the duties of matrimony require it (Stevens 1973: 96). This contrast between women’s “good” and “bad” sexual behaviors is often referred to as the Madonna/Whore complex (or duality). Further, the distinction between *casa* (house) and *calle* (street) has been a fundamental aspect

in Latin American notions of female morality. Franco (1999) has demonstrated that the very structure of the Hispanic house emphasized that it was a private world, shut off from public activity. Respectable and honorable women only emerged from the house when accompanied and when necessary. In Guatemala in the past, the Civil Code allowed men to restrict their wives' activities outside the home:

The husband can oppose the wife's dedication to activities outside the home, as long as he supplies what is necessary for the support of the same. . . . Once procreation starts with the birth of the first child, the woman must understand that her mission is in the home, and except for very special circumstances she must not neglect her children under the pretext of personal necessities or the desire to aid her husband (Código Civil Dto. Ley 106, Artículo 114, cited in Smith 1995: 736).

The association of the woman with the house in Guatemala is closely related to the man's proscribed role as the provider and authority figure of the household (Ystanes 2011). Patriarchy refers to family and societal arrangements in which men exercise predominant power (Merry 2009). A common notion of patriarchy is male dominance over women, sometimes through violence. Patriarchal dominance is also expressed through the idea that women are the keepers of men's honor while men are the guardians of women's virtue (Melhuus 1996). Although it is too simple to imply a causal relationship between patriarchy and violence against women, I argue that the wide-spread belief that men have the right to control their wives through violence or fear of violence contributes to a normalization of violence against women in Guatemala.

The term patriarchy has been criticized for paying little attention to historical change and cultural differences; such as the relative social position of some men; or for assuming that women lack agency or that all women are subjected to inequality in male/female relationships in the same way. Despite criticism, particularly feminist researchers have argued that it is impossible to understand, let alone theorize, women's oppression without the concept. Kelly (1988) argues that criticisms of particular formulations, or specific uses of the concept, do not invalidate the concept itself.

Ystanes (2011) has showed that the dichotomy *casa/calle* is still relevant in Guatemala today and involves notions of morality, intimacy, economic activities, responsibilities and trust. Being an *ama de casa* (housewife) is still largely considered a virtue and does not only imply

a sexual division of work (where men work outside the home and women within), but also control of women's sexuality. Stølen (1996) found that female domesticity is highly valued as it protects women from the exposure to carnal temptations. In her case study from Argentina she shows that "*ser casera*" (to be of the home) not only refers to a woman's ability as mother and wife, but that it also says something about a woman's moral qualities, about her chastity and respectability. In Guatemala, women's honor is primarily based on sexual conduct (England 2013). Girls ideally remain virgins until marriage and when married they stay at home and raise children, while the man will act as provider and head of household. However, as Ehlers (1991) has pointed out, what is true for middle-class women (that they are discouraged from working and exclusively identified with the home) is not the case for millions of poor women in Guatemala for whom work is a necessity.

Ideal vs real

Stølen (1996) highlights the importance of exploring the links between the represented and the lived in order to understand the power of gender discourses. In Guatemala, as in other Latin-American societies, there is often a disconnection between the ideal and the real; the ideal gender roles and expectations versus how people *really* live. Today, female-headed households are not uncommon and being a single mother does not carry the same stigma as before. I had several friends - from various economic strata - who were single-mothers and this was not considered a major concern for the women or for their families. Although sexual chastity is still a virtue in Guatemala, it is increasingly common to have more sexual partners and not all women are considered "bad" women or "sluts" exclusively based on their sexual history. This resembles what Nencel (1996) observed in her case study from Peru, where she demonstrates that the sexuality of the "good woman" is not as fixed as commonly perceived. The sexuality of the ideal woman, the *chica de su casa* ("girls of the house"), was perceived positively by men, thus conflicts with the discursive gender notions which portray the "good woman" as asexual and virginal. Here, the dichotomy between the good woman (asexual, passive) and the bad woman (sexually active) is too simplistic.

Also McCallum argues that women experience a tension between two poles in the constitution of female gender, represented by house and street; no woman is just a mother or just a whore (1999: 287). She demonstrates how modernity is equated with a loss of social control over

female sexuality and reproduction in Brazil. She found that metaphors for female sexual behavior were largely spatial: *sair de casa* (leave home/the house) was a euphemism for loss of virginity, hidden love affairs and disobedience of the parents and especially the father (1999: 280). She then risked being called *mulher da vida* (“woman of the life, prostitute”) since she was no longer associated with the house; she was “of the street”. She claims that although control of female sexuality is discursively located in the past, a striking aspect of contemporary social relations is the pressure on women and girls to control themselves sexually, psychologically and spatially:

The idea that women were once controlled and once upon a time respected thus has a mythic function: it works to generate a morally loaded conceptual framework within which to think about gender in a totalising fashion, and to act upon gendered bodies and their movements. It is one way of giving form to gender ideology and thereby of exercising social control over certain categories of people (1999: 287).

This pressure on women to be contained takes place at many levels, such as in friction between parents and teenage children and in violence between husband and wife. She maintains that talk about women’s sexuality serves as a brake upon pressure for change instead of a transformation in the gender system.

Machismo

As with patriarchy, the term machismo is considered an all-embracing concept referring to women’s subordination. The term refers to a set of attitudes, behaviors, and practices that characterize men, such as physical courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness. Exploring the masculine ideology in Puerto Rico, Rafael L. Ramírez (1999: 45-46) writes:

He [the macho] pursues, punishes, repudiates, or devalues those women who reject him or pay no attention to his demands. Some men beat and sometimes even kill this last type of women. Sexual harassment and violence against women are evidence of this orientation toward conquest and the use of sexuality in its aggressive articulation of power and pleasure.

Machismo is far from a static phenomenon and it varies in different contexts and over time. In addition, the term has been heavily contested. Ramirez (1999) critiques early approaches to machismo and makes a point against pre-existing stereotypes of machismo as a trait among lower-class Latin-American men. Also Gutmann (1996) argues against the portrayal of working-class men as womanizing, hard-drinking, violent machos. In his case study from a low-income area of Mexico City, he argues that masculinity is not static but continually contested. However, I found that people often referred to the stereotypical (and often idealized) macho man while talking about violence against women. While talking to María, a woman in her forties who had suffered domestic violence, and her brother Marlon, they claimed that the old, well-known Mexican movies were partly to blame. The movies from around 1936 to 1969, the so-called golden age of Mexican cinema (*Época de oro del cine mexicano*), are very popular in Guatemala. “A lot of machismo comes from those movies”, Marlon argued: “Pistolas, tequila y mujeres – guns, tequila and women – that’s what they are about.” He claimed that the drunk, jealous, womanizer is idealized and that the movies are of cultural importance even today. I heard references to this type of movies several times during discussions about violence against women.

Sexual virility is thus considered one of the main components of machismo. In Guatemala it is not uncommon that men have two or more families; a wife and her children and another woman and hers. This was something I noticed first time I was in Guatemala, as both my host-father and several of the men in the neighborhood had more than one woman and children outside of marriage. This is relevant to my work because several of my research participants who had been victims of domestic violence claimed that their husbands had turned violent because they wanted to “get rid of them”, as they had found new partners. Also McCallum (1999) found that nearly every family in Salvador da Bahia, a Brazilian community where she did fieldwork, told a story about a male member who had two or more families. Yet as in the Brazilian case, Guatemalan women are not solely passive agents. Several of my female friends and research participants were themselves involved with married men. In addition, women were also considered adulterous. However, my findings are similar to those of McCallum, who found that men’s sexuality was considered unchanged, while women were considered looser than “in olden times”.

Following Gutmann's (1996) urge to consider masculinity as a dynamic process, women's (assumed) natural subordination must be seen as equally dynamic.³⁰ While recognizing the problem of using the over-arching term machismo in reference to an entire society, it is relevant because women themselves attributed violence against women to machismo. When I talked to women - from various economic strata - about violence against women most of them claimed that it all starts in the home; it was commonly understood that machismo fostered much violence against women, particularly domestic violence. When I asked research participants what they considered machismo to be, they would refer to the belief that women are inferior. Male aggression and sexual virility were traits they commonly perceived as attributes of a *machista*.³¹ The majority of my research participants claimed that physical violence was a main component of machismo and machismo was considered the root of the high level of violence against women.³² In addition, many believed that if children grew up in a family dynamic where the father drank excessively and used violence against his wife and children - traits the majority of women considered characteristics of machismo - there was a high probability that the children would themselves become victims and victimizers. Thus, women often stated that "it all starts in the home". However, it is important to mention that machismo does not merely refer to direct, physical violence. Guatemalan sociologist Ana Silvia Monzón states:

Although violence is the most evident expression of machismo, there are a series of subtle attitudes which subordinate women and assign them a secondary status, which also originate from "male superiority" and have caused more harm to women than physical abuse (Monzón 1988 in Nencel 1996: 56).

Doña Tula, an elderly woman from Antigua, claimed that her husband had been a *machista*, but had never been physically abusive towards her. However, she did recognize violence as a component of machismo, thus she felt that her husband had been an exception to the rule.

³⁰ Butler (1990) proposes the concept performativity; she argues that gender, sex and sexuality are performed repetitively and in doing so become naturalized. For Butler, then, gender is not static but a social construction. From a performative perspective, women "do" gender by putting up with violence without complaint, calling it deserved or treating it as inevitable (Merry 2009).

³¹ The term *machista* derives from the concept machismo and can be roughly translated as male chauvinist.

³² Several women also referred to high alcohol consumption (and drugs to smaller extent) as a reason for domestic violence. Although alcohol and drugs can never be blamed for violence, it undoubtedly affects it. The majority of women claimed that their husbands were most violent towards them and their children when they were intoxicated.

When I asked her why she thought there was such a high level of violence against women, it was “*because of the culture,*” she claimed: “*Moms say that the girls have to serve the men. My husband was like that too –if he wanted a glass of water, he expected to be served by me or our daughters. They’re the ones in charge, women have to obey.*”

Doña Tula argued that although her husband had never been physically violent towards her, he had become aggressive if he did not “get his way” and claimed that although her husband had not physically abused her, several of her friends had experienced violence if they had failed to accommodate to their husband’s needs.

Financial dependency

Ehlers (1991), aiming at debunking marianismo, claims that women’s behavior vis-à-vis men, is not merely a complement to machismo, as often maintained (see for instance Stevens 1973), but a survival strategy. She argues that due to the nature of patriarchal society in Guatemala, the sexual division of labor excludes women from income-producing activities, giving them no choice but to accept irresponsible male behavior. This is similar to what Gabriela, a gym-owner in her early forties, told me. She believed the reason for the high rates of domestic violence was due to women’s financial dependence on men: “*If they don’t work and make their own money, they can’t leave even if their husbands beat them,*” she explained. If their husbands are abusive, they might not have the choice to leave unless they have families who can support them. In the residential area in Quetzaltenango where she lived all her women neighbors were housewives, yet she did not interact much with them. That women chose to be financially dependent on their husbands upset her, because she knew of several women who had been abused by their husbands but had chosen to stay because of lack of opportunities. That was why she had her gym, she told me - to have more opportunities. Gabriela believed that financial dependence on men enabled vulnerability towards physical violence. The cultural ideal of the man as the sole breadwinner, the sexual division of labor, and inequalities within the labor market effectively fosters women’s economic dependence on men. The majority of research participants claimed that their husbands had not accepted that their wives worked, even when the family was struggling with making ends meet.

Change in gender power relations

Olivera and Furio (2006) have analyzed some of the structural causes of recent violence against women in Mexico, which is claimed to be closely linked to the failure of the neoliberal system. The authors claim that the widespread poverty that results from neo-liberal policies has forced women to join the labor market under unequal and vulnerable conditions. This massive integration of women into the labor market has destroyed the traditional model of sexual division of labor and thus challenged the collective imagery that women are dependent on men. They maintain: “In this climate, men are driven to hypermasculinity, exaggerating the violent, authoritarian, aggressive aspects of male identity in an attempt to preserve that identity” (2006: 106). Olivera and Furio’s contention that changes in the global economy have altered traditional gender relations, thus leading to increased violence against women, is similar to that of Bourgois (1996). He asserts that there has been a crisis in traditional working-class patriarchy as a result of these changes: “Marginalized men lash out against the women and children they can no longer support economically nor control patriarchally” (1996: 412).

The argument that increased participation in the workforce, particularly if women’s income is greater than their spouses, may create a climate of insecurity can be translated to the Guatemalan context. Women often expressed frustration because their spouses did not approve of them working. However, the main reason was not because of the income (even if the income was greater than that of their spouses), rather because of *celos* – jealousy. Some of the women were frequently accused of cheating while working outside the home. Julia, who had been victim of domestic violence, found that her husband had become increasingly violent after she had started working. She had started selling *refacciones* (mid-day snacks) to the students at her children’s school. One day her husband had seen her talking to a man at campus and became furious and aggressive towards her. Julia explained that she had not been able to reason with him and that he had refused to believe her explanation that he was the school’s principal, thus her employer, and not a suitor. Although their family depended on the income of both Julia and her husband, and her husband had no objections to her working, he did not approve of her interacting with other men – even if it was her employer. A working woman – being public – potentially makes herself available to other men (Melhuus 1996).

Jealousy

As we saw in the example of the popular Mexican movies, machismo often includes male jealousy which is seen as a sign of true love. Ystanes found that in Guatemala, jealousy is not necessarily discouraged and may have positive aspects. One woman explained: “If your boyfriend is jealous it’s a compliment, it means that you are important to him” (2011: 214). However, jealousy can easily turn into violence, I was told, and was one of the main reasons for violence in intimate relationships. Jenifer, 34, told me:

It [the violence] started early. He was so nice to me the first two months, but then it all started. He would ask why I dressed nice, who I tried to look nice for. I said “nobody” – I just liked to look nice, you know. He threatened me that he wouldn’t give me any money for clothes, and he didn’t. He took away all my clothes and didn’t give me any money to buy new. You should’ve seen the clothes I had to wear! I wasn’t allowed to leave the house or anything, because of jealousy (por los celos).

This is similar to numerous stories I heard during fieldwork. Many women considered jealousy a main reason for why men turned to violence. In addition, jealousy in intimate relationships greatly inhibited women’s life opportunities; many of the women I talked to were not allowed to work outside the home because of potential interaction with other men, as we saw in the case of Julia. During a group therapy session at the Wayak’ shelter the younger women were asked what they thought about going back to school and achieve an education even though they had children. Lilian, 18, claimed that it depends whether you have a husband or not: “*If you have a husband it is more difficult, because they don’t let you study because you will be around other guys,*” she claimed. “*The fact that I have a kid doesn’t make it difficult to study – you can leave the kid with your mom or your family when you go to school.*” The majority of the young women did not see having children as an obstacle to achieving education, rather having jealous partners.

Conclusion to the chapter

It is important to note that women are not merely passive agents in gender discourses and I was often reminded while on fieldwork that “*women too are machistas.*” However, this does

not mean that women condone violence; no woman is ever to blame for the violence against her. But the ideal of the macho man, for instance, is maintained by both men and women. Stølen (1996) has rightfully claimed that gender ideas and stereotypes are not just in people's minds but that they have a material reality. However, does it also reflect how the State views and treats violence against women - can one point to gender inequalities and expectations for the unwillingness to resolve cases of violence? According to Stølen, Catholic gender values also penetrate other institutions of civil society, such as the legal system, the educational system and, to a certain extent, the media. In the following chapter we will see how gender ideology in Guatemala has contributed to normalization and, to a large degree, societal acceptance of much violence against women.

Chapter 3:

***“He probably just had a bad day”*: Normalization of violence against women**

Hegemonic epistemologies of violence become not only normalized but accepted as common sense, and this makes challenging them all the more difficult (Hume 2008: 63).

In the previous chapter I explored gender relations and expectations in Guatemala. In this chapter I argue that gender inequalities have facilitated a normalization of violence against women. Much literature on violence against women tends to distinguish between violence in the public and private sphere. My findings, however, show that they are intertwined in many ways, due to normalization of violence in both spheres.

I argue that laws designed to protect women have been inadequate because violence has been normalized, not only by the public but by the criminal-justice system. Violence against women who transgress gender norms has been particularly legitimized. In addition, I maintain that mainly poor and indigenous women have not been considered “worthy” victims, thus violence against them has been particularly legitimized.

I stress the importance of understanding the processes by which violence is excused or condoned, yet I do not imply that all Guatemalans tolerate and accept violence against women. However, I follow Lundgren’s (2012 [1993]) contention that neither perpetrators nor victims represent individual deviations, but that under the process of normalization both actors follow certain cultural norms. Thus, in order to understand the process of normalization of violence and internalization, we must understand the cultural roots regarding gender and sexuality.³³

³³ In a similar vein, Hume (2004; 2008) explores how hegemonic epistemologies of violence become not only normalized, but accepted as common-sense. Hume draws on Gramsci, whose concept of “hegemony” refers to

Sexual violence

Sexual violence was a subject that almost seemed unavoidable during fieldwork. Stories of sexual violence emerged both when talking to women about potential dangers in the street and about domestic violence. The majority of young women at the Wayak' shelter had been victims of sexual violence, mainly incest. In addition, this type of violence has been a recurrent subject in the numerous testimonies of victims of war during ongoing trials. Boesten (2010b), writing about wartime sexual violence in Peru, urges the linking of different rape regimes in wartime to peacetime gender inequality and violence against women. She argues that it must not be seen as a deviation or an exception, but an exacerbation of existing forms of violence and gender and racial inequalities:³⁴

Observing a continuum – a continuity and affinity in the use of violence rather than rupture and exceptionality – forces us to examine the underpinning norms, values and institutional structures that normalize certain violences and exceptionalize others (2010b: 113).

Historically, the violation of women's bodies has been a virtually normative practice in Guatemala (Forster 1999; Godoy-Paiz 2008) and we saw in chapter 1 that rape during the almost 40-year-long internal conflict was extremely prevalent. In the past, Guatemalan indigenous women were to be impregnated but never legally married to whiter men as a form of "racial improvement:" "A fact admitted by the entire community...is the right of sexual access and the fact of rape that plantation owners exercise over the indigenous women on their *fincas* [holdings]" (Casaús Arzú 1992 in Nelson 1999: 221-2). Nelson argues that indigenous women are by ladinos considered very sexually aggressive and "this projection of desire and aggression onto indigenous women allows ladino men to rape them and allows that rape to be described as desired by the woman [...] (1999: 226). This view is sometimes reflected in popular discourse, for instance in the widely popular Guatemalan jokes called *Chistes de Velorio*. In one of the jokes, rape of an indigenous girl is being portrayed as something desired: Ten soldiers rape the young girl³⁵ and when they are done, they come out

the way the dominant class represents its interests in such a way that they are accepted as "natural" or "common sense" by society.

³⁴ This is salient not only for rape during conflicts, but other forms of violence as well. See for instance Taylor (1999) and Broch-Due (2005).

³⁵ The comedian refers to the indigenous girl in a racist manner; "*indita*", meaning «little Indian» (*india* means female Indian and *-ita* is the diminutive suffix).

one by one zipping up their pants. The lieutenant asks what is going on and the indigenous girl comes out wounded and asks: “Does anybody want to repeat?”³⁶

Today, sexual violence continues to be a major problem in Guatemala. In 2013, there were 5,832 registered cases of sexual violence, a 47 percent increase from the previous year (Mejía 2014). Although high, the number is most likely much higher due to under-reporting. There has been a steady increase in cases of sexual violence in Guatemala: Guatemala’s human rights prosecutor’s office state that rapes and sexual assaults of women increased by 34 percent from 2008 to 2011, while in nine of every ten of these cases, those responsible are not punished (Human Rights Watch 2013).³⁷ The majority of victims are between 12 and 30 years old (MSF 2009) and almost on a daily basis can one read about rape of children as young as a few years in the Guatemalan news media. Article 200 of the 1973 Penal Code established that criminal responsibility for rape could be waived if the victim was over 12 years old and the perpetrator agreed to marry the victim (Godoy-Paiz 2008). This law was not suspended until 2006. Forster (1999: 71) argues that rape was defined as “male violence against women who belong to other men”, thus rape of your “own” women were not considered rape.

Sexuality and self-control

During a previous trip to Guatemala a friend of mine was raped. After a long night of drinking at a local bar, she had been walked home by a mutual friend of ours, when he had forced himself into her apartment and raped her. She had been very drunk, I was told, and she could barely stand up straight when they had left the bar. Completely in shock by the recent event I told Luis, an acquaintance of mine, what had happened while we were talking about how dangerous Antigua had gotten. “No, I really doubt it,” he said, when I told him she had been raped. “She slept with José [another mutual friend of ours] last weekend!” I asked him what that had to do with anything. “She’s such a slut – she’s always getting drunk and sleeping with anybody,” he responded. He did not recognize the rape as such because she was in his opinion a “slut.”

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgJduMpg66U>. My translation.

³⁷ In addition, trafficking of women and children is a major – and largely undocumented – problem in Guatemala. Particularly indigenous and poor women and girls are victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking (PDH 2012).

Although this incident did not happen during fieldwork I find the case illustrative of how many people consider violent acts against women who transgress physical and moral boundaries. In this case, the rape of my friend was not recognized as rape because she had a reputation for being promiscuous. In addition, she commonly went to bars and consumed alcohol, a behavior divergent from the local ideal of a “good woman.”

Men often draw upon a repertoire of gendered codes to legitimize their violence and enforce social notions of “appropriate” behavior for women (Hume 2008: 67). I showed in the previous chapter that the distinction between *casa* (house) and *calle* (street) has been a fundamental aspect in Latin American notions of female morality. In Guatemala, female victims of violence are often blamed because they put themselves in that situation, either by challenging the ideal of moral behavior; by their dress code; or by venturing outside the protection of the home. This is often implicit in conversations, even when it is not uttered. While talking to Doña Luisa, a retired teacher in Antigua, about the increasing rate of violence in the city, she mentioned how women who dress provocatively can easily fall victims of violence. “*Hay que protegerse*” (one must protect oneself) she told me, and claimed that if women dress in short skirts men “*will want to touch them.*” This was a comment I often heard, which put much of the blame on the women: If they dress provocatively, men “*will want to touch them.*” This view that women could consciously avoid falling victims for sexualized violence by dressing more modestly, was often mentioned in regards to *extranjeras* (female foreigners). People often reasoned violence towards *extranjeras* to their way of dressing as well as their behavior, as in the above excerpt (my friend who was raped was a foreigner). Many foreigners traveling to Guatemala are drawn to the large selection of bars and access to inexpensive alcohol. Diverging from the local virtue of female behavior, many *extranjeras* have a more liberal approach to partying, consuming alcohol, and approaching the opposite sex. Thus, I often heard people argue that it was not surprising that they became victims of sexualized violence due to their behavior and way of dressing. However, the argument by causation that women’s dressing may lead to sexual violence is not exclusive to foreigners. Blaming women for sexual violence against them due to the way they dressed themselves, was something I frequently came across in the media. When an online newspaper revealed the registration of 20 rapes in two months of victims in the age of nine to 16, many people commented in social media. Although the majority denounced rape of minors, many commentators pointed to violence as a consequence of females’ dress code and behavior in the public space. One man argued:

In our society there are many women who dress very provocatively, that awakes a violent and aggressive impulse in people, and...before pointing any fingers towards who's to blame, we must weigh up the crimes.³⁸

This quote illustrates clearly that women are considered to spur a “violent and “aggressive impulse” in men by dressing in a certain way, thus they must be equally to blame (as the perpetrators) for violence against them. Blaming women based on morality is not limited to the Guatemalan context. In a study of gender-based violence among a group of Puerto Rican adolescents, Asencio (1999) describe how young men, through the use of gender-based social constructs such as “machos” and “sluts,” justify violence by linking it to beliefs about gender roles, sexuality, and biology. Punishment for “slutty” behavior in females ranged from verbal abuse to physical abuse. In this environment, otherwise socially unacceptable behaviors, such as sexual harassment, lying, physical abuse, and even rape, were justified if a girl was considered “loose.” The majority of males in the study stated that once a female was identified as accessible, “anything goes.” As in the excerpt from the incident of the rape of my friend in the beginning of the chapter, it is clear that Luis did not classify the event as rape because he identified her as a “slut”. Thus, because she enjoyed going to bars and consuming alcohol, in addition to having relationships with men, Luis did not consider the incident as rape.

As we have seen, women's sexuality is a great source of ambiguity. This ambiguity is not only seen in dominant gender discourse, but in popular media. In Guatemala, as in other Latin-American societies, the image of the treacherous woman is prevalent in both the widely popular *telenovelas* (soap operas) and in music. Ystanes (2011) points out that in Guatemala numerous songs of all genres (sung by men) commonly deal with the image of the treacherous woman. Female infidelity in intimate relationships is often seen as a legitimate reason for violence. Asencio (1999) also found that female infidelity in Puerto Rico - a behavior associated with being a “slut” - provided the greatest justification for physical violence. In a case during fieldwork, a woman was held captive and sexually abused and tortured for five days in a cave in Guatemala City by her ex-partner (Valdez 2013a). In his defense, he had tortured his former girlfriend because he was jealous because she had decided to leave him and had found another partner. While torturing her in front of her son (who was brought to the cave by the man), he repeatedly stated: “This is how you treat women. You don't bury them,

³⁸ As mentioned in the introductory chapter, due to the changing nature of online social media, some of the quotes are not cited.

you kill them and throw them in a river, just like with the dogs” (Valdez 2013a, my translation). This is similar to the case of Mindy Rodas, a woman whom had parts of her face cut off by her ex-husband when she professed to him that she did not want to reestablish a romantic relationship with him (LA Ruta 2010). Although it can be argued that these cases are nothing more than the result of pathological behavior, I find that they are too common to merely be attributed to individual pathologies. Due to notions of honor and respectability, women’s sexuality is often used as an explanation for legitimate use of discipline.

Being where they are not supposed to be

As we have seen, it is a common view that women themselves are at fault for becoming victims of violence, partly because they put themselves in that situation by venturing outside the protection of the home. We have seen that the street represents both moral and physical danger and norms about “appropriate” places for women to be are reinforced by the fear and actuality of male violence. I often found that people rationalized violence against women by the victims’ transgression of boundaries: Violence affected them because they hang out on the street - *andan en la calle*. Implied here is not only a transgression of physical boundaries, but of moral ones: “Hanging out on the street” is usually understood as interacting, flirting, and establishing intimate relationships with the opposite sex. This view is reflected in commentaries in social networks, in news media, and in conversations. In a social media discussion about the country’s increasing rate of femicides, a man commented: “*One can’t ignore that the majority of them [the female victims] are where they decided to be.*”³⁹ In this lies that if the woman knew the perpetrator – a result of hanging out on the street and having intimate relationships with men – the violence against her comes as no surprise. Thus, the blame must lie with the woman as well. Bourgois (1996) found a similar view among Puerto Rican immigrants in New York. Men operated with a dichotomy between worthy and unworthy rape victims, based on who “hung out” in the street. One man explained: “I mean look at their attitude; if they hang out too long, believe me, then they know what’s happening. If the girl is gonna hang then she’s gonna get fucked” (1996: 423).

39

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151947069153149&set=a.371517728148.156062.345419408148&type=1>.

Sexual violence on the street, particularly harassment and grabbing, is a common occurrence in Guatemala and something many women fear daily. While talking to Hilda, a woman in her late thirties, about her experiences living in Guatemala City, she told me that she was constantly afraid. She would hear about violent incidents against women every day, and she had herself experienced sexual violence:

Five or six months ago I went out to get plantains because my kid wanted them. The store is just a few blocks from here. A truck drove by and stopped close to me. There were three guys in the truck and two of them came out of the car. They grabbed me all over and didn't let me leave. I was so scared, but couldn't do anything."

I asked Hilda if she had reported the incident and she laughed and told me that reporting does not solve anything – the police will not do anything about it. When I asked her why she thought such incidents happened on a regular basis, she claimed it was due to lack of respect for women. Sexual violence was extremely common, Hilda claimed; therefore women just have to find a way to live with it. She did not feel motivated to report the incident, because she did not believe that would lead to anything. Instead, she acknowledged the problem as simply a part of everyday life. This was something women often told me. Alberta, a woman in her late thirties from Quetzaltenango, explained to me that women are expected to accept sexual harassment on the street. She told me:

When I was younger, I was going to a party with my dad and I was wearing a nice dress. A kid (patojo) approached me and grabbed my butt. I told my dad but he didn't stand up for me – he just told me to keep walking.

This is consistent to Ystanes' (2011) findings from Guatemala. She claimed that sexual harassment was a taken-for-granted part of day-to-day existence. A woman from Flores explained to her:

This place is very small and everybody knows who everyone is. And even if the whole island knows that I'm married they don't care; they keep shouting after me and making [obscene] gestures (ibid: 252).

As a woman in Guatemala, both as fieldworker and tourist, I have myself experienced various unwelcomed sexual incidents, such as profane remarks, being followed in the street by men, and being grabbed. I find the concept of "sexual access" useful in reference to sexual violence in Guatemala. The concept, as used by feminist theorists, refers to the range of processes

through which women are defined as sexual objects available to men (Kelly 1988). Men assume sexual access to unfamiliar women by making sexual approaches or remarks and the extreme form is sexual assault or rape by strangers. The second context in which the concept is used is within intimate relationships. Here the focus is the assumed rights of men to sexual access with wives and lovers, and in some cases, to daughters. Sexual violence in intimate relationships or against children is difficult to document, particularly in societies where extremely high value is placed on virginity. Sexual violence in intimate relationships, or against children, was not a focus of my research. However, it was a subject that was difficult to escape, as most of the women and girls at the Wayak' shelter had been victims of sexual violence by spouses or parents, respectively. Thus, sexual violence is not something that only happens in the public sphere. As the director of a women's rights organization put it: "*The home is much more dangerous to women than the street.*"

Domestic violence

My mom did nothing when my dad raped me, she even saw us. He hit my mom too, but she didn't do anything about it (Modesta, 16, victim of incest).

In Guatemala, domestic violence has often been considered a normal part of life and relationships, and something women should simply endure. Until recently, violence against women in the family was not defined as a criminal offence. In addition, rape was not recognized as such if it occurred in the context of marriage, as previously demonstrated.

Domestic violence is a major problem in Guatemala. By November 2013, the Public Ministry had received over 40,000 reports of domestic violence throughout the year (Juárez 2013). Numbers of reports have increased dramatically: According to the National Institute of Statistics reports increased by 439 percent from 2004 to 2013 (Orozco and Castro 2014). Although there is an increase in reported cases, domestic violence is still heavily underreported. Underreporting of violence against women is a common problem not only in Guatemala, but worldwide. According to a recent study, only seven percent of women globally who have been victims of physical or sexual violence report to formal sources, including legal, medical, or social support services (Palermo *et al* 2013). The study reveals that *formerly married and never married status*, urban residence, and increasing age were

characteristics associated with increased likelihood of formal reporting. Thus, according to this study, married women are least likely to report violence. In Guatemala, one of the reasons for under-reporting is that domestic violence has often been viewed as a private family matter instead of a crime. Other reasons may be a lack of education, communication difficulties, fear, and a general mistrust in the judicial system. Many women are monolingual and do not speak Spanish, but only one of the country's 26 indigenous languages. This makes it more complicated to file a complaint. As for many others, they hesitate to go to the police in fear of reprisals from their partners. They know that their cases will most likely go unresolved and the police will not be able to offer any protection from the perpetrators, a subject I will return to.

Guatemala ratified the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Violence against Women in 1995 (Belem do Pará Convention). As a direct consequence of this ratification, the *Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Domestic Violence* was passed (Sieder 2013). The domestic violence law from 1996 put the focus on violence in the private sphere of the home, a form of violence that has largely been “invisible” in Guatemala. It legally defined domestic abuse as a human rights violation that causes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm. The law, however, focuses on violence within the family generally and does not directly address domestic violence against women. Through its use of gender-neutral language throughout the articles, the law has been criticized for failing to denounce violence against women specifically (Godoy-Paiz 2008).⁴⁰

Although there has been increased attention to the subject of domestic violence, often with the argument that it can happen to anyone despite class and ethnicity, there is still a common misconception that domestic violence only happens in poor, rural areas. When I talked to people, both men and women, about the high prevalence of domestic violence in the country, many of them pointed to poverty and lack of education as main catalysts for this form of violence. Hilda (a woman in her late thirties introduced in a previous section) had divorced her husband after being victim of abuse. She had joined group meetings for victims of domestic violence in Guatemala City in order to talk about her experiences with other women who had suffered the same. She was greatly surprised when she had showed up to the first meeting and had perceived several of the women present to be wealthy. Hilda, herself illiterate and from a low-income background, had considered domestic violence to solely

⁴⁰ For a discussion on “de-gendering” domestic violence, see Nancy Berns (2001).

happen in poor, low-educated families. Attending the group meetings had made her realize that domestic violence happened to “everybody”. Based on my interviews with women from different backgrounds, I argue that domestic violence has largely been accepted as a normal part of marriage, thus it does not discriminate based on social and ethnic background. Domestic violence is something that occurs throughout the country and has more to do with the fact that this violence has become normalized and considered an “everyday violence” (Scheper-Hughes 1993; Bourgois 2004a; 2004b), than to poverty and lack of education.

When I talked to women’s rights organizations and advocates, almost all of them would mention the normalization of domestic violence as the main reason for under-reporting. Cristina, 32, and a mother of two, claimed that:

Parents don’t talk much about that [domestic violence] with their children. But it’s something that really needs to be talked about! Not only to their daughters, of course, but to the boys too [...] But there is more talk about it nowadays than before, I never heard mention of domestic violence when I grew up.

Cristina’s statement was similar to what I often heard: domestic violence is still largely considered a private family matter and a normal part of everyday life. It is important to mention that although domestic violence has been normalized, not all women accept and condone men’s violence within the home. However, according to Lundgren (2012 [1993]), men’s violence becomes a normal part of everyday life in what she calls a process of normalization. She describes men’s violence against women in intimate relationships as a dynamic process where the violence becomes normalized, both by the man and the woman. In this process boundaries are being shifted and acts of violence gradually take on a new meaning. The result is that the extreme starts to appear normal and his reality becomes hers; women start to take responsibility for men’s violence. According to Lundgren, this internalization is often a result of normalization. However, this does not mean that women permanently condone men’s violence. An important difference emerged in women’s retrospective understanding of the violence compared to the way they viewed the man’s actions when they were still living with him and with the violence: “It is only when the woman is *out of* the relationship and *out of* the violence that she can fully bring herself to describe the experiences as violent (Lundgren *et al.* 2001: 18, original emphasis). For Lundgren, this is due to the control exercised by the man over the woman in an intimate relationship by means of violence combined with brainwashing, switching between violence

and warmth, and isolation of the woman. Isolation can include physical isolation – by not letting the woman socialize with anyone he has not approved; by refusing her a social life outside of work; or refusing her to work altogether.

Lundgren (2004) also includes mental isolation; not allowing the woman to reveal any information about their private lives. This is consistent with my findings, as most women told me that they did not “see” how their husbands were treating them until they had left the relationship. During the abusive relationship isolation – both physical and mental – also contributed to “silencing” this type of violence and contributed to the women seeing it as something normal. Because domestic violence has become normalized, women had internalized the violence which greatly affected their self-esteem. For instance, Hilda argued that she had eventually believed that she was worth nothing. “*The worst is how it affects your self-esteem – it just hits the floor*”, she told me. This was also the case for Alberta, 38, who explained to me how her self-esteem had been affected by her husband’s abuse. She had started devaluing herself and felt like a failure, to the point where she had wanted to take her own life.

“The government doesn’t care about us”

It’s a fight (una lucha) to work with the subject of gender. The problem is with the institutional structure; there’s not much help given to promote women’s issues. So we don’t just meet resistance from the population, but even from the government.

This quote is from a director of a women’s program in Guatemala City.⁴¹ She and her staff organized group meetings where victims of domestic violence could meet and talk about their experiences, educational film exhibitions that promote the prevention of violence, and the like. The director argued that although it was a government program, it did not receive sufficient funding for projects dealing with violence against women. Recognizing the alarming numbers of murdered women in Guatemala, often by intimate partners, violence against women has received increased attention in recent years. Pressure from women’s rights advocates and international support led to the implementation of the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women in 2008 and specialized courts have been

⁴¹ The Women’s Office at one of the Public Prosecutor’s Offices (MP) in Guatemala City.

created in Quetzaltenango, Chiquimula and Guatemala City that focus specifically on crimes against women. Several campaigns, both from government programs and non-governmental organizations, support groups, and general knowledge about violence against women have aimed to decrease the stigma surrounding the subject (particularly domestic violence). However, as Boesten (2010a) argues, while laws can be changed changing the norms that guide daily life is harder. She draws on Butler and her notion of normative violence and extends the relevance of thinking in terms of normative violence to the case of domestic abuse in Peru. She argues that:

[N]orms are owned, reproduced and maintained by society on a daily basis. The norm is the standard of normalization, the norm makes us believe in a natural order between human beings, and hence, natural boundaries of sex, gender, race and even class and ethnicity (2010: 10).

She claims that although it is now legally a crime to beat and rape a wife in Peru, in practice, it is still largely accepted as the norm. Thus, in Peru, the reason why conviction rates are low and protection is unavailable is because norms and institutional structures are more difficult to change than legislation. She maintains that many of the representatives of the state, such as police and judges who decide over a woman's denunciation of domestic violence, believe that the women themselves are to blame. Thus, in the Peruvian case, domestic violence is not only normal but also expected. Several of Boesten's arguments are relevant in the Guatemalan context. In Guatemala, women are often blamed for their husband's rage and are expected to endure it. Victims of domestic violence expressed that they felt like they had not been taken seriously when they had reported their husbands. This was a common theme running through the narratives. Moreover, they felt that the violence perpetrated against them does not even count as violence. Because several types of violence against women are not recognized as a serious crime, such as domestic violence, the police and judicial system have failed to treat the problem seriously. Silvia, a social worker at the Wayak' shelter, claimed that machismo and the view that women should endure domestic violence as a "normal" part of family life, is alarmingly widespread even among authorities in the judicial system. Part of her job is to accompany the women to court hearings and she explained to me that some judges are indifferent to domestic violence. In one case from the previous year, she had accompanied a woman who had been severely beaten by her husband, which was evident by her bruised and swollen face. The judge had asked the woman why she did not simply return to her husband – he had probably just had a bad day. Here, the judge's conception of domestic violence as

normative is undeniable – “he probably just had a bad day.” Thus, the woman was expected to endure her husband’s beatings due to the hardship of his everyday life.

Although the Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Domestic Violence acknowledged various types of violence in the home, psychological violence has been particularly hard to prove, largely because it has not been recognized as violence. Hilda explained to me how psychological violence during her marriage had broken down her self-esteem until the point where she did not know who she was anymore. From the time she got pregnant, her husband told her constantly that she was worth nothing, that she was unattractive, and that he could find another woman at any time. He had highlighted that she depended on him because she did not have any money, thus had no option to ever leave him. The worst, however, was the threats; he had claimed that he would kill her if she ever left. Despite this, Hilda had left him almost immediately after the psychological violence started. Her mother, however, had discouraged her from leaving her husband:

I was really upset because not even my mom believed me. She always said that at least he wasn't hitting me. But there's not only hitting, you know. There's more psychological violence than any other type. That was what was worst for me at least. My ex-husband insulted me all the time. There's a lot of fear when it comes to psychological violence – if there's no hitting, there's no proof (si no hay golpes, no hay pruebas) so it's difficult to go to the police.

Hilda’s husband was eventually prosecuted and sentenced to prison. However, he received a very short sentence and when he got out Hilda had been forced to take out a restraining order against him because of harassment. Silvia, the social worker, argued that psychological violence as part of domestic violence had been the hardest to deal with. Again, this type of violence was not recognized as a serious form of violence, thus many of the cases have been left in impunity:

Psychological violence has been difficult to get through. We had a case last year that was very difficult for us [the organization] to fight and it started a big debate here in Quetzaltenango. The case was presented to a judge and he told us that we were lying – that we were not neutral and only in favor of the victim. That was very difficult. (Me: How did the case end?) The case ended in impunity. To this day, I don't know what happened to the case, if she ever made it [won] or not.

Silvia highlighted that if non-governmental organizations like the one she worked for did not exist and could not provide legal assistance and moral support to victims, it would be much more difficult for victims to win cases of psychological violence.

In the Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Domestic Violence “security measures” specified in Article 7 provide for victim protection, immediate removal of the aggressor, limitation/denial of child visitation rights for the aggressor, and the removal of the aggressor’s weapons (GHRC 2009). However, “victim protection” of women has largely failed. There is a serious lack of shelters (CAIMUS) for victims of domestic violence, and those that exist have limited capacity.⁴² When I asked the director of a prominent women’s rights organization why the government did not establish more desperately needed shelters, she argued that “*they simply don’t care.*” As a result of the inaction by the authorities, the women were forced to return to their husbands, who in turn retaliated against their wives. Many of the women had filed complaints against their husbands multiple times before, yet nothing had been done. Several of them had been taken seriously only after their husbands had been abusive towards their children as well. Jenifer, a woman at the Wayak’ shelter, had filed complaints against her violent husband three times before, but the police claimed they did not have enough evidence. Not until her husband raped their oldest daughter, did the police interfere. This example is just one of many where women expressed their discontent against the police and the handling of cases of violence. Because violence against women has become normalized throughout society, the majority of victims I talked to had little or no faith in the Guatemalan judicial system. “*There’s no use in reporting,*” they told me, because the police did nothing to interfere. One day at the shelter, I was talking to Alberta about the prevalence of domestic violence in public debate. The case of missing Guatemalan woman Cristina Siekavizza had spurred much debate about the subject and I asked Alberta if she felt that the publicity of the case had contributed to increased attention by the government. Alberta just chuckled and said that those cases were just to get publicity; “*That’s just to show off, to show that they’re doing something. But the government really doesn’t care about us [women].*”

⁴² In 2013, the government approved the transference of Q 9.7 million (approximately USD 1.3 million) to the operation of various CAIMUS, yet less than Q 4.5 million was transferred (PDH 2013).

Impunity and legitimization

They didn't even do a fluids analysis. They gave me all her clothes in a bag and when I saw some white stains on it, I asked at the morgue: what's this, is it semen? My little girl had been very badly treated, there was blood on her front and back but they didn't do any blood analysis or anything. It's two years and eight months since she was murdered. Where are the forensic tests? (Mother of murder victim, in Amnesty International 2005: 17).

The above testimony is from the mother of 15-year-old María Isabel Veliz Franco who was brutally murdered in 2001. She had been raped, her hands and feet had been tied with barbed wire, her body was punctured with small holes and her nails were bent backwards. Her face was disfigured from being hit and she had been stabbed, strangled and put in a bag. The Public Prosecutor's Office failed to conduct a proper investigation and finally inspected the crime scene one and a half years later (GHRC 2009).

We saw in the introductory chapter that impunity in cases of violence against women has been almost total. Investigation in cases of violence against women has frequently been evaded because of the perceived morality of the victims; the victims have been dismissed as prostitutes, gang members, or criminals, thus unworthy of investigation. In a report by the Public Ministry María Isabel was clearly blamed for the violence perpetrated against her. The report concluded that: "Her school attendance was irregular, she was told off for wearing skirts that were too short" and that "the other ladies in the boutique [where she had worked] started the day with a prayer...she didn't like joining in. Other thing the minor liked to do included going to nightclubs for which her mother gave her great freedom" (Amnesty International 2005: 21).

In the case of another murdered Guatemalan girl, Claudina Isabel Velazques Paiz, authorities admitted that her case had been considered unworthy of investigation due to the way she was dressed and the place of the crime scene. 19-year-old law student Claudina was categorized as a "nobody" because she was wearing sandals and a belly button ring (GHRC 2009). Her body was found abandoned on a Guatemala City street on August 13, 2005. She had been shot in the head and bruises and traces of semen were found on her body. However, all but one piece of clothing she was wearing the night of her murder were returned to the family before any investigation was made. No follow-up interviews of witnesses were done, nor an inspection of

the house where her body was found outside. Fingerprints of the body were not taken until the memorial service, when several armed police officers showed up and demanded access to the body (Sanford 2008). When Claudina's father refused, the police threatened to arrest him and his wife. The coffin was moved from the memorial service and taken to a private room where they took fingerprints and nail clippings from the body in the coffin (Sanford 2008).

These cases clearly show how preconceived notions of the women's morality can affect the outcome of the investigation. During an investigation about femicides in Guatemala, Amnesty International (2005) found that victims' relatives had to prove that the victim was "respectable" or that they had not been involved in any crimes before the authorities would take their complaint serious. This is consistent with Stanko's (1985) findings from Britain and the United States where she demonstrates that the perceived morality of women affected their credibility in cases of violence against them. She argues that male violence against women remains a problem of women's respectability, not men's behavior. The more credible one's social characteristics, the greater the likelihood that one's words will be taken seriously. She writes:

'Nice' girls, for example, don't accept rides from strangers, don't go into pubs alone, don't walk the streets at night, are 'chaste', in essence, are passive, compliant, sexually controlled within respectable boundaries (1985: 91).

Stanko argues that being white and middle-class contributes to a woman's credibility. Although this is true in the Guatemalan context as well, we saw in the case of Claudina Isabel Velazques Paiz (who was from a high-income family) that her perceived morality affected the case more so than her social status. While exploring sexual violence reforms in Guatemala, also England (2013) found that the view that only respectable women deserved legal protection was widespread.

In Guatemalan news media it is common to hear that murdered women were involved with *mareros* (gang members) or that she had a "jealous boyfriend" and so-called "crimes of passion" are rarely investigated in Guatemala (Sanford 2008).⁴³ While commenting on the wave of femicides in Guatemala, former president Óscar Berger claimed that: "We know that in the majority of the cases, the women had links with juvenile gangs involved in organized crime" (Amnesty International 2005: 21). Thus, if involving themselves with dubious partners

⁴³ "Crimes of passion" refer to violent crime, especially murder, where the perpetrator commits the act against someone because of sudden strong impulse such as rage rather than as a premeditated crime.

(such as gang members or jealous boyfriends), part of the blame must be put on the women. This, in turn, can be related to the ideal of self-containment and venturing outside the protection of the home. I often heard comments that “violence like that would not happen to us.” This reflects the widespread conviction that violence rarely happens to “good women,” thus victims must take some of the responsibility of what happens to them.

The “worthy” victim and grievable life

We have seen that violence against women has become so normalized that several forms of violence have not been considered serious crimes. This has been reflected in how women have been treated in the judicial system. I will argue that violence against *some* women, mainly poor and indigenous, has been particularly normalized and reflects a deeper notion of who is considered a “worthy” victim and who is not. This is evident in the government’s handling of the cases, in day-to-day conversations, and in media attention. I will explore the recent case of missing woman Cristina Siekavizza (mentioned above) which I find illustrative of this. Cristina, a ladina woman from a wealthy background and a mother of two, went missing from her home in Guatemala City on 7 July 2011. Her husband, Roberto Barreda, who was believed to be responsible for the disappearance and possible murder of his wife, went missing along with their children shortly after her disappearance. Barreda was captured in México on November 8 2013 alongside the children who were physically unharmed, yet the body of Cristina remains unfound. The case has received extensive attention, both media coverage, in politicians' discourses, and from civil society organizations.

In Guatemala, public and media attention in cases of female victims of violence has mainly been directed towards ladina, middle-class women. I find this reminiscent of what has been termed the “Missing White Woman Syndrome”. The term is used to describe how mainstream media tends to cover the murder, kidnapping, or disappearance of white females, often wealthy and conventionally attractive, as opposed to male, non-white, or older missing persons. Much has been written on the subject, but I draw on Stillman (2007) who argues that biased media attention has led to the distinction between “worthy” and “unworthy” victims and how this group of victims is seen as more deserving of collective resources. She highlights how the media attention directed towards only some disappeared females reveals

an act of dehumanization, as some cases are “reified in one-dimensional deaths, rather than illuminated in nuanced and complex lives” (2007: 492).

Although Stillman focuses on missing white women in the United States, I argue that this act of dehumanization can be translated to the Guatemalan case. In Guatemalan news, it is easy to see who is considered a worthy victim and who is not. In the national newspaper *Prensa Libre* one can read about violent murders of women almost on a daily basis. The majority of the murders, however, are mentioned under a short column titled “*En Breve*” (“In Short”). For instance, on November 11 2013, the body of a young woman was found in Guatemala City in a plastic bag with her hands and feet tied. The case was barely mentioned under the “In short” section. The article does not mention anything else about the case – the identity of the woman; what happened to her or which measures will be taken by the police. This case differs greatly to that of Cristina Siekavizza, whose case received extensive media coverage. In the two years between her disappearance in 2011 and the capture of her husband in 2013, the case dominated the Guatemalan press. In a few days after the capture of her husband, most of the space in the online version of *Prensa Libre* was dedicated to the case. In a small post further below we could read about two women found murdered in a small village in Chiquimula, with “signs of violence on various parts of the body” and blood-soaked rocks by the side of the bodies (Paxtor 2013). This case of the brutal murder of two women from a small village (who were unlikely from the same financial background as Siekavizza) effectively illustrates the biased media coverage in Guatemala and serves as just one of many examples.

Butler (2004; 2009) underscores the role of the newsprint media in what she calls a dehumanizing process by choosing whose lives have been publicly mourned and whose have not.⁴⁴ She highlights how the media judges some lives ungrievable; how “certain images do not appear in the media, certain names of the dead are not utterable, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is derealized and diffused” (2004: 38). In deciding whose lives are grievable and whose are not, Butler states:

The differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain

⁴⁴ She highlights for instance how long obituaries have served to humanize the Americans who were killed not only in the 9/11 attack but in various wars, yet Arabs have been excluded from this public mourning. This was part of a dehumanization process that put practitioners of Islam outside the “human.” She claims that they cannot be mourned because “they are always already lost or, rather, never “were” (2004: 33).

certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a livable life and a grievable death? (2004: XIV-XV)

Thus, the matter of grievability comes down to whose lives counts as lives. Although Butler focuses on post-9/11 America, I find her discussion on how certain forms of grief become nationally recognized and amplified, while other losses become unthinkable and ungrievable, useful in the Guatemalan context. As we have seen, the lives of mainly poor, indigenous women in Guatemala have not been considered grievable. Victims from the civil war, for instance, have been excluded from media coverage and public grief. Even during recent high-profiled trials of former army generals, little attention has been directed to the lives of the victims and survivors of the war. Steinberg and Taylor (2003) note that landmarks and memorials in a landscape play a powerful role in telling us about people's history and values. Due to the lack of memorials in the areas most affected, the geographers note that it is difficult to believe that thousands of people were killed or disappeared. They argue that the lack of investment in public monuments reveals a great deal about how many members of the military elite struggles to acknowledge their role in the violence during the war. In addition, they were puzzled by seeing the official road sign that announces entry into the Ixíl country of Quiché – the area most affected during the war - riddled with bullet holes. With several new signs in the area, advertising banks, gas stations, etc., the authors ask why the government would leave an old bullet-riddled sign in one of the most violent areas during the war. The unwillingness to publicly remember and grieve the victims of the war can be seen as a part of what Butler calls the “discourse of dehumanization.” The result of this discourse, she maintains, is that these deaths simply vanish.

Conclusion to the chapter

Violence against women in Guatemala is alarmingly prevalent despite more awareness and implementation of laws protecting women's rights. This, I have argued, is because much violence against women has become normalized. The result is that violence has been considered a normal part of everyday life and something that women should endure. I have explored how gender ideology has contributed to normalization and, to a large degree, societal acceptance of much violence against women. As Hume (2004) has highlighted, failing to acknowledge particular acts as violent not only minimizes people's experience and denies

them a voice but actively undermines their pursuit of justice. I showed how impunity has reigned in cases where the victims' character has been considered morally ambiguous and in the last part of the chapter I argued that some victims have been considered "worthy" and others not, largely based on ethnicity and social status. There is a clear persistence of racism, misogyny, and historic patriarchy in the country and the result is severe when the state does not view violence against women as a problem, but instead contributes to its naturalization (PDH 2012).

Chapter 4:

Violence in the public sphere and a continuum of violence

In this chapter I continue the discussion on how violence permeates the lives of many women, yet here my main focus is violence in public spaces. In the previous chapter I showed that violence in the public and private sphere are intertwined in many ways, due to normalization of violence in both spheres and the way the cases are treated in the criminal-justice system. This argument is continued in this chapter: Due to the prevalence of several types of violence in both the home and in the street, and the penetration of violence in the public sphere into the private, violence in the two spheres cannot be separated. I therefore argue that there are no safe-zones in women's lives.

Continuum of violence as an analytical tool

I find the concept of a continuum of violence in Guatemalan women's lives useful for analyzing how violence permeates the lives of many Guatemalan women. The concept, as used by Kelly (1988), is based on two of its meanings in the Oxford English Dictionary: "A basic common character that underlies many different events" and "a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and which cannot be readily distinguished" (1988: 76).

Several researchers have used the concept of a continuum of violence from war to post-war situations, both from Guatemala and other societies (see for instance Cockburn 2004; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Bourgois 2004b; Manz 2008; Alden 2010). I focus on the continuum of violence in women's lives in post-war society. Many of my findings from Guatemala are similar to those of Kelly (1988), despite the divergence in time (her book was published in the late 1980s) and space (her study was done in England): Violence is not merely an event in women's lives, but an ongoing process. For instance, the women I talked

to who had been victims of domestic violence had also suffered other types of violence, for instance robberies or assaults on the street. I argue that the threat of violence, and actual physical violence, in both private and public sphere is something that continues throughout many women's lives. The subject of violence against women in Guatemala has received much attention in recent years due to the high prevalence of femicides, which has been referred to as an "epidemic" and being a result of the "culture of violence". Kelly's findings from a western setting suggest that the continuum of violence against women is not limited to societies struggling with extraordinary levels of violence.

Kelly explored sexual violence as a continuum in women's lives; she noticed how many women had experienced more than one form of sexual violence, such as threat of violence, sexual harassment, rape and incest, to mention some.⁴⁵ These forms of sexual violence were extremely common in women's lives, both in the sense that they occurred to most women and that they occurred on multiple occasions. Although Kelly uses the concept to discuss different forms of *sexual* violence in women's lives, I will extend the concept to other types as well.

Kelly also investigated the commonness of sexual violence in another way: Women were asked if they had any friends who had experienced this type of violence as well. Of the 60 women interviewed, they knew 435 other women who had experienced sexual violence in their lives. Again, although Kelly focuses exclusively on sexual violence while I am concerned with additional types of violence, this is highly consistent with my own material. When I interviewed women about various forms of violence they experienced, women would frequently refer to female friends and relatives who had experienced violence as well; indirect experiences of violence increased their own fear of violence. Although I never asked directly if they knew of others who had been victims of violence, the majority would also refer to acquaintances when I asked about the prevalence of violence in women's lives. This supported my premise that violence permeated many women's lives in Guatemala.

Julia's story

The case of Julia demonstrates how many women experience several forms of violence, both in public and private sphere, thus illustrates a continuum of violence. The case is just one of many examples of how violence permeates women's lives. Some of my research participants

⁴⁵ Lundgren et al (2001) had similar findings while interviewing women in Sweden.

had experienced several forms of violence throughout their lives, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, and violence in the street (*asaltos*) to mention some.

Julia, a Maya K'iche' woman in her late thirties, was staying at the Wayak' shelter after her husband had injured her about six months earlier. After a fight, he had attacked her with a knife and tried to cut her throat. While she tried to defend herself with her arms and hands the knife had cut through her right hand, severing her thumb. While sitting and talking after a session of occupational therapy where the women had made jewelry, Julia and I started talking about violence against women. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I rarely initiated conversations about violence unless I carried out structural in-depth interviews. On this occasion, the subject was brought up by one of the other women, as often happened. Julia told me her story and what had happened that day. *"I wouldn't have been alive if it hadn't been for my two oldest boys – they had to fight my husband off me,"* she explained, showing me red scars across her throat and hand.

Even though she reported her husband, the police claimed they could not find him and their children were placed with other relatives. She was furious with the police, whom she felt had not taken her seriously and did not believe her even though she showed them her knife wounds. She told me they had just laughed and joked and tried to "make a move" on her and one of the police officers had inappropriately touched her chest. Her husband was not caught and arrested until he tried to attack her again, this time outside their children's school.

Julia had also experiences of violence in the public sphere. Some years ago she had worked for her father, who owned a small fruit stand in one of Guatemala City's many fruit markets. She told me that criminal gangs had controlled the market and robberies of customers were common occurrence. Although the gangs had not personally attacked her, she had witnessed both robberies, murder, and kidnapping while she was working at the market, which had affected her deeply. The gangs had stolen the customer's wallets and sometimes they passed the wallets to the vendors (a way of making them accomplices), who had no choice but to pass them on until they arrived in the hands of some of the other gang members. Julia explained that they had no choice but to cooperate, because the gangs were threatening to kill the vendors and their families if they refused to cooperate. One particular incident had made a deep impression on Julia. She had been witness to a kidnapping where a little girl was taken from her mother:

The lady was buying some fruit and had her nena (girl) over her shoulder. A guy took the girl and ran to a waiting car. They must have planned everything because the car was just waiting for them there. The lady was screaming for help: “ayúdame, mi nena!”, but we couldn't do anything.

When I asked Julia how she felt to not be able to interfere, she got quiet and looked down, seemingly affected by the memory. To my question about what had happened to the little girl she replied: “*Saber (who knows). This was difficult for us, because only God knows what happened to that girl.*” She explained that a few days after the incident, a group of men had come to the market and killed three of the vendors. Julia believed the armed men had been the little girl's family.

The presence of armed gangs controlling entire areas (such as markets and neighborhoods) is common in Guatemala. The gangs generally offer protection to the people in exchange for money and/or cooperation in delinquency. The fear of interfering in criminal activities was so great that Julia and the other sellers had helplessly watched the kidnapping of a child. Julia explained that the threats made by the gang were not empty; she had heard several stories of violence against vendors who refused to cooperate and she argued that they would specifically target the male vendors' wives and female children. Due to fear for their own lives and those of their families, nobody at the market had any choice but to watch the gang members carry out criminal activities on a daily basis.

Julia's story serves as an illustration of how violence permeates many women's lives. At her job Julia was made an accomplice to delinquency, threatened not to contravene, and even witnessed the kidnapping of a child. The attack by her husband had long-lasting effects for Julia. It had severed her thumb affecting the nerves in her hand, making it difficult to continue her livelihood once out of the shelter (she knitted clothing which she sold at the market and cooked foodstuff to be sold at the market and outside her children's school). However, the separation from her children was the worst, she told me. She had been placed at the shelter because she alone could not provide for her family and the children had been placed with her husband's relatives in Quiché. They had lost their scholarships (*becas*) at their previous school in Quetzaltenango and her oldest son had started having problems with drugs. Julia was scheduled to leave the shelter soon, yet was doubtful of what the future had in store. After the attack by her husband, she had been sexually harassed by a police officer while attempting to make a report. In addition, not being taken seriously by the police reflects a deeper notion

of how domestic violence is not viewed as a serious crime. This in itself must be seen as an act of violence, as many women experience not being taken seriously while reporting their husbands. Julia felt she had been mistreated particularly because she was indigenous. This form of structural violence is an everyday reality for many indigenous women, as I mentioned in the introductory chapter.

Fear of violence in the public sphere

Scholars usually refer to the threat of sexual violence as the main reason for women's fear (Stanko 1985). It is commonly understood that violence in the public sphere, such as robberies, primarily affects men, while sexual violence and violence in the home affects women. In Guatemala, where several types of sexual violence are highly prevalent, this fear is not ungrounded. However, I will argue that also seemingly "gender-neutral" crimes, such as robberies, kidnapping, and extortions, are increasingly considered specifically targeting women. By this, I do not intend to imply that all violence in the public sphere is directed against women, but that these are considered increasing risks for women. The fear of these crimes can be, but are not necessarily, due to the threat of sexual violence.

Robberies

When I asked women research participants about what they considered the biggest threat to their security, the majority would point to robberies or muggings (*asaltos*). Almost everybody has had an experience of being robbed in some point in their lives, as this is the most common crime in Guatemala. Although robberies are a common crime directed against both men and women, many women argued that it was frequently directed against women, even more so than men, because they were considered "easy" targets. The fact that women normally carry purses and men do not, may contribute to the notion of women as easier targets. Moreover, the potentiality of sexual violence during robberies put women in a more dangerous situation than male victims. Women's fear of robberies is well justified. According to a recent report, it was found that almost twice as many Guatemalan women as men were the victims of unarmed robbery with aggression or physical threat (UNDP 2013). In addition, women were the

majority of victims robbed in their own home while they were alone. Being robbed in the home undoubtedly increases both the fear and potential threat of sexual violence.

In Antigua, there has been a recent wave of robberies (López 2013a) and the majority of women I talked to expressed a great concern about the increasing rate of robberies against women in the city. Throughout my several visits to Guatemala, I have predominantly lived in Antigua. Living near one of the busiest streets of the city, we often heard robberies happening outside. My boyfriend would normally run out to see what was going on, and in the majority of cases the victims were women. Some were beaten while being robbed, some were sexually harassed, some were threatened with firearms, and subsequently many were traumatized. During the first two months of fieldwork in Antigua, four of my female acquaintances and neighbors were robbed. Two of them were injured during the robberies and one was even sent to the hospital. Aggression during robberies is increasing and is the main reason why women are afraid of being robbed. Some claimed they had managed to escape attacks because they did not leave their house after dark. However, many people – including me – have been robbed during daytime as well.

In addition, sexual violence during the robberies is common, and is what women fear the most; the majority of research participants expressed fear that robberies could potentially turn into sexual assault. While talking to Lydia, a woman in her early thirties, about the violence in Antigua she explained to me that rape was what she feared the most. As a teacher in one of the city's many Spanish schools, Lydia had also heard several stories of attacks against *extranjeras* (foreign women). She recognized sexual violence during robberies as a serious – and increasing - threat. She explained:

I usually go out with my brother. He always tells me that if something happen to us I should just run, leaving him behind. It is more dangerous for women, you know. If they are just after my money, that's fine – take them! But as women we have the threat of being sexually assaulted too - that's what scares me the most.

Although in her thirties, Lydia was expected to be chaperoned by her brother while venturing outside the home. She told me this was partly because she was unmarried, thus it was the “natural” thing to do, and partly due to the threat of violence. Stanko (1987) highlights that using “safe” men for protection against other men is a common strategy for women. This strategy, however, is not always successful. As we saw in the previous chapter, my friend was raped while being walked home by a friend – a presumed “safe” man. However, I often heard

women express the preference of men's accompaniment, whether it be brothers or friends, due to the threat of violence in the street.

Robberies and sexual violence on public transportation were the main thing women in Antigua and Guatemala City considered the biggest threat to their security.⁴⁶ Many routes, particularly to and from Guatemala City and within the city, are notorious for both violence against the bus drivers and the passengers. While I did my fieldwork in Antigua, an acquaintance of mine, a young bus driver, was murdered while driving from Antigua to Guatemala City. This sparked much conversation about the increase in violence on these buses and in October 2013 the bus service in Antigua was on strike for several days due to the extortion and murder of bus drivers. In the first six months of 2013 murders of public transport drivers had more than doubled compared to the same period last year (Wells 2013), and there was a generalized perception that violence on public transportation had increased greatly. Although violence mainly affects male drivers and their assistants (and of course the widows and children left behind), women expressed that the greatest threat to their security was indeed crime on the buses. Particularly women who worked in Guatemala City and depended on buses expressed great fear about this daily practice. There are often robberies on the buses, sometimes related to the extortions and sometimes not, and it is common to hear about passengers who are injured and even killed because they have opposed the robbers (see for instance Prensa Libre 2014). Although violence on public transportation affects both men and women, women research participants considered violence on public transportation a greater threat to women due to the risk of sexual violence and this type of violence was what they feared most. It is also common to hear about these incidents in the media and on several occasions, women have been forced out of the buses and sexually abused.⁴⁷

Although none of the women I talked to had themselves experienced sexual violence on the bus, the majority of them were afraid of taking buses and almost everybody had a relative or friend who had experienced sexual harassment. I often heard friends and research participants, both male and female, talk about sexual harassment against women on the buses. David, an *Antigüeño* in his mid-twenties, told me that he had seen this several times while on buses in Guatemala City. He worked in one of the many call-centers in the capital and relied on buses

⁴⁶ This was not a major concern in Quetzaltenango, although crime on buses also happened here, particularly extortion of drivers. However, women did not feel as insecure on public transportation here as in Antigua and Guatemala City. I also depended on public transportation on a daily basis to get to the Wayak' shelter, but never felt unsafe.

⁴⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hm8XOHgSYKE>. In this incident, cameras on an urban bus caught several men forcing a woman out of the bus to sexually assault her during a robbery.

to get to and from work. In one incident he had taken an urban bus when two men had entered. As robberies are frequent, David had immediately recognized the men as robbers because of their suspicious behavior. The bus was completely full and there were many standing passengers, a common trait of the urban buses in Guatemala City. David told me:

An older lady was standing and talking on the phone and didn't notice the men that came in, because the bus was so full. The guys tried to take her phone, but she refused. They took out a gun and said that nobody was getting off the bus. Then they started taking people's belongings. Next to the woman was a younger girl, I think she was a secretary because of the clothes she was wearing - like a short skirt. She was really pretty. The guys started touching her breasts and private parts, qué tienes ahí - what do you have there - they were saying. She was crying a lot but she couldn't do anything about it.

David recognized that robbers do not exclusively target women – they are after people's belongings, mainly cell phones – yet he argued that many female victims of robberies on buses are being sexually harassed. Sometimes the women are being touched inappropriately; sometimes they are being threatened with sexual abuse; other times they are verbally harassed. Because of the often sexual character of robberies, women considered robberies a particular threat to their safety. Even when the perpetrators were not specifically targeting a woman's body, indecent contact often occurred. Francisca, an *Antigüeña* in her late sixties, told me she rarely went to Guatemala City because she did not like to take the buses. She explained that many Guatemalan women, particularly older women, tend to hide their money in the brassiere. Her friend had been victim of attempted robbery on the bus recently, where the robbers had wanted to look under her shirt to see if she carried money – “*ahí llevas el pisto*” (“you carry the money there”), they had said. The woman had no choice but to lift her shirt so the robbers could check under her brassiere, although she did not carry money that day.

These examples show that sexual vulnerability has a material reality. Sexual violence is a main factor, but not the only one, contributing to women's fear of robberies.

Extortions and kidnapping

Other types of violence, such as kidnapping and extortions, are often viewed as increasingly targeting women. Research participants argued that this was because they are considered “easy” targets. I will also argue that part of the reason may be the increase in female business owners. Either way, the threat of extortion affects many women’s lives. According to recent statistics, extortions went up almost seven percent in 2013 compared to the previous year and Guatemala and Quetzaltenango are the departments with most reports of extortions (GAM 2012; Juárez 2014). In Quetzaltenango, the majority of the victims are store owners and vendors (anything from larger stores to *tortillerías* - tortilla bakeries - and street stalls), followed by public transport workers and private persons (Martínez 2013). The fact that even low-income street workers are being targeted illustrates just how entrenched extortion is at all levels of Guatemalan society. In a newspaper interview, one female street vendor claimed she had to move her business to another place, as well as changing her phone number, because the extortionists kept asking for more money. They had demanded about \$3000 in exchange for not hurting her and her family, which she had to take up a loan to be able to pay (Martínez 2013).

I also heard about several women business owners in Antigua who had been victims of extortion, including one of my neighbors who owned a hotel and a small *tienda* (store). However, I was frequently discouraged to talk about this as people were generally very afraid and quite paranoid. One of the neighbors, Doña Gloria, had experienced extortion in her family. Four years ago, her sister-in-law had become victim of extortion and kidnapping. Her relative had been living in the United States but owned properties in Guatemala. While visiting in 2010, she had been kidnapped on our street and the kidnappers had demanded one million Quetzales, around \$130,000. Three days after the first payment of 80,000 Quetzales, she was found dead in a river close by. The case was well-known in the neighborhood, yet it was not often spoken about.

Kidnappings and subsequent extortion, particularly of wealthy families and business owners, is a major problem in several Latin-American countries. In Guatemala I was told that this was a predominantly unspoken crime, as the affected families wish to avoid public attention. Sofia, a mother of two from Guatemala City, explained to me that kidnapping had been an issue in her life since she was a child, and she believed it to be a crime predominantly targeting women. Coming from a high-income family, she had attended private schools

throughout her life, thus the majority of her friends were from similar social strata. She told me that three of her friends from college had been kidnapped in recent years. In one of the cases, the woman and her baby had been kidnapped at a parking lot outside a gym. The kidnappers had forced themselves inside her car, hit her and insulted her, and forced her to drive to an ATM and withdraw money. She and her baby had been dropped off at El Trebol, one of the main intersections in the city which is notorious for being a highly dangerous area. She was told to count to a hundred and then wait five minutes. The woman was in shock by the event and did not recognize where she was, nor did she have any identification or money. Sofia explained to me that kidnappers specifically target women: “*They’re looking for young women with babies*”, Sofia claimed. “*They always do it [kidnap] in the exclusive areas and they always take the women.*” She believed they targeted women (and their children) because it was easier to make the families pay the ransom.

Sofia’s own family had also been victim of extortion and threat of kidnapping when she was a child, although she did not find out until she was older. Her father, a business-owner, had been victim of extortion and the extortionists had threatened to kidnap his children - Sofia and her older sister - if he did not pay a weekly fee. Even though her father met the extortionists in a park every week to pay the demanded fee, he still feared they would kidnap his children. Sofia told me she could remember that her father insisted they were dropped off by the school bus at different locations every day. This was an attempt to avoid a routine and thus make it complicated for the extortionists to locate the children. Now, in her early thirties and with children on her own, Sofia was very apprehensive about the safety of her children because of the threat of kidnapping and considered it to be a significant threat.

Blurring of private and public

In chapter two and three I discussed how the dichotomy of *casa* (home) and *calle* (street) has been a fundamental aspect in Latin American notions of female morality. Here, I am focusing not on the moral aspects of the dichotomy but on the continuum of violence in the two spheres.

Because of the increase in extortions and the prevalence of kidnappings in the country, I argue that violence in “the street” penetrates the (perceived) safety of the home. Ystanes, writing on

Guatemala, highlights that “the safe zone of the house is not only penetrated, but may be completely devastated by the violent elements associated with the street” (2011: 263).

As demonstrated in the previous section, extortions are frequent in Guatemala and many of my research participants considered it a crime that increasingly targeted women. During a previous stay in Guatemala my boyfriend’s mother was victim of extortion and it was an experience I will not soon forget. One night I heard much commotion from the living-room and found my mother-in-law Milvia crying hysterically. The rest of the family was also there and everyone looked pale in the face. I learnt that Milvia had just gotten off the phone with a man who had threatened her and the family. The caller had known everything about the family, even where her children in the United States lived and what time her children in Guatemala went to work in the morning. The man on the phone demanded money in exchange for not hurting her family. The police arrived shortly after, but did not do much except recommending changing the phone number. Fortunately, nothing happened to any of the family members, but the incident left the family in despair. Although it affected the whole family, I noticed a particular change in Milvia after the incident. She was more afraid of going out and did rarely leave the house at night. In addition, she insisted on knowing every move of the family members.

This incident happened in our neighborhood in Antigua, a city that has seen an increase in violence in the past years. Robberies on the streets are more and more frequent, also during my fieldwork. Ystanes (2011) has pointed out the private nature of dwellings in Guatemala and states that is rarely possible to walk past a house and catch a glimpse of life inside it. In addition, barred windows keep intruders out. However, she highlights that sounds easily penetrate. From the living-room in our house we could frequently hear robberies in the happening; particularly women’s scream and yelling could be heard on a weekly basis. My boyfriend would run out to see what was going on, although his family would dissuade him to do so, as they feared getting involved. Also Sofia had experienced how violence in “the street” had affected their private sphere. She told me about an incident outside her house a while back. Her children had heard screams from outside and she had gone out to see what was going on. A young woman was crying hysterically and seemed to be in shock. After comforting her for a while, and managing to call her boyfriend and get him to the house, the woman explained that a group of men had approached her and sexually harassed her and touched her private parts. Living on one of the busiest streets of *zona* 1, the tranquility of

Sofia's home was frequently disturbed by violence on the street outside. These examples serve as illustrations of how much violence in "the street" penetrates the home.

So-called "gated communities"⁴⁸ are increasing in number in Guatemala and are considered safe from outside intrusion, due to high level of security. However, we have seen that extortion and kidnapping of members of high-income families, often women, is prevalent and thus rupture the perceived safety of the family (the home). In addition, the walls themselves become a constant reminder of the presence of violence (Caldeira 1996). The sensationalization of violence is another way violence penetrates the home. As Benson *et al.* (2008) have observed, gates may keep chaos and crime out of enclaves, but sensational newspapers maintain danger as a constant presence even for the most sheltered (2008: 53).

The absence of "safe-zones" in women's lives

The *desconfianza* and dangers associated with the world outside the home in local ontology are heightened by the threat of violence that also lurks in the enclosed dwelling (Ystanes 2011: 261).

We have seen that violence in the public sphere is considered a great threat to women's safety and fear of crime generally refers to criminal activities outside the home. Stanko has written extensively on women's fear of violence and highlights that generally "It [fear of crime] is associated with concern about being outside the home, probably in an urban area, alone and potentially vulnerable to personal harm" (1995: 47-8). Fear of violence, however, is not limited to "the street" but is present in personal relationships as well. I have showed in previous chapters that violence within the home is highly prevalent. Thus, both the home and the street present palpable dangers to many women. In addition, violence in "the street", such as extortions, penetrates the perceived safety of the home. Because there is so much violence on the street and high prevalence of violence in the home, I argue that there are no "safe-zones" in women's lives.

Franco (1999) argues that institutions that have historically been refuges in Latin America, such as the family (the home), the Indian community, and the Church, can no longer be seen as immune spaces: "[T]he destruction of the immunity formerly accorded to wives, mothers,

⁴⁸ I will return to this in the following chapter.

children, nuns, and priests have all taken away every immune space” (1999: 10). Franco’s notion of the penetration of former sanctuaries is relevant to my study as I argue that women’s perceived safety in the home is problematic. Women often told me that violence would not happen to them because they rarely left the home; *andar en la calle* (hang out on the street) was considered a threat to women’s safety but could be prevented by avoiding venturing outside the home. Also Ystanes (2011) found that the Guatemalan house is still largely considered a source of moral rectitude, familiar warmth, intimacy and safety from danger. Indeed, the majority of women I talked to pointed to violence in the public sphere as the greatest threat to their safety. The notion of the home as a “safe-zone” is not limited to Latin America. Pain (1997) found that most women from her study in Britain hold powerful concepts of public space as dangerous and private space as safe. However, she calls this a “spatial paradox” because for the majority of women, most incidents of violence were domestic.

Due to alarming levels of domestic violence in Guatemala, I argue that the home cannot be considered a “safe-zone” any more than the street can. We have seen that physical violence within families is widespread in Guatemala and cannot be distinguished from the country’s high level of femicides, as it is widely accepted that the majority of murders are committed by known assailants. I have also demonstrated that the Guatemalan government has proved both unwilling and inefficient in stemming the high level of violence against women, particularly in the private sphere, which contributes to my argument that for many women the home cannot be considered a “safe-zone”. With high levels of violence in both the private and public sphere – thus no place to truly feel safe - fear becomes something that needs to be managed. This will be explored in the following chapter.

Conclusion to the chapter

Throughout this chapter I have continued the exploration I started in chapter 1 of how violence suffuses everyday life. I referred to this prevalence as a continuum of violence in women’s lives. Because both the public and private sphere present palpable dangers to women, and because violence from the “street” penetrates the home, I argued that the family (the home) can no longer be seen as an immune space. Thus, I showed are no more safe-zones

in women's lives. In the next chapter I will discuss the implications of the constant threat of violence in women's lives and explore how fear is managed.

Chapter 5:

Managing fear

While reading the newspaper one day I came across an article where a security expert offered advice in how to take precaution while traveling on public transportation.⁴⁹ As an “outsider” I was surprised to read these precautions and felt that it illustrated well the everydayness of violence in Guatemala and how precautionary measures are taken for granted as a normal part of everyday life. These precautions were clearly meant for women, due to the location of the article (under the section “Family”) and the type of the advice. Some of the expert’s advice included that if taking a taxi, one has to make sure the driver locks the doors and closes the windows. Valuables should never be kept close to the windows. According to the expert, people should never talk on the phone while using public transportation of any kind. In the most notable of his advice he warned against using “flashy jewelry, noteworthy watches, large purses and very high heels.” When I asked a friend about this article, however, she thought my surprise was unfounded and believed the security expert’s tips entirely made sense. Articles like these were not uncommon in the media, yet I was continuously astounded by the normalness of the precautionary newspaper articles during fieldwork.

As a result of high level of violence in the country, articles with precautionary measures - strategies in dealing with violence and insecurity - are frequent. This example illustrates how violence has become such a large part of everyday life that these are considered normal precautions to take. Many of my research participants acknowledged that violence was a normal part of life in Guatemala, thus everyday life required careful planning and precautionary measures.

⁴⁹ Precaución cuando viaje. In *Nuestro Diario*, October 11, page 27.

Fear versus reality

The violence during the armed conflict enabled the presence of suspicion, fear, and mistrust in social relationships (see for instance Green 1999; WHO 2007). Due to high prevalence of violence in post-war Guatemala fear is still a major part of many women's lives. Fear alters not only intimate relationships, but women's trust in the judicial system and its obligation to provide security and protection in their lives. As we have seen in previous chapters, fear is not ungrounded as violence permeates much of both public and private spheres. Thus, I have argued that fear has become a way of life. This materializes in which precautions women take and the choices they make in life. Living with violence on an everyday basis had different manifestations in women I talked to; some had problems sleeping, some were constantly afraid while outside the house, some avoided leaving the home altogether, while others claimed it was just something they had to endure.

Every Guatemalan woman does not experience violence in their lives. However, when it comes to fear I argue that actual personal danger is not antithetical to perceived personal danger. I found that even women who had not experienced violence personally were very conscious about the potentiality of falling victim to violence. I showed in chapter one how violence permeates day-to-day conversations and news media, which ultimately affects how women perceive the threat of violence. In addition, "everybody" knows someone who has experienced violence, whether in the public or private sphere, which affects their perception of the prevalence of violence. Fear, then, does not only affect people who have been direct victims. Therefore, I found that both women who had experienced violence and those who had not, managed fear in many of the same ways. Also Nussbaum (2005) has argued that even those who do not suffer from violence directly suffer from the threat of it, which greatly diminishes numerous capabilities. While describing violence in post-war Guatemala I have shown that fear of violence is far from ungrounded. However, does it even matter if it well-grounded as long as it is experienced as real for women and affects choices and conduct? Although many women will never experience violence in their lives, we will see that fear has a material effect.

Unequal access to security: Negotiating danger differently

“*Rich people can buy security - we can't*”. This was a phrase I often heard while talking to people about violence in Guatemala. Although the threat of violence and crime affect all Guatemalans lives to various degrees, the threat differs greatly from those who can afford to take precautions. Those whose means to secure self-defense are limited are more likely to become victims of violence in the public sphere.

Access to security in Guatemala is highly unequal as in many other Latin American countries, which ultimately affects people's sense of safety in the public sphere. Social and economic status affects how women conceive of possible threats to their safety. Living (or working) in Guatemala City's low-income “red zones”, for instance, is considered highly dangerous. As previously mentioned, “red zone” refers to places with exceptionally high crime rates, mainly measured by homicide rate, and Guatemala City's most dangerous areas have also the highest rate of femicides (Numeremos Guatemala 2011; Valdez 2013b). In Guatemala, as in other countries struggling with high levels of crime, security can be purchased and I showed in chapter one that the private security industry in Guatemala is increasing.

When talking to various women about insecurity in Guatemala, the vast majority mentioned the danger of walking on the street at night as well as depending on public transportation as major threats to their sense of security. As mentioned in the previous chapter, having to rely on public transportation is seen as a great threat to women's security. Many women who do not own cars rely on buses on an everyday basis, thus this form of violence mainly affects women from low-income backgrounds. Women who owned cars or those who did not work outside the home (*amas de casa*) pinpointed not having to depend on buses as the main reason why they felt safer. Ileana, a mother of three from Guatemala City, argued that although she felt unease about living in the capital due to the high rate of violence and crime, at least she did not have to depend on buses to get to work. “*Gracias a Dios - thank God - I have a car at least*”, she said and told me she never left the house except when she was driving. Although Ileana also feared robberies while driving, which are frequent in the capital, she argued that she had escaped much violence because she did not have to rely on buses. Also Kelly (1988) found that having a car increased women's sense of security in the public sphere. At least half of the women she interviewed who said they felt quite safe in public mentioned that they had a car and that this increased their sense of control. Although Kelly's study focuses mainly on

the threat of sexual violence in a western setting, I find this example similar to that what women told me in Guatemala: Having a car greatly increased their sense of security in the public. Also when I talked to women of lower economic strata they would argue that “rich” women had it easier in the sense of being able to protect themselves against much violence, because they did not have to depend on public transportation.

This is not to say that wealthy Guatemalans do not experience violence or the threat of violence in public spaces, as I discussed in the previous chapter where I showed that particularly kidnapping and extortion are types of violence that many wealthy Guatemalans are exposed to. In addition, even though women own cars and do not depend on public transportation, they are not excluded from the threat of violence. Many of my friends who worked in Guatemala City and went by car expressed great fear. Robberies on trafficked roads are a common problem and while driving through the city one is advised to avoid opening the windows. In addition, sexual violence is a threat even for women who do not depend on public transportation (I showed in the previous chapter that women considered sexual violence on buses a great threat). During fieldwork a taxi driver was captured after the rape of 17 customers whom he picked up in upscale areas of Guatemala City (Sactic 2013).

Physical segregation

Physical segregation is a common trait in many Latin American cities. Caldeira (2000) eloquently demonstrated that the fear of robbery, kidnapping, and violence in general in São Paulo has resulted in people taking measures to close themselves in. This has led to a physical segregation between the wealthy and the poor population, where the wealthy have moved to gated communities. Similarly, those with the means to protect themselves against high levels of violence and crime in Guatemala often chose to live in the country’s many gated communities. There are several areas that are considered mainly white, wealthy, and secluded, particularly within Guatemala City, such as the notorious Ciudad Cayalá.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ “Cayalá” means paradise in the Maya language Cakchiquel, a name that might seem appropriate: Ciudad Cayalá is a large, exclusive area for wealthy Guatemalans on the outskirts of Guatemala City and was designed to escape the city’s violence and crime. The “city” contains apartments, parks, high-end boutiques, a church, nightclubs, and restaurants. Although the Mayan name might seem appropriate due to its oasis-like characteristics, I find the name ironic as the large majority of its inhabitants are not indigenous, but “white” Ladinos.

A similar segregation is visible in Antigua, where a predominantly wealthy population lives within the city limit, while low-income groups live in the surrounding towns. Several of my research participants in Antigua never or rarely left the city. Many were afraid of violence and crime and felt safer within the city limits. I made a similar observation when I lived in Mexico City. I lived in Polanco, one of the most expensive - and safest - areas of the city. One night I was trying to convince a friend of mine, who lived in the same area, to visit a restaurant in another part of the city. She refused, and asked rhetorically why she would ever leave Polanco – she had everything she needed there. Coming from a wealthy family, my friend did not have a job, thus had the possibility to “never” leave the area, which naturally limited her sense of fear in the city.

We have seen that fear becomes easier to manage if one has sufficient means to protect oneself. However, although wealthy Guatemalans may protect themselves against some violence and crime, due to their (limited) physical movement in the public sphere, the threat of violence is still present. Managing fear, then, is something women from all social strata are forced to do.

Managing fear in the public sphere

Adapting to violence

Fear of violence forces women to take precautionary measures while entering the public sphere. However, all women experience the threat of violence differently. Although some claimed it did not affect their everyday lives greatly (although it was a perpetual concern), I mostly found that the constant threat of violence limited women’s movement in public spaces. Some women would argue that they had to consider carefully what to wear before leaving the house. As we have seen, dressing in a certain way may lead to dangerous situations, in addition to the high possibility of being blamed for the violence against them solely because of their choice of dress. Other women would avoid using public transportation and some would avoid leaving the house at all. In Antigua, several of my research participants rarely saw friends or relatives who lived in the Guatemala City because they refused to travel by bus there. In the capital, some argued that they rarely ventured outside their houses or neighborhoods due to fear of crime and violence.

While conducting quantitative interviews⁵¹ in one of the crime-ridden areas of Guatemala City, *Zona 4*, I started talking to Elena, a 43-year old indigenous woman who was accompanied by a female friend. She argued that although she lived in Mixco, which is considered the most dangerous area of Guatemala City, she felt apprehensive about mobility in and around the city. I asked her if she often did errands around the city (since we met at a shopping center) and she said it was the first time she had been in that particular zone of the city; “*no salimos mucho – we don’t go out that much*”, she told me. Through her body language it was clear that she was not comfortable. She explained that even though she lived in a dangerous area of the city, she felt privileged because her husband’s income allowed her to be a “housewife”. Thus, she retained from leaving her neighborhood as far as possible. On another occasion, while conducting interviews in a low-income neighborhood in *zona 2*, a group of women told me that they almost never left their neighborhood. The group of four female friends and relatives made tortillas for a living and also depended on the income of their husbands. By running a small *tortillería* the women could avoid venturing outside the vicinity, as the children went to school nearby as well. When I asked them why they rarely left the neighborhood, one of the women told me: “*Here [in the city] one can’t travel by bus (aquí no se puede ir en bus) – one hear about violence every day*”.

For Sofia - whom I introduced in previous chapters - fear of violence did not prevent her from leaving her house in Guatemala City. However, the threat of violence was constant and it affected where she chose to take her children:

It’s something you always talk about and think about before you leave the house: what to bring, to roll up your windows and things like that - especially when the kids are there. You have to think closely where to bring the kids. There’s a park close by, but we can’t go there because they sell drugs there. And in the central park there are a lot of robberies (asaltos).

Because of the limitations of where to take the children, Sofia often took them to play at the city’s high-end shopping centers or to the zoo. Not being able to take her family to nearby parks or outdoor areas, however, greatly affected their budget. She complained that these activities were costly, yet she felt she had no choice. However, Sofia did not only feel scared in public areas of the city, but while driving as well: “*One time we got robbed here in zona 1*

⁵¹ This was the only time I used quantitative, or standardized, interviews as a mode of data collection. I chose this form of interviewing because I aimed to do brief, un-planned, interviews with several women in order to gain an understanding of their sense of security in this particular zone of the city.

in the car”, she told me. *“I had the kids in the car and a guy approached by motorcycle with a knife. He wanted the phone. Luckily the kids were younger so they didn’t understand.”* She said that even though many parts of *zona 1* are considered safer than others, she highlighted that there are many dangerous parts of the city. For instance, according to a 2011 report on femicides in Guatemala City, *zona 1* is the zone with the second highest level of femicides (Numeremos Guatemala). Sofia argued that it had not always been so dangerous in the capital: *“When I was a kid I went out by myself to play. But now there’s a lot of paranoia. Especially if you read the newspapers – there’s so much violence.”* When I asked her if she thought the security situation would improve she claimed:

I don’t think it’s going to get worse or better. It’s simply going to continue, so we just have to get used to it and teach the kids how to live with it too. My daughter, for example, didn’t understand why she couldn’t use her cell phone [in public or in the car], but now she understands the danger.

These examples show that the threat of violence affects and limits women’s entry into public spaces. Even for women who live in crime-ridden areas, such as Elena, venturing out of these areas is considered a highly dangerous endeavor, thus some women avoid going out altogether. For Sofia, venturing outside the home is an endeavor that demands both preparation and consideration. Questions to be addressed such as “where are we going, which roads can we take, and which valuables can I bring”, need careful consideration before leaving the house.

We saw in chapter 1 that people are afraid to interfere (and potentially impede) in violent incidents. Also in the last chapter I showed how Julia became a helpless bystander in the kidnapping of a little girl due to fear of getting involved. Knowing that people will most likely not interfere and assist in violent incidents in public sphere, one can expect that this increases the fear of violence itself.

The threat of sexual violence

The great majority of women I talked to during fieldwork would mention the fear of robberies when in the public sphere. Many however, spoke about the threat of sexual violence as well. We saw in chapter 3 that Hilda had been sexually assaulted when going out to buy plantains.

She saw this as a normal part of everyday life, thus did not feel like she could avoid it. I wondered how she dealt with the violence, then, and she explained: “*We try to survive (tratamos de sobrevivir). We just find a way to live with it.*” Although considered almost impossible to avoid (because it has become so normalized), experiences of sexual violence affected many women’s day-to-day lives. Hilda claimed that this experience had scared her so much to the point where she did not want to leave her home. She had felt such helplessness in the situation, and knowing that the police would not do anything if she reported it increased her sense of helplessness (she said there was no point in reporting, because the police would not care). In addition, indirect experiences of sexual violence – hearing about friends and relatives’ experiences - increased women’s sense of fear. We saw in the previous chapter that sexual violence on public transportation is a common occurrence; “everybody” knows someone who has been victim of some form of sexual violence on the bus.

For Carmen, a woman in her mid-thirties from Quetzaltenango, a way to avoid potential sexual violence in the street was to dress modestly. In the past she had worn more “revealing” clothes, but due to the negative attention from men and the fear of sexual violence she had changed her way of dressing. She explained: “*If I wear tight pants, men get very offensive, mamacita, qué rica, they say. And then they will touch my butt – as if they’re entitled to that because I wear tight clothes!*” Since women are often considered responsible for their own sexual safety (depending on morality), Carmen had changed her way of dressing due to men’s reactions even though it meant avoiding dressing the way she wanted.

Violence in Guatemala affects both men and women and most people experience the threat of violence on a daily basis, whether in the car, on public transportation, or walking on the street. However, because of both the fear and potentiality of sexual violence, women experience a double threat. Cahill writes that:

Geographical areas which may be completely accessible to men are, for women, sites of possible (and likely) harassment, molestation, or rape. What is important in this comparison is that where women are encouraged or mandated to restrict their movement for safety’s sake, the danger described is not to the body *in general*. That danger is almost always sexualized (2000: 55, original emphasis).

This is an important point. We saw in the previous chapter that women consider robberies the greatest threat to their security. Although not all women who are robbed are victims of sexual

violence, yet due to the high prevalence of sexual violence the *fear* of sexual violence is constant. Avoiding this form of violence, then, becomes something many women do automatically. Shortly after I arrived Antigua to conduct fieldwork there was an increase in rape in the area of *Cerro de la Cruz* (Hill of the Cross), a gorgeous hill overlooking Antigua located on the north end of the city. Although the area has a history of assaults and robberies, the recent wave of rapists who attacked women with machetes scared many *Antigüeños* (López 2013b). Lydia, whom I introduced in the previous chapter, was shocked to hear the news about the sexual assaults in the area where she frequently went jogging. Her fear of sexual violence in Antigua had greatly increased:

*I didn't use to worry before, but now I always look over my shoulder when I walk alone. I rarely leave the house alone at night, but when I have to I always cross the street when I see men on the same street as me. I also have to think about the safest streets to choose in order to get to my house. I never take your street!*⁵²

Crossing the street was for Lydia a mechanism to avoid danger that had become naturalized. It was a taken-for-granted strategy, something she did on a daily basis without putting much thought into.⁵³ This might seem like an insignificant activity, yet for many women living in high-risk societies, a daily part of life. Coming from a relatively small city in Norway without much crime and violence, this was an avoidance strategy I was unfamiliar with. However, while in Guatemala I started doing the same. Whenever I encountered men on secluded streets, I contemplated the potential risks I might encounter, and I would always cross the street to avoid direct passing. Thus, crossing the street before passing men often seemed like a necessary activity. After returning from fieldwork, I caught myself doing the same. This had become a natural avoidance strategy also for me. What this activity implies is a sense of uncertainty and powerlessness even in seemingly harmless situations (most of the time, passing men on the street does not cause women any harm). However, due to the commonality of violence against women in Guatemala, this becomes a necessary preventive measure. Because of the additional threat of sexual violence, daily strategies become more crucial.

⁵² Here she was referring to the street where I lived, which was on the way to her home.

⁵³ I find this similar to what Bourdieu (1977) termed *doxa*.

Surveillance of others

Although we have seen that Guatemalans have been forced to learn to live with high levels of violence, I have argued that mere apathy is not the only outcome of normalization of violence, but that people manage fear and the threat of violence in various ways. However, because ultimately little could be done to protect oneself against violence and crime, most of the people I talked to felt helpless in regards to what many called uncontrolled levels of violence. I observed that what became important then, was surveillance, both of self and loved ones and of potential threats in their environment. Many of my research participants had strict rules about their children's physical movement in the public sphere. Children, both younger ones and teenagers, enjoyed little personal freedom and were under constant supervision. This was an aspect of family life I was unfamiliar with, coming from Norway where children generally have much freedom, both physically and socially. While traveling during several stays in Guatemala, I often noticed that my adult friends would call their parents the moment they arrived at the destination. I found this peculiar, as many of my friends were in their thirties. However, as one of my friends pointed out during a weekend trip while on fieldwork: "*Here in Guatemala you never know if you will arrive [at the destination]*".

During fieldwork one of the country's leading phone companies, Claro, launched a plan for mobile users designed to monitor the movement of family members. The plan *Localízame* ("Locate Me") allowed its users to see the location of family members at any time thanks to a digital map. In addition, one could create so-called "geo-zones", such as the home or school, and receive notifications of the family members' arrival and departure of these places. On the television commercial of the plan, the text read: "Mom is going to the supermarket! Mom arrived at the supermarket!"⁵⁴ I was surprised to learn about the plan offered by the phone company, and the possibility to monitor family member's every move seemed quite excessive at first. When I asked some friends about it, however, this made perfect sense to them. With the threat of violence affecting every part of everyday life, even going to the supermarket, this "surveillance-plan" was considered a useful tool to reassure the safety of family members.

I found that the constant threat of violence in the public sphere created much suspicion and I heard frequent comments from women that people were observing them. Sofia found that a security guard stationed at a government building across from her house in Guatemala City

⁵⁴ In Spanish: *Mamá va al super! Mamá llegó al super!*

had been observing her and her family. One day he had approached Sofia's sister, who co-lived with Sofia's family, and asked several detailed questions about their family situation. He had asked if there were only the two women living there; if there was a man in the house, and if they worked from home. Both Sofia and her sister had found the incident extremely intimidating, although they never found out what his inquiry was about.

Also Doña Gloria explained to me that she had frequently seen men standing on the corner at the end of the street where she lived in Antigua just observing. When I asked her what she meant by "observing," she claimed that they were observing the street and keeping an eye out of who lived there, thus robberies and extortion was bound to follow. Doña Gloria claimed that she was not scared to go out in her hometown Antigua, because nothing had happened to her. But at the same time she expressed her fear of the police, arguing that they cannot be trusted "*because one cannot know if they are disfrazados (in disguise)*".

Managing fear in intimate relationships

When I was a kid I had an uncle who touched me. He was 45 and touched me when I was sleeping. After that I became scared of men [...]. It is difficult to have relationships because men are machistas.⁵⁵ I know I can't generalize all men but that's just how I feel.

I met Alberta, an educated woman in her late thirties, at the Wayak' shelter where she had been staying for a longer period because of an abusive marriage. Due to negative experiences with men, Alberta had now made a conscious decision to not have intimate relationships. As part of the treatment at the shelter, she had undergone weekly therapy sessions and the incident from childhood had reemerged and had affected her greatly. The childhood experience, in addition to the abusive marriage later in life, had made her mistrust all men. When I asked her if she would get involved in a relationship again if she found a genuine, kind, and loving man, she laughed and told me that would not happen because all men in Guatemala, at least those she had met, were *machistas*. Partly as a joke, and partly serious, she

⁵⁵ *Machista* refers to the belief in the inferiority of women. The word derives from the concept machismo, which highlights attributes such as physical courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness, a concept I discussed in chapter 2.

claimed that she would demand a psychological test from the man if she was ever to get involved in a relationship again.

After one of the weekly occupational therapy classes at the shelter, Alberta and I remained seated in the classroom talking about our lives. As one of the women I had developed a close relationship with, we often stayed and talked after class. When the subject of relationships came up and I told her about my long-term relationship with a Guatemalan man, she seemed surprised. She wondered how the relationship could possibly work when there were such great “cultural differences” between us. I asked her what she meant by that, and she argued that Guatemalan men are violent, drink too much, and cheat on their partners. Thus, machismo must be a problem for me, coming from a western country, she argued. I told her that my boyfriend was not like that and that there were many exceptions – not all Guatemalan men were *machistas*. She laughed and asked: “*Then where are all these guys – I sure haven’t met any!*” Due to her own experiences, both from childhood and from marriage, Alberta was convinced that all Guatemalan men were alike. Hume (2008), writing on violence in El Salvador, claims that violence, drinking, and womanizing have become so bound up with dominant constructs of maleness that they are seen as natural. She states: “This model of hegemonic masculinity denies men agency, choice, and the possibility of being different” (ibid: 66). In this case, Alberta truly believed that all men are violent towards their partners, thus had taken the conscious decision to avoid intimate relationships. When I asked her if she ever wanted to get married again, she answered firmly: “*Me? No, never. I prefer to be happy by myself – I don’t need a man to be happy.*”

Alberta’s mistrust in men was often mirrored in conversations with other women who had experienced violence in their lives, particularly domestic violence. This was also the case for Hilda. Violence in her marriage had affected her in such a way that she did not want to have another relationship. In addition, she had seen so many cases of domestic violence, she told me, involving her family, friends and neighbors. Because she herself had experienced domestic violence and because it was so prevalent in the lives of people around her as well, she was scared of entering a new relationship because of potential violence. She told me that she was most afraid of violence against her six-year old son; she was afraid a new partner would rape him. Surprised by this particular preoccupation, I asked her why she assumed a new partner would do that. “*This is something that happens often,*” she told me as it had happened to several women she knew. In addition to sexual violence against her son, Hilda was afraid of not only physical abuse, but murder. She told me that one of her friends had

entered a new relationship after separating from her husband. Two months into the relationship, the man had murdered her friend and her son. No one really knew why, but he was drinking a lot, Hilda said. Thus, she was scared something similar would happen to her family.

I was left pondering about Hilda's preoccupations. Having witnessed so much violence in friends' and family's relationships, and having experienced violence herself, Hilda automatically assumed that a new man in her life would hurt her or her son. This is an important point while discussing women's fear of violence. The fact that most of the women had friends and relatives who had various experiences of violence, both in the public and private sphere, also increased women's fear of violence. For Hilda, the prevalence of violence in other women's lives also affected her sense of fear of violence.

For Alberta and Hilda, the potential threat of violence was great enough to avoid intimate relationships altogether. Their past experiences had taught them that violence was something they could not escape - a normal part of life. Managing the threat of violence, then, became important. For Alberta, sexual violence in her childhood was something she had not been able to avoid. As an adult, however, she had left her husband once the abuse started, an act she could herself control. But she felt that all men were *machistas*, thus violence was something unavoidable in relationships. For this reason she could not allow herself to have a relationship with a man again. Hilda had also left her husband. This was a part of her life that she had been able to control; she had left when her husband had become psychologically abusive – she knew the physical violence would ensue. Because she had seen so many incidents of domestic violence, in its physical form, she knew what the consequences were and made a conscious decision to leave the father of her child. In addition, she did not want a new partner because he could potentially hurt her or her son. Due to her own experience as well as those of family and friends, the probability of a new partner causing them harm was great. Thus, Hilda's way of managing the threat of violence in her life was to avoid intimate relationships altogether.

Self-surveillance

As we have seen throughout the chapters, many women's geographic mobility in the public sphere is limited due to the fear of violence. Avoidance strategies, then, become important.

We saw for instance that some women avoid taking public transportation while others avoid leaving their homes altogether. In personal relationships, women adopt different strategies. According to Lundgren (2012 [1993]; 2001), women might adjust their femaleness in order to avoid violence from their spouses, a strategy which is developed as a result of men's strategies of violence regarding norms, expectations and demands. The woman believes that he will stop using violence if she conforms to his demands; if she is perceptive to his temper. This, then, functions as a survival strategy.⁵⁶ Several of my research participants told me that they had tried to conform to their husband's expectations in order to avoid violence. Monica, 29, was very outgoing and had always loved going out with her friends. After she got married she told me how she had been "locked up" in the house and was not allowed to socialize. In order to avoid conflict with her ill-tempered husband, she had accepted to stay in the home, only leaving to go to the market or picking up the children at school. Also Hilda told me that when her husband became agitated and showed signs of aggressiveness, she would avoid provocation: "*There's no use arguing with men. I would just leave him alone and take my son outside to play or something.*" Monica expressed a similar sentiment. She had avoided interaction with other men because her husband had disapproved: "*I didn't want to cause any more problems*", she explained, knowing that interacting with other men most likely would lead to violence. Both Hilda and Monica's strategies to avoid conflicts with their spouses, reflects a conviction that men cannot be reasoned with; this is simply how they are, thus careful attention to men's temper is needed.

Women need to manage self-control and behavior not only due to high levels of violence, but because women are often blamed for the violence against them. Cahill (2000) demonstrates how women experience their own individual body as culpable for making dangers possible. If the body gets hurt or violated, then the blame must rest on the woman's failure to limit its movements:

She was somewhere she should not have been, moving her body in ways that she should not have, carrying on in a matter so free and easy so as to convey an utter abdication of her responsibility of self-protection, that is, of self-surveillance (Cahill 2000: 56).

⁵⁶ However, beyond trying to adjust their behavior in accordance to their husband's expectations and demands Lundgren asserts that woman's strategies are not goal-oriented. Gradually the woman will internalize the submission by making his reality hers, as discussed in chapter 3.

This quote can be seen in relation to what I discussed in previous chapters, where I showed that women are often blamed for violence perpetrated against them if they transgress moral boundaries. I drew on McCallum (1999), who argued that women are still expected to control themselves sexually, psychologically and spatially. I showed that in Guatemala, transgression of moral and physical boundaries affect how cases will be treated in the criminal-justice system. Women's movement in the public sphere, then, is not only affected by the risk of violence, but by their knowing how the violence against them may be viewed. Therefore, self-surveillance becomes an important avoidance strategy.

Women's fear of violence as political fear

Robin (2004) opens for the possibility of thinking about women's fear of violence as political fear, an approach I find useful for my research. Robin claims that the way we understand fear today, ignore or downplay everyday forms of fear, which reinforce a repressive social order, constrain freedom, and create or perpetuate inequality. By political fear, the author refers to

a people's felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being - the fear of terrorism, panic over crime, anxiety about moral decay – or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups. What makes both types of fears political rather than personal is that they emanate from society or have consequences for society (2004: 2).

According to Robin, private fears - such as fear of flying - have little impact beyond ourselves, while political fear arises from conflicts within and between societies. Political fear is often associated with government acts, but not necessarily, at least not overtly. He exemplifies with the fear a woman has of her abusive husband. To the casual observer, this fear is personal, the product of a private derangement of power. However, it is in fact political: they spring from pervasive social inequities, and help sustain long traditions of rule over women:

These inequities and traditions are often reinforced, however indirectly, and created, however remotely, by government policies. Behind the husband's abuse of his wife lie centuries of laws and doctrines awarding him authority over her [...] (2004: 3)

Considering women's fear political fear because it derives from social structures is applicable in the Guatemalan context. We have seen in previous chapters that highly unequal gender roles have put women in a disadvantaged position - economically, politically, and within the family – which affects how violence against women is viewed, treated, and prevented. For Robin, political fear is “a friend of the familiar – laws, elites, institutions, power, and authority – and a consort of the conventional – morality and ideology [...]” (2004: 24). This relates directly to my argument that women's fear of violence and crime not only refers to direct, physical violence in public or private sphere. As we have seen in previous chapters, structural violence, such as institutionalized misogyny and racism, affects how women are treated within the legal institutions that have been designed to assist them. As a result, women have been placed in a disadvantaged position where violence against them is normalized and sometimes not even considered violence. We have seen that moral and physical transgressions of gender norms affect how violence against women is viewed as well as the sanctions taken. All these elements affect women's sense of fear. For instance, knowing that chances are poor for receiving assistance and protection when reporting violence inevitably increase women's sense of fear. We have seen in the previous chapters that women have little trust in the judicial system. The case of Jenifer illustrates how many women's fear directly “emanates from society”; fear of her abusive husband is greatly increased due to the government's management of the case.

Jenifer, 34, was staying at the Wayak' shelter due to years of abuse by her husband against both herself and their children:

He hit me through all my pregnancies, even put a knife to my throat. But the last time was the worst [pointing at the little girl hanging from her chest]. He hit me all the time, so finally I had it – I left. First we went to my family, but he found us, then we came here. Costó mucho – it was hard - getting in to a shelter. I begged the judges to let me go to a shelter because I wasn't safe with my family either. He came to their house and threatened them all the time. He said that he would kill me when he found me.

Now, at the shelter with her seven children and away from her husband, she was still afraid. The police had not been able to catch her husband, although there was a warrant out on him. He had previously explained to their 13-year old son that he was going to the United States and when he came back he would change his name, but he would still find them. Jenifer was scared of going back to her hometown because her husband might be hiding there: “*He said*

he was going to the States, but maybe it was a lie. If he ever finds me, he will kill me, no doubt.”

Due to fear of reprisals from her husband, Jenifer had to stay at the shelter with her children for indefinite time. Although Jenifer’s sense of fear is due to her husband’s threats, it is imperative to highlight that the lack of protection and assistance from the State enabled fear and helplessness in Jenifer’s life. She had little faith in the judicial system due to previous experience; I showed in chapter 3 that Jenifer had reported her husband three times before yet nothing had happened. Only after her husband had raped their oldest daughter, did the police interfere. Due to her own experience, then, she knew that if she went back to her hometown, the police would do little to catch her husband who was on the run as well as fail to provide protection to her and her children. For Jenifer, the fear of violence not only involved fear of direct, physical violence. Knowing that she would receive little support and protection from the police increased her fear of violence. In the previous chapter I used the concept of a continuum of violence to discuss how violence is so prevalent in women’s lives. Cockburn extends the concept a bit further and claims that the continuum of violence “runs through the social, the economic, and the political, with gender relations penetrating all these forms of relations, including economic power” (2004: 43). Cockburn’s contention is relevant here. As we have seen, women generally have little trust in the Guatemalan legal system. Historic, widespread immunity in Guatemala has created great mistrust of government agents. Both state action and state inaction have affected women’s fear of violence. The state’s failure to investigate and prosecute violent offenders exacerbates women’s fear of violence, as it is commonly understood that people can assault, rape, and murder without facing accountability.

Conclusion to the chapter

In this chapter I have explored how women manage fear of violence. Because the threat of violence is so great, it effects women’s day-to-day lives and manifests itself in strategies women employ to avoid violence, both in public and private spheres. Surveillance, both of self and others, became a way of managing fear. We have seen that violence has become such a normal part of everyday life that women must manage fear even in intimate relationships. For instance, Hilda had left her husband immediately after he started to psychologically abuse

her. Because violence in intimate relationships has been normalized in Guatemala, she expected that physical abuse would ensue. As illustrated through the case of Jenifer, women's fear of violence can be considered political fear because it emanates from society; women's fear is increased because violence has become normalized in laws, institutions and gender ideology.

Concluding remarks

Throughout these chapters I have explored violence, crime, and fear in Guatemala. I started by showing how violence permeates Guatemalan society in chapter 1. Although I recognize that it affects *both* men and women, I have argued for the relevance of distinguishing between violence against men and women. Despite more awareness and implementation of laws protecting their rights, violence against women in Guatemala is alarmingly prevalent. This, I have argued, is because much violence has become normalized. Unequal gender relations, including patriarchy and machismo and the ideal of the “good woman”, put women in a disadvantaged and vulnerable position, as showed in chapter 2. This gender ideology suffuses much of Guatemalan society, both on the street, in the home, in the courtroom, and at the scene of the crime. In chapter 3 I explored how this has contributed to normalization and, to a large degree, societal acceptance of much violence. The result is that it has been considered a normal part of everyday life and something that women should endure. I showed how some women have been considered “worthy” victims and others not, largely based on ethnicity and social status. This also affected how violence against them is viewed and the way their cases are treated in the criminal-justice system. Failing to acknowledge particular acts as violent not only minimizes people’s experience and denies them a voice but actively undermines their pursuit of justice (Hume 2004). It was essential to address the high level of impunity while discussing normalization of violence, due to the historic impunity that has characterized women’s cases. I have been particularly concerned with how impunity has reigned in cases where the victims’ character has been considered morally ambiguous.

Throughout the chapters I gradually sought to explore how women manage the threat of violence and fear. I have explored how violence has become such a pervasive part of women’s everyday lives that I have referred to it as a continuum of violence, as discussed in chapter 4. Because both the street and the home present palpable dangers for women and because violence in the “street” penetrates the (perceived) safety of the home, the home can no longer be seen as an immune space. Therefore, I have claimed that there are no more “safe-zones” in women’s lives. Managing fear, then, has become an important part of everyday life, as we saw in chapter 5. Fear and the constant threat of violence were so great that women were forced to employ strategies to avoid it. Because violence permeates their lives, women

have been forced to manage fear even in intimate relationships. For instance, we saw that Hilda had left her husband immediately after he started to psychologically abuse her. Because violence in intimate relationships has become normalized in Guatemala, she expected that physical abuse would follow.

Although I have explored some of the root causes of the normalization of violence against women in Guatemala, I do not pretend to have the solution to the problem. There are many brave Guatemalan women - and men - who have dedicated their lives to fighting violence against women and their increased attention to the subject has led to the implementation of laws and government pressure in solving these crimes. There are numerous organizations working for women's rights, which despite lack of resources continue their struggle on a daily basis. Moreover, individual women stand up against injustice and refuse to be victims. Many women I talked to left their abusive husbands despite having no financial resources and few employment opportunities, which illustrates the courage of Guatemalan women.

However, it is clear that measures taken to stem the high levels of violence have not been sufficient. As we have seen, violence against women has deep historical and cultural roots that implementation of new laws will not easily transform. First and foremost must types of violence that have traditionally been "invisible", such as domestic violence, be recognized as a serious crime, not only in legislation but in norms and attitudes throughout society.

One of the purposes of the discussion on violence against women in Guatemala was to show that the state's handling of cases has been inadequate. Although legislation has been changed, norms and institutional structures are more difficult to change. Stanko has argued that women's fear of crime is "more a reflection of women's social location within intersections of gender, class, and ability structures" (1995: 58), thus we must reconsider what we mean by crime prevention and fear reduction. In Guatemala constant fear of crime is a reality for both men and women. However, due to a societal acceptance of much violence against women, even in the criminal-justice system, fear alters their everyday life. My analysis have been influenced by Robin (2004) who suggests that women's fear of violence can be seen as political fear, as the inequities and traditions that enables violence against women, are often created and reinforced by government policies. In other words, women's fear is increased because violence has become normalized in laws, institutions and gender ideology. Women know, both because of statistics and their own experiences, that their cases will most likely end in impunity. We saw throughout the chapters that lack of faith in government officials to

handle cases of violence, affect women's individual experiences. Knowing that not only it is unlikely that the state will offer protection and assistance, but that the perpetrator will most likely go free, exacerbates fear of violence. Because if victims of violence cannot turn to the state for support and assistance, then who can they turn to?

If we are to take Robin's urge to consider women's fear as political fear seriously, then the structures that enable normalization of violence throughout society must be recognized as a serious obstacle to women's quality of life. What is needed is not increased legislation, but a transformation in gender ideology. Further research is needed on how violence against women is condoned and legitimized based on transgression of gender boundaries not only by civil society, but by the criminal-justice system. Only by understanding how acts of violence become normalized throughout society, can we aim to eradicate the norms and structures that greatly impede women's sense of security, their capabilities, and pursuit of justice.

My intention has been to portray women's everyday reality in Guatemala. I was continuously encouraged by women, particularly those who had suffered domestic violence, to highlight their struggles, not only with violent partners but with the justice system. Although I do not claim to have "spoken" on behalf of the women, I maintain that it is important to let women's voices be heard. Unfortunately, this is most often not the case in Guatemala. To end with a quote from one of my favorite authors: *There's really no such thing as the "voiceless". There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard* (Arundhati Roy).

References

Asencio, Marysol W.

1999 Machos and Sluts: Gender, Sexuality, and Violence among a Cohort of Puerto Rican Adolescents. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 13 (1):107-126.

Acan-EFE

2014 Veinte pilotos han sido asesinados en 2014. *Prensa Libre*, 24 January. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/justicia/asesinato_de_pilotos-pandillas-extorsion-pdh_0_1072092962.html, accessed 9 May 2014.

Alden, Amie

2010 A continuum of violence: A gendered analysis of post conflict transformation. *POLIS Journal*, Vol.3.

Alford-Jones, Kelsey

2013 Remilitarization Gives Rise to New Tensions and Violence in Guatemala. *Upside Down World* online magazine, 25 January. Available from <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/guatemala-archives-33/4095-remilitarization-gives-rise-to-new-tensions-and-violence-in-guatemala>, accessed 3 April 2014.

Alma, Hija de la violencia

2013 Documentary, *Arte*. Available from <http://alma.arte.tv/es/>, accessed 12 May 2014.

Alston, Philip

2007 Guatemala: Civil and political rights, including the questions of disappearances and summary executions. Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Available from http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/pdf_state/Alston-Guatemala-A-HRC-4-20-Add-2.pdf, accessed 10 April 2014.

Amnesty International

2005 Guatemala: No protection, no justice: killings of women in Guatemala.

Available from

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR34/017/2005/en/d7c31231-d4fe-11dd-8a23-d58a49c0d652/amr340172005en.pdf>, accessed 16 February 2014.

2011 Testigos periciales reciben amenazas de muerte tras juicio por masacre en Guatemala. Available from

<http://www.amnesty.org/es/news-and-updates/testigos-periciales-amenazas-muerte-juicio-masacre-guatemala-2011-08-12>, accessed 3 April 2014.

Artigas, Edda Gaviola

2008 “Sólo se hizo justicia.” El caso de Doña Juana Méndez Rodríguez Vrs. el Agente de la Policía Nacional Civil, Antonio Rutilo Matías López. Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala. Available from

<http://www.bantaba.ehu.es/obs/ocont/obs/gen/doc/iccp/juamen/>, accessed 4 June 2014.

Asad, Talal

1986 The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus, 141-164. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Bannister, Jon and Nick Fyfe

2001 Introduction: Fear and the City. *Urban Studies* 38 (5-6): 807-813.

Begley, Larissa R.

2009 The other side of fieldwork: experiences and challenges of conducting research in the border area of Rwanda/eastern Congo. *Anthropology Matters* 11 (2): 1-11.

Benson, Peter, Edward F. Fischer, and Kedron Thomas

2008 Resocializing Suffering: Neoliberalism, Accusation, and the Sociopolitical Context of Guatemala's New Violence. *Latin American Perspectives* 35 (5): 38-58.

Berns, Nancy

2001 Degendering the Problem and Gendering the Blame: Political Discourse on Women and Violence. *Gender and Society* 15 (2): 262-281.

Bevan, Anna

2012 Cuando la seguridad privada se hace cargo en Guatemala. *BBC Mundo*, 7 December. Available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2012/12/121207_proliferan_empresas_seguridad_guatemala_msd.shtml, accessed 26 April 2014.

Boesten, Jelke

2010a Inequality, normative violence and livable life: Judith Butler and Peruvian Reality. *POLIS Working Papers* No.1, 1-22.

2010b Analyzing Rape Regimes at the Interface of War and Peace in Peru. *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* Vol.4, 110-129.

Bourdieu, Pierre

1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2001 [1998] *Masculine Domination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc Wacquant

2004 Symbolic Violence. In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 272-274. Blackwell Publishing.

Bourgois, Philippe

1996 In Search of Masculinity: Violence, Respect and Sexuality among Puerto Rican Crack Dealers in East Harlem. *British Journal of Criminology* 36 (3): 412-427.

2004a US Inner-city Apartheid: The Contours of Structural and Interpersonal Violence. In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 301-307. Blackwell Publishing.

2004b The Continuum of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador. In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 425-434. Blackwell Publishing.

Broch-Due, Vigdis

2005 Violence and Belonging: Analytical Reflections. In *Violence and Belonging: The Quest for Identity in Post-Colonial Africa*, edited by Vigdis Broch-Due, 1-40. London and New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith

1990 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.

2004 *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London and New York: Verso.

2009 *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York: Verso.

Cahill, Ann J.

2000 Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body. *Hypatia* 15 (1): 43-63.

Caldeira, Teresa P. R.

1996 Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation. *Public Culture* 8: 303-328.

2000 *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Carey Jr., David and M. Gabriela Torres

2010 Precursors to Femicide: Guatemalan Women in a Vortex of Violence. *Latin American Research Review* 45 (3): 142-164.

CEH, Commission for Historical Clarification

1999 Guatemala Memory of Silence: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification: Conclusions and Recommendations. Guatemala City: CEH.

Cockburn, Cynthia

2004 The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace. In *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 24-44. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Corzantes, Geovanni Contreras

2013 Vigente ley contra el robo de teléfonos celulares. *Prensa Libre*, 9 October. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/justicia/Vigente-ley-robo-celulares_0_1007899230.html, accessed 4 February 2014.

2014 Inseguridad es el gran problema. *Prensa Libre*, 14 January, page 2.

De Cicco, Gabriela

2013 Guatemala Genocide Trial – Women Seeking The Truth. Association for Women's Rights in Development, AWID. Available from <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Friday-Files/Guatemala-Genocide-Trial-Women-Seeking-the-Truth>, accessed 12 March 2014.

Di Leonardo, Micaela

1991 Introduction. Gender, Culture and Political Economy: Feminist Anthropology in Historical Perspective. In *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge*, edited by Micaela di Leonardo, 1-50. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ehlers, Tracy Bachrach

1991 Debunking Marianismo: Economic Vulnerability and Survival Strategies among Guatemalan Wives. *Ethnology* 30 (1): 1-16.

England, Sarah

2013 Protecting a Woman's Honor or Protecting Her Sexual Freedom?: Challenging the Guatemalan Patriarchal State through Reforms to Sexual Violence Legislation. *Latin American Perspectives* 41 (1): 124-142.

Farmer, Paul

2004a On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below. In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 281-289. Blackwell Publishing.

2004b An Anthropology of Structural Violence. *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305-325.

Forster, Cindy

1999 Violent and Violated Women: Justice and Gender in Rural Guatemala, 1936-1956. *Journal of Women's History* 11 (3): 55-77.

Foucault, Michel

1995 [1977] *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Franco, Jean

1999 Killing Priests, Nuns, Women, Children. In *Critical Passions: Selected Essays by Jean Franco*, edited by Mary Louise Pratt and Kathleen Newman, 9-17. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

2006 Rape and Human Rights. *Modern Language Association* 121 (5): 1662-1664.

Furedi, Frank

2002 [1997] *Culture of Fear: Risk-taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*. London and New York: Continuum.

2007 The only thing we have to fear is the 'culture of fear' itself. *Spiked* online magazine, 4 April. Available from <http://www.spikedonline.com/newsite/article/3053#.U9VIY0aKCUCk>, accessed 7 June 2014.

Galtung, Johan

1969 Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3): 167-191.

1990 Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (3): 291-305.

GAM, Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo

2012 Extorsiones continúan en aumento durante 2012. Available from <http://areadetransparencia.blogspot.no/2012/03/extorsiones-siguen-aumentando-en.html>, accessed 8 January 2014.

GHRC, Guatemala Human Rights Commission

2009 Guatemala's Femicide Law: Progress Against Impunity? Available from http://www.ghrc-usa.org/Publications/Femicide_Law_ProgressAgainstImpunity.pdf, accessed 11 November 2013.

Giles, Wenona and Jennifer Hyndman

2004 *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Gíron, Anna Belinda Sandoval

2007 Taking Matters Into One's Hands: Lynching And Violence In Post-Civil War Guatemala. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 36 (4): 357-379.

Godoy Paiz, Paula

2008 Women in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area: Violence, Law, and Social Justice. *Studies in Social Justice* 2 (1): 27-47.

Granito: How to Nail a Dictator

2011 Documentary, Skylight Pictures.

Green, Linda

1999 *Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan Widows in Rural Guatemala*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gutmann, Matthew C.

1996 *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Hale, Charles R.

2006 *Más Que un Indio (More Than an Indian): Racial Ambivalence and The Paradox Of Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Human Rights Watch

2013 World Report: Guatemala. Available from <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/guatemala?page=1>, accessed 7 January 2014.

Hume, Mo

2004 "It's as if you don't know, because you don't do anything about it": gender and violence in El Salvador. *Environment and Urbanization* 16 (2): 63-72.

2008 The Myths of Violence: Gender, Conflict, and Community in El Salvador. *Latin American Perspectives* 35 (5): 59-76.

INACIF

Información Anual 2008-2013. Available from http://www.inacif.gob.gt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=97&Itemid=18, accessed 7 January 2014.

Juárez, Tulio

2013 Más de 40 mil denuncias en el MP por violencia intrafamiliar. *El Periódico*, 24 November. Available from <http://www.elperiodico.com.gt/es/20131124/pais/238505/>, accessed 7 January 2014.

Juárez, Eder

2014 GAM: 23,048 extorsiones en cuatro años. *La Hora*, 18 March. Available from <http://www.lahora.com.gt/index.php/nacional/guatemala/actualidad/192967-gam-23048-extorsiones-en-cuatro-anos>, accessed 4 June 2014.

Kelly, Liz

1988 *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kovats-Bernat, Christopher J.

2002 Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork Amid Violence and Terror. *American Anthropologist* 104 (1): 208-222.

LA Ruta

2010 *Mindy's Nightmare*, video documentary. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnGcwyVgvUc>, accessed 28 April 2014.

Lara, Julio F.

2013 Extorsionan desde la cárcel. *Prensa Libre*, 19 December, page 3.

Leacock, Eleanor Burke

2008 *Myths of Male Dominance: Collected Articles on Women Cross-Culturally*. Haymarket Books.

Lewy, Frank La Rue

2013 Silenciando a la Prensa. *Prensa Libre*, 22 August. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/opinion/Silenciando-Prensa_0_979102102.html, accessed 24 August 2013.

Linke, Uli and Danielle Taana Smith

2009 *Cultures of Fear: A Critical Reader*, edited by Uli Linke and Danielle Taana Smith, 1-17. London and New York: Pluto Press.

López, Miguel

2013a Continúa ola de robos en Antigua. *Prensa Libre*, 28 February. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/sacatepequez/Continua-ola-robos-Antigua_0_874112633.html, accessed 28 April 2014.

2013b Reportan violaciones en Cerro de la Cruz. *Prensa Libre*, 13 August. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/sacatepequez/Reportan-violaciones-Cerro-Cruz_0_973702673.html, accessed 16 August 2013.

Lundgren, Eva

2012 [1993] *Våldets normaliseringsprocess och andra våldsförståelser*. Roks.

Lundgren, Eva, Gun Heimer, Jenny Westerstrand and Anne-Marie Kalliokoski

2001 Captured Queen: Men's violence against women in "equal" Sweden – a prevalence study. Available from <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/gender/vaw/surveys/Sweden/publication.pdf>, accessed 21 May 2014.

Manz, Beatriz

2008 The Continuum of Violence in Post-war Guatemala. *The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 52 (2):151-164.

Martínez, A.

2013 Denuncian aumento de extorsiones en Xela. *Prensa Libre*, 30 July, page 23.

McCallum, Cecilia

1999 Restraining Women: Gender, Sexuality, and Modernity in Salvador da Bahia. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 18 (3): 275-293.

McNeish, John-Andrew and Oscar López Rivera

2009 The Ugly Poetics of Violence in Post-Accord Guatemala. *Forum for Development Studies*, 36 (1): 49-77.

2012 The multiple forms of violence in post-war Guatemala. In *The Peace In Between: Post-war violence and peacekeeping*, edited by Astri Suhrke and Mats Berdal, 289-306. London and New York: Routledge.

McSherry, J. Patrice and Raúl Molina Mejía

1992 Confronting the Question of Justice in Guatemala. *Social Justice* Vol. 19, No. 3 (49): 1-28.

Mejía, Carlos

2014 Violaciones se incrementaron en un 47% en 2013. *Siglo Veintiuno*, 6 January. Available from <http://m.s21.com.gt/nacionales/2014/01/06/violaciones-se-incrementaron-47-2013>, accessed 10 June 2014.

Melhuus, Marit

1996 Power, Value and the Ambiguous Meanings of Gender. In *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*, edited by Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen, 230-259. London, New York: Verso.

Melhuus, Marit and Kristi Anne Stølen

1996 *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*, edited by Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen. London, New York: Verso.

Menjívar, Cecilia

2008 Violence and Women's Lives in Eastern Guatemala: A Conceptual Framework. *Latin American Research Review* 43 (3):109-136.

2011 *Enduring Violence: Ladina Women's Lives in Guatemala*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Merry, Sally Engle

2009 *Gender Violence: A Cultural Perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.

MINGOB,

2012 Policía Nacional Civil cambia uniforme a partir de 2013. Available at:
http://www.mingob.gob.gt.previewdns.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=2400:polic%C3%ADa-nacional-civil-cambia-uniforme-a-partir-de-2013&Itemid=103, accessed 12 February 2014.

Monzón, Kenneth

2014 Este año tendremos 35 mil policías. *Nuestro Diario*, 9 January, page 8.

Moser, Caroline and Cathy McIlwane

2001 *Violence in a Post-Conflict Context: Urban Poor Perceptions from Guatemala*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications.

MRGI, Minority Rights Group International

2011 State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Guatemala. Available from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e16d37246.html>, accessed 16 April 2014.

MSF, Médicos Sin Fronteras

2009 Sobrevivientes de Violencia Sexual: Derecho a la atención médica y psicológica. Available from <http://www.medicossinfronteras.org.mx/web/public/files/msf-reporte-guate-violencia-sexual.pdf>, accessed 14 June 2014.

Nelson, Diana M.

1999 *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Nencel, Lorraine

1996 *Pacharacas, Putas and Chicas de su casa: Labelling, Femininity and Men's Sexual Selves in Lima, Peru*. In *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*, edited by Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen, 56-82. London, New York: Verso.

Nordstrom, Carolyn and Antonius C. G. M. Robben

1995 *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, edited by

Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C. G. M. Robben. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Nordstrom, Carolyn and Antonius C. G. M. Robben

1995 Introduction: The Anthropology and Ethnography of Violence and Sociopolitical Conflict. In *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, edited by Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C. G. M. Robben, 1-23. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Numeremos Guatemala

2011 Informe No. 2: Femicidio en Guatemala. DMC Consultores, S. A. and Aragón & Assoc. Available from http://bd.cdmujeres.net/sites/default/files/documentos/publicaciones/femicidio_en_guatemala.pdf, accessed 9 March 2014.

Nussbaum, Martha C.

2000 *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2005 Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities. *Journal of Human Development* Vol. 6, No. 2.

ODHAG, Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala

1998 Informe de la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, REMHI: *Guatemala: Nunca Más*. Donostia: Tercera Prensa-Hirugarren Prentsa S.L.

Olivera, Mercedes and Victoria J. Furio

2006 Violencia Femicida: Violence against Women and Mexico's Structural Crisis. *Latin American Perspectives* 33 (2): 104-114.

Orantes, Coralia

2014 Violencia a mujeres, el delito más denunciado. *Siglo Veintiuno*, 23 July. Available from <http://m.s21.com.gt/nacionales/2014/07/23/violencia-mujeres-delito-mas-denunciado>, accessed 27 July 2014.

Orozco, A. and Castro, S.

2014 Violencia intrafamiliar ha subido 439%. *Prensa Libre*, 18 July. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/comunitario/Progreso-Sacatepequez-Retalhuleu-denuncias-violencia_intrafamiliar_0_1176482569.html, accessed 23 July 2014.

Pacheco, Daniel

2012 Guatemala Must Fight Impunity from Within: CICIG Director. *InSight Crime: Organized Crime in the Americas*. Available from <http://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/guatemala-must-fight-impunity-from-within-cicig-director>, accessed 4 January 2014.

Pain, Rachel

1991 Space, sexual violence and social control: integrating geographical and feminist analysis of women's fear of crime. *Progress in Human Geography* 15 (4): 415-431.

Palermo, Tia, Jennifer Bleck, and Amber Peterman

2013 Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, December.

Patzán, José and Walter Sactic

2013 Año cerrará con más linchamientos. *Prensa Libre*, 9 December. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/justicia/Ano-cerrara-linchamientos_0_1044495550.html, accessed 14 May 2013.

Paxtor, Edwin

2013 Pobladores encuentran dos cadáveres en aldea chiquimulteca. *Prensa Libre* 10 November. Available from http://www.prensalibre.com/chiquimula/pobladores-encuentran-dos-cadaveres-aldea_San_Esteban-Chiquimula_0_1027097382.html, accessed November 10 2013.

PDH, Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

2012 Violencia sexual en contra de niñas, adolescentes y mujeres en Guatemala. Available from <http://www.pdh.org.gt/documentos/informes-especiales/viewdownload/29-informes-especiales/256-informe-violncia-sexual-en-contra-de-ninas-adolescentes-y-mujeres-de-guatemala.html>, accessed 19 March 2014.

2013 Informe Anual Circunstanciado: Informe de Situación. Available from <http://www.google.no/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pdh.org.gt%2Faccesinfo%2Findex.php%2Fmision-vision-y-objetivos%2Ffinish%2F96-mision-vision-y-objetivos%2F375-informe-de-situacion-2013.html&ei=KIXWU4yVJsr-ygPHtIHobw&usq=AFQjCNG5Bn0KS9Un6J19ni45fykQEZgHpw>, accessed 19 March 2014.

Peacock, Susan C. and Adriana Beltrán

2003 *Hidden Powers in Post-conflict Guatemala: Illegal Armed Groups and the Forces Behind Them*. Washington Office on Latin America, WOLA.

Prensa Libre

2013a Capturados seis aspirantes a policías. 15 December, page 10.

2013b Subinspector policial será destituido por amenazas a periodistas. 26 August.

Available from

http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/politica/APG-demanda_0_981502147.html, accessed 15 November 2013.

2014 Un muerto y 12 heridos deja asalto a bus en ruta al Atlántico. 4 February.

Available from

http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/justicia/muerto-heridos-asalto-bus-ruta-Atlanticom_0_1078692359.html, accessed 5 February 2014.

Ramírez, Rafael L.

1999 *What It Means To Be a Man: Reflections on Puerto Rican Masculinity*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press.

Robin, Corey

2004 *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rodgers, Dennis and Bruce O'Neill

2012 Infrastructural violence: Introduction to the special issue. *Ethnography* 13 (4): 401-412.

Rodríguez, Shirlie

2013 Violencia en los hogares aumenta. *El Quetzalteco*, 30 August. Available from

<http://elquetzalteco.com.gt/quetzaltenango/violencia-en-los-hogares-aumenta>,
accessed 5 November 2013.

Romo, Rafael

2013 Guatemalans shocked by girls' violent deaths. *CNN*, 19 January. Available from <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/17/world/americas/guatemala-girl-killings/>, accessed 21 January 2014.

Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Louise Lamphere

1974 Introduction. In *Women, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, 1-17. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Russell, Diana E. H.

2001 Introduction: The Politics of Femicide. In *Femicide in Global Perspective*, edited by Diana E. H. Russell and Roberta Harmes, 3-11. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University Press.

Sactic, Wálter

2013 Taxista guardaba objetos de víctimas. *Prensa Libre*, 17 December, page 12.

2014 La impunidad persiste. *Prensa Libre*, 4 January, page 4-5.

Sanford, Victoria

2008 From Genocide to Femicide: Impunity and Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Guatemala. *Journal of Human Rights* 7: 104-122.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

1993 *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Philippe Bourgois

2004 Introduction: Making Sense of Violence. In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 1-31. Blackwell Publishing.

Schirmer, Jennifer

1998 *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.

Sieder, Rachel

2011 Contested sovereignties: Indigenous law, violence and state effects in postwar Guatemala. *Critique of Anthropology* 0 (0) 1-24.

2013 Sexual violence and gendered subjectivities: indigenous women's search for justice in Guatemala. In *Gender Justice and Legal Pluralities: Latin American and African Perspectives*, edited by Rachel Sieder and John-Andrew McNeish, 109-132. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Smith, Carol A.

1995 Race-Class-Gender Ideology in Guatemala: Modern and Anti-Modern Forms. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (4): 723-749.

Stanko, Elizabeth A.

1985 *Intimate Intrusions: Women's Experience of Male Violence*. London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

1987 Typical Violence, Normal Precaution: Men, Women and Interpersonal Violence in England, Wales, Scotland and the USA. In *Women, Violence and Social Control*, edited by Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard, 122-135. Macmillan Press.

1990 *Everyday Violence: How Women and Men Experience Sexual and Physical Danger*. London, Sydney, and Wellington: Pandora.

1995 Women, Crime, and Fear. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 539: 46-58.

Steinberg, Michael K. and Matthew J. Taylor

2003 Public Memory and Political Power in Guatemala's Postconflict Landscape. *Geographical Review* 93 (4):449-468.

Stevens, Evelyn P.

1973 Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo in Latin America. In *Female and Male in Latin America: Essays*, edited by Ann Pescatello, 89-102. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Stillman, Sarah

2007 'The Missing White Girls Syndrome': Disappeared Women and Media Activism. *Gender and Development* 15 (3): 491-502.

Stølen, Kristi Anne

1996 The Power of Gender Discourses in a Multi-Ethnic Community in Rural Argentina. In *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*, edited by Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen, 159-184. London, New York: Verso.

Taylor, Christopher C.

1999 *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

The Guardian

2013 Guatemalan president accused of involvement in civil war atrocities. 5 April. Available from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/05/guatemalan-president-accused-civil-war>, accessed 28 February 2014.

Torres, Gabriela M.

2005 Bloody Deeds/*Hechos Sangrientos*: Reading Guatemala's Record of Political Violence in Cadaver Reports. In *When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror*, edited by Cecilia Menjívar and Néstor Rodríguez, 143-169. Austin: University of Texas Press.

UN General Assembly

1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Available from <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>, accessed 25 May 2014.

UNDP

2006 Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-Affected Countries: Human Security. Available from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/thematic/conflict/ConflictEvaluation2006.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2013.

2013 Informe de Desarrollo Humano para América Latina 2013-2014. Seguridad Ciudadana con Rostro Humano: Diagnóstico y propuestas para América Latina.

Available from

<http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/dam/rblac/img/IDH/IDH-AL%20Informe%20completo.pdf>, accessed 22 January 2013.

Valdez, Sandra

2013a Exesposo tortura a mujer en cueva. *Prensa Libre*, 5 September. Available from http://208.96.32.249/noticias/Exesposo-tortura-mujer-cueva_0_987501269.html, accessed 5 September 2013.

2013b Guatemala concentra más zonas peligrosas. *Prensa Libre*, 19 August, page 10.

Ventura, Carlos

2013 Delinquen cerca de sedes policiales. *Prensa Libre*, 4 September, page 20.

Viato, Roberto Villalobos

2013 Insensibilidad social. *Revista D, Prensa Libre*, 6 December.

When the Mountains Tremble

1983 Documentary, Skylight Pictures.

Wells, Miriam

2013 Murders of Guatemala Bus Drivers Double in 2013. *InSight Crime: Organized Crime in the Americas*, 29 July. Available from <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/driving-guatemala-buses-gets-even-more-deadly>, accessed 5 January 2014.

WHO, World Health Organization

2007 Informe estadístico de la violencia en Guatemala. Available from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/national_activities/informe_estadistico_violencia_guatemala.pdf, accessed 17 February 2014.

2013 Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Available from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf?ua=1, accessed 17 February 2014.

WOLA, Washington Office on Latin America

2010 Head of CICIG in Guatemala Resigns, Raises Questions about Guatemala's Commitment to Fight Impunity. Available from http://www.wola.org/news/head_of_cicig_in_guatemala_resigns_raises_questions_about_guatemalas_commitment_to_fight_impunit, accessed 7 November 2013.

Ystanes, Margit

2011 *Precarious Trust: Problems of Managing Self and Sociality in Guatemala*. Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, Department of Social Anthropology: University of Bergen.

Zur, Judith

1994 The Psychological Impact of Impunity. *Anthropology Today* 10 (3): 12-17.

