VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S LIVES IN EASTERN GUATEMALA
A Conceptual Framework*

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Abstract: *In this article, I outline a framework to examine women's lives in eastern Guatemala, how multiple forms of violence coalesce in their everyday lives, and how these become normalized so as to become invisible and "natural." Women in western Guatemala, mostly indigenous, have received the attention of scholars who are interested in unearthing the brutality of state terror and its gendered expressions in Guatemala. My discussion builds on previous research conducted among indigenous groups in Guatemala and renders a depiction of the broad reach of violence, including expressions that are so commonplace as to become invisible. I argue that an examination of multiple forms of violence in the lives of women in eastern Guatemala, who are nonindigenous, exposes the deep and broad manifestations of living in a society engulfed in violence, thus depicting the long arm of violence.*

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I outline a framework to examine Ladina women's lives in eastern Guatemala, how multiple forms of violence coalesce in their everyday lives, and how these forms of violence become normalized so as to become invisible or "natural." Women in western Guatemala, mostly indigenous, have received the attention of scholars (and with good reason) who are interested in unearthing the brutality of state terror and its gendered expressions in Guatemala. My discussion builds on previous

research conducted among indigenous groups in Guatemala to render a depiction of the broad reach of violence, including those instances that are so commonplace as to become invisible. Thus, I argue that an examination of multiple forms of violence in the lives of nonindigenous women in eastern Guatemala exposes the deep and broad consequences of living in a society engulfed in violence, thus depicting the long arm of violence.[1]

Guatemala is a society dealing with the aftermath of nearly four decades of state terror and one of the most unequal distributions of wealth in the hemisphere (Grandin 2000; Manz 2004). As do people living in postwar societies around the world, Guatemalans face multiple forms of violence, often at higher rates than during wartime. Some of the violence is directly related to the militarization of life during the political conflict, whereas other forms are tied to long-standing structural inequalities that assault the lives of the majority of Guatemalans. As Paul Farmer (2004b) notes, these forms of violence are interrelated, as one makes the other possible; thus, the regular violation of human rights as a product of capitalism is not unrelated, and, indeed, is possible only through the use of state-sponsored violence (Binford 2004). With respect to Guatemala, Angela Godoy Snodgrass (2005) notes that boundaries between common and political crime have become blurred in many parts of the world; these familiar distinctions have been based on an abstraction that has become increasingly tendentious in recent years because it does not stand up to empirical scrutiny.[2] I therefore follow Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois's approach (2004, 4) to highlight the blurring of the distinctions between wartime and peacetime, "to 'trouble' distinctions between the visible and invisible, legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence in times that can best be described as neither war nor peacetime."[3] I do so by focusing on the lives of Ladinas in eastern Guatemala, an examination that exposes the insidious effects of generalized violence on the everyday lives of women.

Although a neat compartmentalization of the multiple forms of violence is rarely found in practice, in this piece, I disaggregate them only for the purpose of presenting this analytical prism. Following Bourgois

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1. I borrow this metaphor (i.e., the long arm of the law) from other areas and life-course studies that capture the long-term effects of events and circumstances in people's lives (see Haas 2007).

2. Edelberto Torres-Rivas (1998, 49) notes that the criminogenic conditions of postwar violence can be examined within the context of power and state violence: "the bad example of the use of violence on the part of the state is then imitated by the citizens."

3. This point is exemplified in the words of one of Daniel Wilkinson's (2004, 200) informants, "People say that before the fighting we had peace. But what do you call peace? The war begins at the psychological level, in the plantations, where every day we were dying a little bit, every day we were consuming ourselves."

(2001), in this framework I include structural, political, symbolic, and everyday interpersonal forms of violence to unravel the interrelated strands of violence that shape life in Guatemala. I add gender and gendered forms of violence, as they coalesce in everyday life and not only in extraordinary events in the women's lives.[4] Taken individually, some of these forms of violence can be so general as to be visible when they occur anywhere, can be interpreted differently (e.g., structural violence can be viewed simply as poverty, without conceptualizing it as a form of violence), and can be applicable in any number of situations. However, taking these forms as a whole allows us to see that they are mutually constituted and form a context of violence that shapes the lives of women in particular ways. This framework therefore provides an ample lens that permits the analytical gaze to focus not only on physical, evident forms of violence but also on hidden though equally damaging forms, such as abuse, ill treatment, neglect, and victimization. As George Kent (2006, 55) notes: "The common thread in all these forms of violence is the fulfillment of one party's purposes at the expense of others. Violence entails the use of power." The examination I present here exposes the systematic patterns of disadvantage that are neither natural nor necessary (see also Kent 2006). Thus, I do not examine violence only in its direct physical manifestations. More important, I focus on those "assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 1). Significantly, I do not aim to argue that the lives of the women I came to know in Guatemala are only violent, as their reality is more nuanced and complex. However, I do focus on those aspects of violence in their quotidian lives so as to retrieve them from the recesses of normality.

As such, this framework permits an examination of the lives of women whose suffering is less likely to be noted because it is commonplace and does not result in immediate, direct physical injury. This approach brings out the unrecognized, normalized forms of violence that are deeply linked to the more visible forms of violence that have been so skillfully documented for the Mayas in western Guatemala. As Veena Das (1997, 567) aptly argues, "one can see suffering not only in extraordinary events such as those of police firing on crowds of young children, but also in the routine of everyday life." It is noteworthy that by unearthing the links between violence at the interpersonal level with broader structures, this project seeks analytical distance from cultural or individual-based explanations to elucidate the roots of violence in structures of power away from individual circumstances. Thus, it is not enough to interpret different situ-

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4. A focus on the everyday life "shows how social institutions are deeply implicated on two opposing modes—the production of suffering on the one hand, and of creating moral communities that could address it, on the other" (Das 1997, 563).

ations as forms of violence; it is necessary to trace them to the broader structures—beyond individuals—that make them possible.

There are three important considerations regarding this discussion of violence. First, the political economy of violence does not affect everyone in the same manner; violence weighs differently for those in dissimilar social locations. Women and men from different social classes and ethnic groups face different forms of violence, and they experience, interpret, and react to the same violence in different ways. And the different forms of violence constitute and shape one another, as class violence parallels sexual and ethnic violence, and they are often conflated in real life (Forster 1999, 59). Second, following the scholars on whose work I build this framework, violence is not simply an event, a palpable outcome that can be observed, reported, and measured. From the angle I propose, violence is a process, one that is embedded in the everyday lives of those who experience it. Third, as the Guatemalan sociologist Edelberto Torres-Rivas (1998, 48) observes, not all societies recognize the same things as violent, either in their origins or in their effects. Torres-Rivas's observation can be extended to researchers, as scholars often make use of different theoretical repertoires and viewpoints to examine the same cases and do not assess them in the same manner. Thus, in Rashomon-like fashion, the same situation might be described and interpreted in a very different light depending on the lens through which it is examined. In the rest of this article, I present one lens, one in which violence emerges as central, and I do so by borrowing from different perspectives.[5] I will present each of the components separately and will end with a discussion of how they are mutually constituted to affect life in a gender-specific fashion. As Ignacio Martín-Baró (1991b, 334) noted, considering other forms of violence besides the political-military in nature helps us to arrive at a picture that is more complex but also more distressing.

METHODS AND DATA

Observations come from sixty in-depth interviews and fieldwork I conducted among women in the Guatemalan Altiplano (thirty-one Maya)

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5. There have been many other conceptualizations of violence in Latin America. Some argue that warfare and ritual violence have been woven into the fabric of life in Latin America since antiquity (Chacon and Mendoza 2007), that a history of colonization through violence created political and economic relationships based on power, not law (Rosenberg 1991), that violence in Latin America is the result of struggles for power (Sosa Elízaga 2004), that it has cultural origins (Cueva Perus 2006), or that inequalities and a *machista* culture lay at the root of the high rates of violence in the region (UN Secretary General 2006). My aim here differs, as I present a theoretical lens that disaggregates violence to give attention to how the different forms of violence are mutually constituted to examine the normalization of violence in women's lives.

and in eastern Guatemala (twenty-nine nonindigenous Ladinas) between late 1994 and 2000. In this article, I focus only on the Ladinas in eastern Guatemala, a town I call San Alejo, drawing comparisons with the Maya women in the Altiplano only when applicable.[6] Even though I draw minimally on the empirical work I conducted in the Altiplano for the present work, the comparative perspective it offered me was crucial for developing the analytical lens I present here. Importantly, during my initial visits and conversations, I did not ask the women questions about violence, as the objective of the project was to study how women's informal networks help them deal with pregnancy-related health care and with their children's illnesses. However, in an inductive (and emic) fashion, this topic evolved from my fieldwork, as it was the women's words that called my attention to this aspect of their lives. I had expected, to a degree, that the Maya women in the Altiplano would bring up the topic of violence (particularly in its political forms). I had not anticipated, however, that the Ladinas would also bring up violence (in its different forms) in our conversations.

In addition to the interviews and follow-up conversations, I talked with the women's friends, neighbors, and family members. I met with community leaders and workers, including health-care workers, Catholic priests, and evangelical pastors, who complemented greatly my informants' own stories. My starting points to access the women in both sites were the local health posts, which gave me access to women from a wide range of social positions, including class and age variation. Even though the focus in both sites was on the women's lives, I also spoke informally with men during the course of the fieldwork, but these conversations were restricted to when women were present.

The women come from different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. The Ladinas who mentioned earning an income outside the home worked as teachers, street vendors, *comadronas* (midwives), store clerks, and domestics; one worked seasonally as a tomato picker; one made *cusha* (clandestine liquor for sale); and another was a photographer. Among the Maya, more than half mentioned that they worked as weavers, but in addition, they sold their textiles for export (mostly in Guatemala City) to intermediaries or in local fiestas and markets, cleaned houses, worked as clerks in stores, made tamales for sale, and worked as teachers and comadronas; one owned a pharmacy with her husband, and one made cusha for sale. A few had worked in *maquilas* or as domestics in Guatemala City. There were a couple of former students among the Ladinas but none among the indigenous.

6. The name of the town is fictitious, as are the names I have used in this article for the study participants.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Torres-Rivas (1998, 49) notes that structural violence (or structural repression) is

rooted in the uncertainty of everyday life caused by the insecurity of wages or income, a chronic deficit in food, dress, housing, and health care, and uncertainty about the future which is translated into hunger and delinquency, and a barely conscious feeling of failure. . . . It is often referred to as structural violence because it is reproduced in the context of the market, in exploitative labor relations, when income is precarious and it is concealed as underemployment, or is the result of educational segmentation and of multiple inequalities that block access to success.[7]

At the macro level, structural violence refers to the political-economic organization, such as unequal terms of trade and structural adjustment policies that make life more precarious, and not just for the poor. Farmer (2003, 40) notes that "the term is apt because such suffering is 'structured' by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire . . . to constrain agency."

An important feature of structural violence, Kent (2006, 55) notes, is that it is not visible in specific events. As Farmer (2004a, 307) observes, "structural violence is violence exerted systematically, that is, indirectly by everyone who belongs to a certain social order." Indeed, in Johan Galtung's (1969, 171) classic work, the differentiating aspect between direct and structural violence is that in the second there is no identifiable actor who does the harming, so that "violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances." Thus, in contrast with direct, physical violence, under structural violence people suffer harm indirectly, often through a slow and steady process; thus, most people are more capable of recognizing direct violence than they are of grasping indirect or structural violence in the social order (Kent 2006). As Galtung (1990) observed, to some, malnutrition and lack of access to goods and services do not amount to violence because they do not result in immediate killings, but to the weakest in society, they do amount to a slow death. An examination of the ills that attack the poor from this vantage point highlights how a political economy of inequality under neoliberal capitalism promotes social suffering. As Miguel Ángel Vite Pérez (2005) points out in his explanation of how individuals become unemployed, we must focus on how neoliberal economic regimes have led to labor instability, to the commodification of public services, and to a

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7. Galtung (1990) argues that direct violence is an event, that structural violence is a process, and that cultural violence—which normalizes and makes possible structural violence—is invariable.

generally precarious situation that engenders poverty, and not so much on the actual individual and his or her inability to keep a job.

Latin America historically has exhibited a high degree of income inequality relative to other regions, with the most unbalanced distribution of resources of all regions in the world (Hoffman and Centeno 2003). Guatemala has consistently ranked among the most unequal, even by Latin American standards. The richest 10 percent of Guatemalans earn 43.5 percent of the country's total income, whereas the poorest 30 percent earn 3.8 percent (World Bank 2006). In 1998, Guatemala's Gini index was 55.8, five years later it was 58, and in 2002 it was 55.1. As an aggregate measure of inequality, the Gini index does not show levels of absolute poverty. For instance, 13.5 percent of Guatemalans live on less than US$1 per day and approximately 32 percent live on less than US$2 per day (World Bank 2006).

Structural violence also appears in the form of a global sweatshop economy that exacerbates gendered vulnerabilities. In a careful examination of the effects of sweatshop employment in Guatemala, María José Paz Antolín and Amaia Pérez Orozco (2001) discuss the psychological violence that takes place in the maquila and its serious consequences for the workers and their self-esteem. Importantly, according to the authors, this situation creates a belief among the women that it is their fault that they do not have more education, and thus they blame themselves for their precarious situation. Indeed, the women with whom I spoke were well aware of the benefits that education can bring, but many had been forced to drop out of school early or had not attended at all. The average years of schooling for adults in Guatemala is three and a half, even though the duration of compulsory education is eleven years, and the literacy rate for men in 2002 was 75 percent and for women 63 percent (World Bank 2006). Education and levels of poverty are intimately related; by the Guatemalan government's own estimates, more than 95 percent of the poor have not attended a single grade of secondary education, and 44 percent have never attended school at all (Manz 2004, 16–17).[8]

Eight of the twenty-nine Ladinas in San Alejo had never attended school (some of them had learned how to sign their names or to read simple words, and a few had attended adult literacy classes), and another eight had only attended elementary school. Invariably, the women pointed to themselves or their parents as culpable for their lack of education and diminished potential for success in life. It is only by tracing the links to the profoundly unequal access to education and resources that we can turn attention to the roots of the lack of such opportunities. Hortencia, thirty-

8. The World Bank (2006) estimates that close to two-thirds of Guatemala's seven- to fourteen-year-olds work and go to school and that approximately 40 percent of them only work.

four years old and a mother of five, explained why she never attended school as follows:

Because my dad was a *mujeriego* [womanizer] and a drunk, my mom suffered a lot with him so they never sent me to school. I had to help her. I learned in the alphabetization [literacy class] how to read and write, and now I have even written letters to the United States for other people, people who don't know how to write. The other day my *compadre* came by so I could help him calculate how old he is because he needed to go get his *cédula* [ID card]. So now I tell my children that they have to go to school, so they don't go through what I went through. You know, the shame of having to learn how to read and write as an adult. . . . One feels so bad, ashamed. I was very embarrassed but eventually I learned.

Although Hortencia views her father as culpable for her illiteracy, it is important to recognize that access to education in rural Guatemala when she was growing up was a privilege, particularly for poor women. Illiteracy thus becomes an expression of the systematic forms of structural violence that assault the lives of the poor.

The majority of the Ladinas with whom I spoke in San Alejo mentioned different expressions of structural violence in their daily lives, which also reveal the normalization of inequality. Several talked about the effects of the profoundly unequal land distribution system, couching their reflections in a framework of the ordinary, explaining brutal forms of exploitation as simply the way things are. In eastern Guatemala, women do not work the land directly, but their male partners do, and they do so through one of the most exploitative land tenure systems. Many are landless and rent land from landowners through a contract known as *medianía*, which implies half and half but is hardly so. As it was explained to me, the landowner provides the land and the renter tills it and provides everything else—seeds, fertilizer, workers to harvest it, and so on. Then they share the crop. This system lends itself to multiple forms of abuse and exploitation, as it is very risky for the renter but not for the landowner. In Galtung's (1990) conceptualization, exploitation lies at the core of the archetypal structure of violence.

Many women brought up the injurious consequences inherent in this system. Sometimes their partners were cheated out and not paid after the harvest and would lose money that was earmarked for other purposes, including medicine and food. Mirna, a twenty-eight-year-old mother of five, complained that the landowner with whom her husband was in medianía would take away money for everything needed to work the land, leaving them with Q100 (about US$15 in 1998) per month in profits, as she also had to make lunch to feed the twelve laborers who helped her husband, even when she was eight months pregnant. In the case of twenty-seven-year-old Leticia, when her partner fell ill from HIV/AIDS, they had to sell half of a tiny plot of land so that he could afford his checkups in the capital city. After he died, she lost the other half of the plot because she found out

she also was infected and needed the money to pay for her own checkups. In her last year of life, she was tormented thinking that she was going to be unable to leave any land, or even a small adobe structure, to her young daughters. Although she was already ill, one of the few ways she had to make a living was to pick tomatoes in the fields, but even this became difficult toward the end because others in town knew of her illness and did not want any contact with her. As the women recounted these stories, they presented them as the way things are, as a normal relationship with the land, between those who own it and those who work it, only rarely hinting at questioning this deeply exploitative "natural" order of things. Not surprisingly, when I spoke with the women whose families owned the land, I heard the same naturalized narratives.[9]

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND STATE TERROR

For thirty-six years, political violence and state terror were the order of the day in Guatemalan society. During Guatemala's conflict (1960–1996), politically motivated violence became an integral part of the functioning, governance, and maintenance of the state (Falla 1994; Jonas 2000; Nelson 1999). Violence and terror, epitomized in highly public assassinations, ruthless massacres, and unsolved disappearances, became the favored political tools for Guatemala's military and political elites (McCleary 1999, quoted in Torres 2005). Repression is in itself a legitimized violent response to social forces perceived as acting against the interests of the state and thus in need of control (Hoffmann and McKendrick 1990). And politically motivated violence operated so successfully during Guatemala's reign of terror that it came to be known as a cultural "fact," as somehow both natural and cultural (Nordstrom 1997; Sluka 2000; Torres 2005). Guatemalan anthropologist Gabriela Torres (2005, 143–144) notes that "the naturalization of political violence into a cultural fact was produced, in part, through the creation and promotion of a language or pattern of political violence that—while it generated terror—at the same time it obfuscated the political economy of its own production."

Until 1980, targets of state terror were primarily Ladinos—students, peasants, union organizers, politicians, and revolutionaries—but in 1981 the army launched its scorched-earth campaign against Maya communities.[10] Throughout this period, Ladinos continued to be killed, particu-

9. In the political climate of Guatemala when I undertook field research, any allusion to criticizing the status quo could be taken as a condemnation of the regime, subject to a heavy price to pay, including being targeted as subversive. So I was not surprised to hear that women would not openly question the system but sometimes would allude or imply that they knew something was wrong with the way things were.

10. For a very good chronology and different forms of state terror for Mayas and Ladinos in Guatemala, see Ball, Kobrak, and Spirer (1999).

larly those who organized for social change, but the atrocities committed against the Maya, described as ethnocide or genocide, targeted "Indians as Indians" (Grandin 2000, 16). As an intricate aspect of a regional political structure in which U.S. political interests have weighed heavily (Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005), in 1954, the U.S. government orchestrated the overthrow of democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán and installed a military regime that would govern the country, in various guises, for the next thirty years. Successive U.S. administrations supported this regime as it engaged in widespread human rights violations, providing training and support for the Guatemalan army's counterinsurgency operations (Manz 2004; Menjívar and Rodriguez 2005). According to the 1999 report of the United Nations–sponsored Historical Clarification Commission, the state responded to both the insurgency and civil movements with unthinkable repression, which climaxed in 1981–1982 with a bloodbath in which the army committed more than four hundred massacres; disappeared more than four hundred Mayan communities; and tortured, murdered, and disappeared more than one hundred thousand Guatemalans (Grandin 2000, 7–8).

Although Ladino communities were not targeted in scorched-earth campaigns, there are many ways in which the generalized political violence led to a normalization of violence that distorted social relations and deeply affected life in Ladino communities as well. The breadth and depth of state-sponsored terror reached all Guatemalans in one way or another, as one of the most destructive aspects of state terror in Guatemala was the widespread reliance on civilians to kill other civilians (Ball, Kobrak, and Spirer 1999). The political violence that claimed many lives and destroyed communities in the highlands was so pervasive that it engulfed the entire country, even though in other regions it did not take the form of massacres or the torching of villages as in the Altiplano. Writing about the insidious effects of the militarization of life in El Salvador, Martín-Baró (1991a, 311–312) argued that "the militarization of daily life in the main parts of the social world contributes to the omnipresence of overpowering control and repressive threats. . . . This is how an atmosphere of insecurity is fostered, unpredictable in its consequences, and demanding of people a complete submission to the dictates of power." He referred to this phenomenon as the "militarization of the mind" (Martin-Baró 1991b, 341). Consequently, to paraphrase Cynthia Enloe (2000), lives become militarized not only through direct means and exposure but also when militarized products, views, and attitudes are taken as natural and unproblematic. As Galtung (1990, 294) observed, "A violent structure leaves marks not only on the human body but also on the mind and the spirit."

Importantly, political violence is also strongly linked to other forms of violence, including domestic violence (itself linked to symbolic violence) and the violence of what is referred to as "common crime." The brutality

of certain assaults such as robberies and burglaries and the violence with which they sometimes are committed cannot be examined independently from the violence engendered by state terror (and structural violence). Often such acts of common crime are characterized by the same cruelty and professionalization with which acts associated with political violence are carried out. In this way, common criminals adopt similar strategies (sometimes the same individuals are engaged in both) and, as posited by examinations using a lens of brutality (see Kil and Menjívar 2006), individuals who commit common crimes mimic the state as it metes out punishments on enemies or dissidents (see also Torres-Rivas 1998). The violence of common crime therefore is not dissociated from the political violence,[11] a point to which I return later.

The effects of political violence, then, are seldom contained neatly in a specific geographic space, among only one group, or in only one aspect of life. It is not surprising that the Ladinas with whom I spoke in eastern Guatemala did not question the taken-for-granted world of violence that surrounded them and was conveyed daily in newspapers, on television, and by bodies on the sides of roads. Regular images and stories of gruesome deaths created a climate of fear and insecurity in eastern Guatemala as well, and it was part of life. Moving the analytical lens from the Altiplano, where direct political violence has been well documented and acknowledged, to eastern Guatemala, where for the most part it has not, unearths the breadth and depth of the project of state terror that engulfed with varying degrees of force and visibility the entire Guatemalan society. The long arm of violence not only touched the entire country but also penetrated the lives of its people in multiple ways. Thus, I also note the link between the widespread and intense political violence and different forms of domestic and intimate violence, an aspect I will discuss in the section on symbolic violence.

Indeed, as Torres (2005) argues, in the process of making violence quotidian, or natural and cultural, the Guatemalan Armed Forces relied on a discourse suggested by the patterned and continuous appearance of cadaver reports and expressed through both the signs of torture left on bodies and the strategy of the display of the reports. This language of violence suggests a systematic practice, and its analysis unveils an organized system and a bureaucracy of violence. Mutilated bodies left on the sides of roads and the unidentifiable victims of torture were meant to send a message to the living. Many victims of terror were disappeared from their

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11. In a disturbing passage, Daniel Wilkinson (2004, 231) describes a particularly abusive Guatemalan landowner. As punishment to a plantation worker who was blind, the plantation owner's wife made the worker stick his hands in an anthill. One needs to be reminded that this incident did not take place in a dark basement in the midst of a torture session. Instead, it occurred in a plantation, within the context of everyday owner-worker relations.

normal existence, making the disappearance itself a powerful message of what awaited those who contemplated sympathizing with the opposition (Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005).

These observations are not meant to lessen in any way the atrocities committed against the Maya in the Altiplano; on the contrary, they underscore the reach of the brutality and violence in ways that are not always acknowledged as violent. The militarization of life, concretized by soldiers and military vehicles on roads even in areas that were supposed to be far from conflict zones, such as the town in eastern Guatemala where I did fieldwork, served as an eerie reminder that violence was never far and was not contained to just one area, and thus everyone was at risk. One day we were driving on the main road that leads to San Alejo, and there was commotion in the streets and traffic was slow. A large group of people were lined on the sides of a semi-paved road and it looked as if they were waiting for a pageant to go by that they did not want to miss. Instead, I saw a convoy of U.S. military vehicles, Humvees too wide for the narrow side roads of the town. People had come out of their homes to look at how these massive vehicles almost touched the houses on both sides of the road as they maneuvered their way through town. The military presence felt as huge as those vehicles in that narrow road, and I wondered about the need to establish such a presence even in "peaceful" areas in Guatemala. I was told that military presence—both by Guatemala and the United States—was, in fact, routine, and that the only reason people were watching that day was plain curiosity. I asked a small group of people what this was all about, and a man said, "It's the gringos. They are on their way to fix the roads around here." "So they have come to help?" I asked. The man smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and simply said, "Saber" ("Who knows?"). As Linda Green (2004, 187) notes, civic actions mixed with counterinsurgency strategies do "not negate the essential fact that violence is intrinsic to the military's nature and logic. Coercion is the mechanism that the military uses to control citizens even in the absence of war." The scene was disturbing to me, but for the town dwellers, accustomed to such sightings, it was life as usual. As Green (2004, 187) observes, in Guatemala "language and symbols are utilized to normalize a continued army presence."

Importantly, the end of the armed conflict has not meant an absence of violence in Guatemala. Death threats, attacks, lynchings, and acts of intimidation are a daily occurrence in postwar Guatemala.[12] Thus, it becomes difficult to discern what exactly it means to live in peacetime Gua-

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12. For instance, there have been many lynchings in postwar Guatemala that have been portrayed as the result of communities' frustration at the failure of the law to deal with ordinary crimes. However, there have been claims that the instigators of these lynchings are former members of the civil patrols (Amnesty International 2004).

temala, when mutilated bodies are still found on the sides of roads, people live in fear, the military presence is strong, and kidnappings occur regularly. This situation is exacerbated when impunity has been the hallmark of the postwar regimes and when many of those responsible for human rights atrocities have entered politics and even been elected to serve in political offices (Menjívar and Rodriguez 2005).

EVERYDAY VIOLENCE, INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE, AND CRIME

Everyday violence includes the daily practices and expressions of violence on a micro-interaction level, such as interpersonal, domestic, and delinquent (Bourgois 2004a, 428). I borrow the concept from Bourgois (2004a), who adapted Scheper-Hughes's (1992, 1997) broader usage to focus on the routine practices and expressions of interpersonal aggression that serve to normalize violence at the micro level. This concept focuses our attention on "the individual lived experience that normalizes petty brutalities and terror at the community level and creates a common sense or ethos of violence" (Bourgois 2004a, 426). Analytically, this focus helps us to avoid explaining individual-level confrontations and expressions of violence, such as common crime and domestic violence, through psychological or individualistic frameworks. Instead, through this prism, such acts become linked to broader structures of inequality that promote interpersonal violence and structures of terror. Clearly, the broader political economy does not instill interpersonal violence directly, but one must understand the extent to which it conditions structures within which people end up inflicting pain on one another, and how such structures distort social relations (see also Bourgois 2004b). As Alejandro Portes and Bryan Roberts (2005) note, rising trends of inequality are very much associated with increasing rates of crime in Latin America, even if precise causality cannot always be established. Indeed, these authors note, "from a sociological standpoint, the reaction of some of [society's most vulnerable] members in the form of unorthodox means to escape absolute and relative deprivation is predictable" (Portes and Roberts 2005, 76). From this angle we can see how such forms of violence create a culture of terror that normalizes violence in the private and public spheres, and how those who experience it end up directing their brutality against themselves and their loved ones rather than against the structures that oppress them (Bourgois 2004a, b).

The most immediate threat in postwar Guatemala in the eyes of Guatemalan women and men is common crime, a form of violence not always understood as directly related to extreme poverty, inequality, political violence, and state terror. Thus, an added challenge is to listen to the poor blame their own for the crimes committed. In an unsettling trend also observed in other societies, street children in Guatemala, some of whom are criminalized youth often referred to as Maras because their origins can be

traced to a gang bearing that name, are often blamed for the high levels of crime. Pointing a finger to the Maras for everyday crime is what public officials and the media offer as explanations for interpersonal violence, distracting attention from the structures of violence within which these gangs have flourished, oftentimes making it seem necessary to eliminate the Maras, as a man in San Alejo once told me.[13] The fact that youth have increasingly joined gangs throughout Guatemala (and Central America in general) is often examined in isolation from the multiple forms of violence in a postwar society.

One of the most striking issues that came up in my initial conversations with the Ladinas in San Alejo is that although initially I did not ask about everyday violence, many brought it up when we were talking about aspects of their life that to me seemed remote from violence. Sometimes they would mention instances of common crime that their friends and families had experienced; other times they would talk about how easy it is to die in their town. To me it seemed surprising that this issue would come up in most of my conversations and was normalized in the women's speech. This made me further reflect on the unrecognized forms of violence in the women's lives. It made such an impression on me that in a field-note entry I wrote: "Almost everyone in this town seems to have had a relative killed. Everyone seems to own and use guns. Is it supposed to be this way here [in San Alejo]?" What I was trying to reconcile was that this region of Guatemala was considered relatively peaceful, as it was away from the Altiplano, where overt, direct forms of political violence were more likely to take place. Matter-of-factly, Isabel mentioned that her brother had been shot and was recuperating. This incident reminded her of the time, two years prior, when her uncle was shot and killed not far from where her brother had been shot. She also mentioned a series of robberies and assaults on people close to her. She attributed such acts, as did others, to drunkenness, jealousy, and revenge. Similarly, when Teresa and I were talking about her family, she mentioned, "These days my father is recuperating from a gunshot. Oh, he had a few drinks, you know how it is, then got his gun and shot himself on the leg." Estrella, with a shrug of the shoulder, simply said, "Oh yes, there are always people who are killed around here. Sometimes you walk around and see a crowd of people, and most of the time it's going to be someone killed in the street. Usually it's a *bolo* [drunken man]." Perhaps what seemed more startling

13. There is widespread consensus among local and international observers that the people responsible for acts of intimidation and crimes against youths are affiliated with private, secretive, illegally armed networks or organizations, referred to in Guatemala as "clandestine groups." These groups appear to have links to both state agents and organized crime, which give them access to political and economic resources, and they are closely linked to the agents of violence that operated during the country's reign of terror.

to me was the element of ordinariness in the women's accounts. According to Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1997, 483), "the routinization of everyday violence against the poor leads them to accept their own violent deaths and those of their children as predictable, natural, cruel, but all too usual." Most women mentioned alcohol as the cause of such killings, but sometimes they would point to young gang members as culpable.[14]

The topic of everyday violence came up even when talking with Lucrecia about the town's fiesta. We were having a lively conversation in the small living room of her house, talking about the music, the queens, the three days of festivities, the *bailes,* and suddenly she said, "Oh but you know, for the fiestas *siempre hay muertos* [there are always dead people]. People drink too much, and once they're drunk they lose track of what they're doing. Oh God, there is always a *matasón* [many killed] during the fiestas. They kill each other. Well, this time, I don't know, I think there were only three or four dead. Not too many this year. In other years there are more, sometimes eight or nine. Everyone knows that there will be at least some dead people during the fiestas. It's just what happens during a fiesta, right?"

During one of my last visits to San Alejo, I heard gunshots almost every night. One evening a man brandishing a gun, apparently chasing after another, ran past our street and I was told to stay inside. I was shaken, but everyone around me laughed because, to them, I had made what seemed a big deal out of just a guy running around loose shooting a gun.[15] My own experiences and observations corroborated the women's perceptions of violence in their town. Again, this was postwar, peacetime, eastern Guatemala.

SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE AND THE INTERNALIZATION OF INEQUALITY

Symbolic violence, according to Pierre Bourdieu (2004), refers to the internalized humiliations and legitimations of inequality and hierarchy ranging from sexism and racism to intimate expressions of class power. As Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (2004, 273) explain, "it is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity." It is exercised through cognition and misrecognition, knowledge and sentiment, with the unwitting consent of the dominated (Bourgois 2004a). In this conceptualization, "the dominated apply categories constructed from the

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14. There is another important dimension of the physical aspects of violence that are not physical per se but become physical as they are embodied in aches and pains. I discuss this link at length in *Enduring Violence: Guatemalan Women's Lives in Eastern Guatemala* (2006).

15. A close parallel that should not be lost here is life in U.S. inner cities, as Bourgois (2004a, b) has so aptly documented.

point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making it appear as natural. This can lead to a systematic self-depreciation, even self-denigration" (Bourdieu 2004, 339). A crucial point in Bourdieu's conceptualization that makes it relevant for the case I examine here is that the everyday, normalized familiarity with violence renders it invisible, power structures are unrecognized, and the mechanisms through which it is exerted do not lie in conscious knowing. Importantly, symbolic violence in the form of feelings of inadequacy, mutual recrimination, and exploitation of fellow victims diverts attention away from the repressive political (and other) regimes that created the conditions of violence in the first place (Bourgois 2004a, b).[16]

Symbolic violence is exerted in the multiple forms of stratification and oppression in Guatemala. I began to reflect on the insidiousness of structural violence and its links to symbolic violence when a female street vendor outside the city hall in San Alejo shooed away a barefoot blond boy (his blond hair came from extreme malnutrition) wearing a tattered Harvard alumni T-shirt of indescribable color because she thought he was bothering me when he asked for food. He took a couple of steps back and looked embarrassed. The expression on my face led the woman to explain her actions and she assured me that it was OK to shoo him away: "Ay, estos patojos son peor que animales Usted, son como moscas" [Ah, these kids are worse than animals; they are like flies]." At first I wondered why this woman, who was not much better off than the *patojo* in question and had probably experienced hunger herself, could not feel any compassion for him. As I thought about the incident, I realized that it had more to do with the overall context of multifaceted violence in which both she and the boy lived than it did with the woman's seeming lack of compassion. I had mistakenly interpreted this act, from my own standpoint, as lack of compassion. Similarly to Nancy Scheper-Hughes's (1992) initial reaction to the seeming indifference of mothers to their infants' deaths and life chances in Bom Jesus do Alto, Brazil, I was not initially aware of the inadequacy of my reading. To link this moment to the ravages of violence in the lives of this woman and this boy required a shift from a focus on individual interaction to the structures that give rise and facilitate these forms of interpersonal violence, and it parallels other examinations of dehumanization and objectification, such as Liisa Malkki's (2004) observations among Hutu refugees in Tanzania.

The women I met in the Altiplano had countless stories about their experiences with racism, mostly in its overt forms. For instance, Lita's adult daughter was complaining about her life in Guatemala City, where Ladinos often stare at her, "Regañan" ("They scold"), and speak roughly to

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16. There are important parallels between Bourdieu's (2004a, b) and Galtung's (1990) conceptualizations that should not go unnoticed.

her, calling her *india,* simply because she is a *natural* (how indigenous refer to themselves). Equally disturbing is the way that such expressions of violence are internalized by the dominated. Ivette, a Ladina in San Alejo, was married to an indigenous man from the town in the Altiplano where I was doing fieldwork. Ivette wears fashionable clothes, always has her nails manicured, and dyes her hair blond. She and I were talking about what life was like for her, as a Ladina, in the Altiplano: "Well, I live well. Everyone speaks Cakchiquel around here and all the women wear *traje.* But my husband says that that's why he married me; he didn't want a woman with traje. In fact, he never even had a girlfriend who wore traje. Yes, on purpose, he didn't want *una de traje.* And he doesn't want me to dress our daughter with traje. My sisters-in-law tell him to do it, but my husband doesn't like it."

The stories I heard in the Altiplano were disturbing and provided me with a small window into how racism in Guatemala might be experienced. In eastern Guatemala I heard stories that show the other side of racism in a way that supports the stories one hears in the Altiplano. Comments in San Alejo usually came either in the form of a racist statement about the Mayas or sometimes in the form of a joke (see Nelson 1999). On one occasion I was chatting with a few Ladinas in San Alejo on the steps of one of their homes, and the life and accomplishments of Rigoberta Menchú came up. With surprise one of them exclaimed, "Right, right, she is not a dummy. Because you know, everyone thinks that the Indians are dumb, well, that's what one believes. But you'd be surprised. Many are not. Look at La Rigo, *que chispuda salió* [how smart she came out]."

However, in San Alejo I was stunned by stories of another form of symbolic violence that is also naturalized and largely unrecognized. I often heard the Ladinas talk about their perceived inadequacies, their views of being unequal to men, and how as women they had learned "their place." Such expressions were so commonplace and naturalized that I hardly noticed them. These powerful and insidious forms of symbolic violence encapsulate Bourdieu and Wacquant's (2004, 272) conceptualization that, "being born in a social world, we accept a whole range of postulates, axioms, which go without saying and require no inculcating. . . . Of all the forms of "hidden persuasion," the most implacable is the one exerted, quite simply, by the *order of things.*" Therefore, I discuss this form of violence in the next section, under gender violence; for Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004), gender domination represents the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence.

GENDER AND GENDERED VIOLENCE

I examine the different forms of violence that assault women's lives in San Alejo by borrowing from the work of Lawrence Hammar (1999),

from a Guatemalan team of social scientists who conducted one of the most thorough studies of gender and gendered violence in Guatemala (UNICEF-UNIFEM-OPS/OMS-FNUAP 1993), and from Bourdieu's work on gender violence. According to Hammar's (1999) conceptualization, the gender differences in a gender-imbalanced political economy that disadvantage women represent gender violence, whereas acts of violence, including physical, psychological, and linguistic, constitute gendered violence (1999, 91). The Guatemalan team differentiates public from domestic violence and notes that the two cannot be examined isolated from one another. They include in their definition of violence "intentional maltreatment of physical, sexual, or emotional nature, which lead to an environment of fear, miscommunication and silence" (UNICEF et al. 1993, 22). They note that all forms of violence are the product of unequal power relations; among these, the greatest are those between men and women. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004, 273), the "male order is so deeply grounded as to need no justification . . . leading to construct [relations] from the standpoint of the dominant, i.e., as natural." They further argue, "The case of gender domination shows better than any other that *symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond—or beneath—the controls of consciousness and will*, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are at once gendered and gendering" (273, emphasis in the original).

Gender and gendered violence, and public and domestic violence work in conjunction, and the double effect of gender and gendered violence increasingly hurt women, as new arenas in which gender emerges a significant axis of stratification multiply. Guatemala's gender-related development index is 0.617, which places Guatemala at 97 of 146 ranked countries (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2003). Education at different levels is deeply unequal by gender and access to land is equally lopsided. Already 40 percent of rural families do not have access to land, and within this hierarchy, women have a much lower rate of direct ownership. A survey found that only 28 percent of ninety-nine thousand women agriculturalists in Guatemala had permanent salaried employment; the rest were employed temporarily (Escoto, Aguilar, Hernández, and Marroquín 1993). There are also important disparities by ethnicity that further complicate gender inequality, as indigenous women fare worse than do nonindigenous women in human development indicators.

The study by the Guatemalan team presents some interesting insights that show how the internalization of an unequal gender hierarchy also translates into institutional violence, as authorities in the medical and judicial fields frame their actions and decisions within this unequal structure. The team interviewed sixteen professionals, including physicians, nurses, police officers, lawyers, gynecologists, a journalist, and a social worker, in the public and private sectors, who, in one way or another, dealt

with instances of domestic violence. They were asked about their views of men and women; overwhelmingly, they all agreed that women are weaker, that women are dependent on men, that women must obey men, that men are the ones who hold authority, and that women are loving and caring. When they were asked under what conditions a man can assault a woman, five of the professionals said that if there is jealously, alcoholism, or infidelity on the part of the woman, then aggression is justified. When the professionals were asked whether violence against women affected society in general, the functionaries responded negatively, indicating that they are isolated cases that do not have much effect. Some of the study participants did mention that violent acts against women have a broader effect, in the sense that children imitate the actions of their father and become aggressors themselves, families disintegrate, women may become a public charge if they are left physically unable to work, and society in general becomes more violent (UNICEF et al. 1993). This last point is of interest to me, as with the framework I develop here one can easily turn around the causal link and instead argue that violent societal structures allow conditions for violent interpersonal relations in the home to flourish. In the process, institutions like the criminal justice system reinforce those structures, causing more injury (often through neglect) and suffering.

Gender and gendered violence in Guatemala are manifested in quotidian events, and it is precisely such everyday forms that contribute to their normalization. Gender ideologies create spheres of social action that not only contribute to normalize these manifestations of violence but also justify punishments for deviations from normative gender role expectations. This is manifested in imposed demarcations between public and private spaces and in the resultant restriction of women's movement, as well as in practices that are more directly physically violent, such as abductions of women before they marry (*robadas*). Sitting outside the front entrance of her thatched-roof home, Mirtala reflected:

And so I can't go to church at night because there's no electricity in that area and the streets are very dark at night. Well, for a woman it's too dark to walk there, especially around that bridge that I told you about, where people have been killed, remember that one? So naturally, one is afraid to go out after dark, even if one is doing something good, like seeking God, going to the church's services. But even during the daytime, it's not safe. The truth is that there really is no safe place for a woman walking by herself.

Often the Ladinas with whom I spoke would find their self-perceptions corroborated by their partners' threats, assaults, reproaches, and orders; in some cases, other women, particularly in-laws, would be the ones reproaching or contributing to the assault. For instance, Delfina described how her husband insults her in front of friends and family, throws food at her if it has not been prepared exactly to his taste, and often threatens her to leave her for a younger woman. She lives with this treatment every day,

though in a moment of reflection that epitomizes the normalization of gender and gendered violence, she somehow considered herself a bit fortunate. In her words: "He's never touched me. Can you believe he's never hit me? Yes, I'm serious. It's true. You'd think, with his character it could be awful. But he's not like others who hit their wives." Delfina's reflection points to a crucial aspect of violence against women: its very absence in her life brings it up as normalized for others. Nonetheless, Delfina mentioned that she felt depressed, tense, and unloved; the perverse effects of her husband's violence also led her to accept her situation as ordinary. So many other women she knows suffer similar (or, in her eyes, worse) assaults routinely, that she did not find her own condition to be "that bad." Here I must clarify that I am not pointing to the women themselves or other women in their families in an accusatory manner. On the contrary, I seek to make explicit the influence of extra-personal, macro structures of inequality on the micro-level, everyday world, within which acts of symbolic violence against women are perpetrated.

To be sure, gender and gendered violence, and their normalization, are not new in Guatemala. In an examination of gender and justice in rural Guatemala, Cindy Forster (1999) notes that, between 1936 and 1956, there were several recorded cases that involved harmful acts against women (one had been killed) that failed to generate criminal proceedings. Authorities noted "nothing strange" in criminal acts against women. This business-as-usual attitude was particularly noticeable in cases where the women were poor and/or Maya.

Gender and gendered violence in Guatemala today have roots not only in gender ideologies that have maintained women's subordination but, importantly, also in Guatemala's generalized violence, made most evident during the thirty-six-year internal armed conflict that ended with the signing of the UN-brokered peace accords in 1996. Even though only one-quarter of the two hundred thousand disappeared or extrajudicially executed during the country's internal armed conflict were women (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico [CEH] 1999; Proyecto Interdiocesano Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica 1998), Torres (2005, 163) notes that "women, as the culturally ideal vessels of the Guatemalan family, were not killed as often as men; however, when women were killed, their cadavers showed evidence of over-kill and rape." This point, Torres (2005) argues, implies that divergence from the expected behavioral norms was punished more for women than for men. Indeed, in her thorough content analysis of records of violence against women that were published in the main newspaper *Prensa Libre,* Torres finds a specific story of violence told by the cadaver reports of female victims; she notes that the victim's gender plays a crucial role in determining the type of torture, the way bodies are disposed of, and the extent and type of reporting on violated cadavers. Thus, Torres (2005) argues that these gender-specific necrological maps

and the significance of their signs point to the role of women in the restructuring of the Guatemalan nation through violence.

Thus, as in other politically conflictive societies, women in Guatemala have been murdered, disappeared, terrorized, and stripped of their dignity; as such, rape and sexual violence have been an integral part of the counterinsurgency strategy (Amnesty International 2005). Blackburn (1999) and Enloe (2000) have argued that such rapes could be linked to more obvious forms of state violence against women, as strategies of state terror, and as part of a process of intimidation of dissidents or minority groups.[17] Within this generalized context of gendered violence, Maya women suffered in particular, as the direct violence was directed at them not only because they were women but also because they were indigenous.[18] As Nelson (1999, 326) notes, the disdain for indigenous life, and particularly indigenous female life, was temporarily extended by counterinsurgency in which "probable insurgents" of all extractions were treated "like Indians— expendable, worthless, bereft of civil and human rights." However, the real magnitude of the violence women suffered during Guatemala's conflict will never be known, in part because cases were not documented, but also because many women, suffering internalized guilt or shame as a result of sexual violence, remained too traumatized to come forward, afraid of reprisals or rejection by their communities (Amnesty International 2005).[19] The commission report *Memory of Silence* states that rape, particularly in indigenous areas, resulted in "breaking marriage and social ties; generating social isolation and communal shame; provoked abortions, infanticide and obstructed births and marriages within these groups, thus facilitating the destruction of indigenous groups" (CEH 1999, 14).

Thus, Guatemala's regime and militarization of life has generated different kinds of gendered violence, as indicated not only by direct political violence against indigenous women in particular but also by encouraging the abduction, torture, rape, and murder of women workers as a lesson to other women workers who might think to assert their rights. According to Amnesty International (2005), in postwar Guatemala, overall violent deaths increased from 2002 to 2004, with a noticeable rise in killings of women. According to police records, in 2002 women accounted for 4.5 percent of all killings; in 2003, 11.5 percent; and in 2004, 12.1 percent.

17. Philippe Bourgois (2004a) makes a direct link between rape and gendered violence to structural and interpersonal violence, a point that is also relevant for my analysis here.

18. I thank one of the reviewers for asking me to clarify this point.

19. According to Torres (2005, 155–156), it is difficult to assess in this context whether female victims (of assassinations, rapes, beatings) suffered politically motivated abuse or a form of domestic abuse. In many cases, for instance, the victim's husband/boyfriend or father, had been apprehended even though he was not necessarily the perpetrator, thus, making it look as if it had been domestic violence when in fact it was a politically motivated crime.

Figures compiled by the Policía Nacional Civil (PNC; Amnesty International 2005) note that the number of women murdered rose sharply from 163 in 2002 to 383 in 2003. Guatemalan authorities confirmed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that between 2001 and 2004 there had been almost two thousand women killed, though the real figure might be higher as a result of underreporting. In Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, a similar pattern of killings has drawn international condemnation. Aside from reports by Amnesty International and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, however, the Guatemalan women's deaths have received little, if any, international attention. As with the killings during the years of the conflict, those today are reported in gruesome detail in the national media, sending the same message of uncertainty and terror, only this time directed specifically at women.

   Thus, the presence of naked or semi-naked bodies in public places, roads, and city streets continues to be a quotidian sight in postwar Guatemala. To be sure, general levels of violence have also affected men, but the brutality and evidence of sexual violence (which in most cases amounts to torture) creates a different context for the deaths of women. The murders in the past few years have included students, housewives, professionals, domestic employees, unskilled workers, members or former members of street youth gangs, and sex workers in both urban and rural areas. Such killings, the overwhelming majority of them uninvestigated, are often linked to common crime, to the actions of youth gangs (Amnesty International 2005), or to a jealous boyfriend or husband. This Amnesty International report notes that while the murders may be attributed to different motives and may have been committed in different areas of the country, the violence is overwhelmingly gender based. The Guatemalan authorities' attitudes are linked, in the words of Bob Herbert (2006) referring to violence against women in the United States, to the "core of the wider society's casual willingness to dehumanize women and girls, and in this sense, we are all implicated."

   The gender of the victim becomes a significant factor in the Guatemalan crimes, influencing the motive and the kind of violence inflicted and the manner in which authorities respond. Many of the women who have been recently killed came from poor backgrounds and suffered discrimination on the basis of both gender and social class. An important ethnic angle to note is that whereas the majority of women who were victims of violence during Guatemala's civil conflict were Maya living in rural areas, the reported murder victims today are both Maya and Ladinas living in urban or semi-urban areas of the country. This new violence is therefore all encompassing. However, the brutality of the killings and the signs of sexual violence on the women's mutilated bodies bear many of the hallmarks of the atrocities committed during the conflict, making, once again, differences between wartime and peacetime Guatemala almost imperceptible.

MULTISIDED VIOLENCE IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN IN SAN ALEJO

The forms of violence I have described are deeply intertwined. Structural inequalities based on economic or racial factors promote different forms of political, symbolic, and everyday violence (see Hoffmann and McKendrick 1990). Structural and symbolic violence fuse and translate into everyday violence, which is expressed in segregation, social inequality, lack of access to material goods, and interpersonal conflicts that the socially vulnerable inflict mainly on themselves, their kin and friends, and their neighbors (see Bourgois 2004a, b). Focusing on violence in the home, D. G. Gil (1986) observes that violence in human relations is rooted in institutionalized inequalities of status, rights, and power not only between the sexes but also among individuals of different ages and races. Examined this way, interpersonal, micro-level instances of violence are not simply the result of individuals' behaviors or choices alone but, more important, are the product of inequalities institutionalized in the legal system and justified through a host of frameworks, such as religion, ideology, and history (Bourgois 2001).

Political violence, structural violence in the form of unemployment and underemployment, and increased economic inequality arising from neoliberal market reforms (e.g., cuts in subsidies to social services, privatizations) dictate the pace of everyday life in many corners of the world. In Guatemala, political violence has been a direct expression of structural violence in the form of a brutal model of capitalist development combined with profound ethnic inequality to prevent the development of an inclusive national project (Grandin 2000, 8). As Portes and Roberts (2005, 77) note, increased levels of delinquency (or common crime) "represent the counterpart to the deterioration of labor market opportunities and sustained high levels of inequality." As in other societies that have experienced high levels of political violence, Guatemala has witnessed a transition from political to criminal violence, itself a "deeply class-bound discourse" (see Scheper-Hughes 1997, 477). As in other postwar societies, a form of social cleansing is also happening in Guatemala today. Death squad operations have not ceased and have resurfaced with even greater vigor, and the targets now are not only perceived political opponents but also ordinary poor people, usually the most vulnerable, who are victimized for acting on the conditions into which they have been forced.

The presence of the armed forces, the evidence of deep and increasing class and ethnic inequalities (evident everyday in the streets, schools, places of work, and infrastructure), the media saturated with images of unresolved crimes perpetrated by allegedly unknown criminals, and the constant fear of violence and death makes one wonder what *peacetime* means in Guatemala. The act of signing the peace accords might not have much meaning when the structures of inequality that have generated

multiple forms of violence are left untouched. Thus, everyday life for poor women in Guatemala today may not differ much from their lives during the years of direct political violence. Indeed, this context resembles closely what James Quesada (2004, 292) observed in Nicaragua during the years of contra war, "the specter of military men and women . . . in addition to . . . periodic shortages of food and goods, contributed to an unsettling hyperawareness of the fact that one resided in the heart of troubled terrain." This hyperawareness of residing in troubled terrain is not foreign to most Guatemalans today, particularly to women from disadvantaged backgrounds on account of ethnicity and/or social class, a decade after the peace accords were signed and during a time when they also must bear the brunt of neoliberal structural adjustment programs.

An examination of women's everyday lives in this terrain highlights how political, structural, gender and gendered, and symbolic violence coalesce and are expressed every day, particularly in micro-level interactions—those that are not so obviously physically violent. A focus on these interpersonal relations in a context of gender inequality and patriarchal authority illuminate the naturalized, routinized assaults that are so commonplace as to become invisible. In these contexts, violence often follows gender lines and violence itself becomes accepted to solve myriad problems. It exemplifies what Martín-Baró (1994, 130) refers to as "normal abnormality," where suffering becomes internalized and routinized but its burden and chronicity pose existential dilemmas for those who suffer.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have assembled a conceptual framework to examine the lives of the Ladinas I came to know in eastern Guatemala. A few points need to be kept in mind. First, the multiple forms of violence I discuss here almost never occur in isolation, though sometimes one or two appear to be more salient. I want to give emphasis to their interrelatedness: in a context like the one with which I became familiar in Guatemala, it is impossible to compartmentalize and isolate from one another these expressions of violence. Although this prism allows me to expose the pervasive forms of violence in women's lives, I highlight the normalization of this violence. Only when discussed or pointed to do routine violent practices (sometimes attributed to culture) become obvious and disturb our normalized gaze. Indeed, it is the insidiousness of this violence in areas that are perceived as calm and peaceful and where violent acts are explained as part of the culture (and do not cause alarm) to which I have called attention here. This quotidian character of violence is linked to its process nature—it is a kind of violence that is embedded in everyday life and not only apparent in extraordinary events, acts, or behaviors—and

to its normalization. It is through this normalization that dehumanization becomes possible and suffering becomes invisible. Importantly, I do not mean to portray the women as simply victims. Women cope in various ways, including accepting violence in their lives and interpreting it in various ways, and often pointing to those close to them as culpable for it. Other times they reflect on the forms of violence that surround their lives but know there is not much an individual can do to change deeply ingrained structures.

Presenting the conditions of life for Ladinas in eastern Guatemala through a prism of violence helps not only to understand the breath and depth of violence in Guatemala in general but also to reflect on the extent to which violence begets more violence, and how it is created and recreated in different spheres of life. I particularly want to call attention to the lives of women who have not received much research attention because they have not been deemed interesting enough in academic research (see Binford 2004) or because they have not been targets of direct political violence. An examination of "inconsequential" moments in the quotidian lives of these women exposes the normalization of violence, the pervasiveness of fear, and the injury of neglect.

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