

Abstract

In this paper 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 internalized and normalized so as to become invisible and "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. This discussion builds on previous research conducted among indigenous groups in Guatemala and renders a depiction of the broad reach of violence, including those forms of violence 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, mostly non-indigenous, exposes the deep and broad manifestations of living in a society engulfed in violence, depicting the "long arm of violence."

Biography

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Violence and Women's Lives in Eastern Guatemala: A Conceptual Framework

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Introduction

In this paper 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 (and with good reason) who are interested in unearthing the brutality of state terror and its gendered expressions in Guatemala. This discussion builds on previous research conducted among indigenous groups in Guatemala and renders a depiction of the broad reach of violence, including those forms of violence that are so commonplace as to become invisible. Thus, I argue that an examination of multiple forms of violence in the lives of women in eastern Guatemala, mostly non-indigenous, exposes the deep and broad manifestations of life in a society engulfed in violence, 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 with people living in post-war 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, while other forms of violence are tied to long-standing structural inequalities that assault the lives of the majority of Guatemalans. As Paul Farmer (2004a) notes, these forms of violence are interrelated, as one makes the other possible;² thus the regular violation of human rights as a product of capitalism is not unrelated, and, indeed, is only possible through the use of state-sponsored violence (Binford 2004). Working on Guatemala, 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 tenuous in recent years because these distinctions do not stand up to empirical scrutiny.³ I therefore follow Scheper-Hughes and 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." And I do so by focusing on the lives of *ladinas*⁴ in eastern Guatemala, an examination that exposes the insidious effects of generalized violence on the everyday lives of women.

While a neat compartmentalization of the multiple forms of violence is rarely found in practice, in this paper I disaggregate them for the purpose of presenting this framework. Following Philippe Bourgois (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.⁵ 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 simply be taken as poverty, without conceptualizing it as a form of violence), and can be applicable in any number of situations. However, taken as a whole, all these forms convey a violent context that shapes the lives of women in particular ways, especially when the angle of violence goes unrecognized. This framework therefore provides an ample lens that allows 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, and victimization. As 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.” This examination therefore exposes the systematic patterns of disadvantage that are neither natural nor necessary (Kent 2006).

Furthermore, this framework permits an examination of the normalization of violence in everyday life, in situations in which it is often not obvious. It allows a focus on the lives of women whose suffering is less likely to be noted because it is so commonplace. As such, this approach brings out the misrecognized, normalized forms of violence that are deeply linked to the more visible forms of violence that have been skillfully documented among the Mayas in western Guatemala. As Veena Das (1997:567) so 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.” This framework aims to capture the routinized, largely unrecognized, forms of violence in these women’s everyday lives. Importantly, by unearthing the links between violence at the interpersonal level with broader structures, such as those in the economy and polity, this project seeks analytical distance from “cultural” or individual-based explanations to elucidate the roots of violence in structural factors. Thus, it is not enough to interpret different situations as forms of violence. The task is to also trace these links, or else we end up inflicting more pain by blaming the victims.

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 positions. Women and men from different social classes and ethnic groups face different forms of violence and will also experience the same violence in different ways. Significantly, the different forms of violence do not operate independently; they 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, as 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. And third, 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. Thus in Roshomon-esque fashion, the same situation might be described and interpreted in a very different light according to the lens used in its examination. In the rest of this paper I present one lens, a lens in which violence emerges as fundamental. I will present each of the components separately and will end with a discussion of how they intertwine to affect life in a gender-specific fashion. As 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 field work I conducted among women in the Guatemalan Altiplano (thirty-one Maya) and in eastern Guatemala (twenty-nine “non-indigenous” ladinas) between late 1994 and 2000. In this paper I focus only on the women in eastern Guatemala, a town I call San Alejo, drawing comparisons with the Maya women in the Altiplano only when applicable. And even though I do not draw on the empirical work I conducted in the Altiplano in this paper, the comparative perspective it offered me was crucial for developing the analytical framework I present here. In addition to the interviews and follow-ups, I conversed 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 the stories provided by my informants. My entrée to the women in both sites was through 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 socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The *ladinas* who mentioned earning an income outside the home worked as teachers, street vendors, *comadronas* (midwives), store clerks, domestics; one worked seasonally as a tomato picker; one made clandestine liquor for sale; and another was a photographer. Among the Maya women, more than half mentioned that they worked as weavers, but in addition, they sold their textiles for export (mostly in Guatemala City) to middlemen or in local fiestas and markets, cleaned houses, worked as clerks in stores, made tamales for sale, worked as teachers and *comadronas*; one owned a pharmacy with her husband; and one made clandestine liquor for sale. A few had worked in *maquilas* or as domestics in Guatemala City. Most women had completed elementary education, some had secondary schooling, and some had never attended school. There were a couple of women with some college among the *ladinas*, but none among the indigenous.

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.” At the macro level, structural violence refers to political-economic organization such as unequal terms of trade and structural adjustment policies that make life more precarious for people at all different income levels. Paul 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) observes, is that it is not visible in specific events. As Farmer (2004b:307) observes, “structural violence is violence exerted systematically, that is, indirectly by everyone who belongs to a certain social order.” In contrast with direct physical violence, in structural violence people suffer harm indirectly, often through a slow and steady process with no clearly identifiable perpetrators. Because the effects of structural violence are more clearly observable at the societal level, most people are much more capable of seeing direct violence than they are of grasping indirect or structural violence in the social order (Kent 2006). Attention to forms of inequality from this vantage point highlights how a political economy of inequality under neoliberal capitalism promotes social suffering. Latin America historically has exhibited a high degree of income inequality relative to other regions; it has the most unbalanced distribution of resources of all regions in the world (Hoffman and Centeno 2003). And Guatemala has consistently ranked among the most unequal, even by Latin American standards. In 1998 Guatemala’s Gini Index was 55.8, in 2001 it was 55.1, and in 2003 it rose to 58. The richest 10% of Guatemalans earn 43.5% of the country’s total income, whereas the poorest 30% earn 3.8% (World Bank 2006). The aggregate measure of inequality given by the Gini Index does not, however, show levels of absolute poverty. For instance, 13.5% of Guatemalans live on less than \$1 per day and approximately 32% live on less than \$2 per day (World Bank 2006). 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 2004a). As Vite Pérez (2005) observes, in trying to understand how individuals become unemployed, for instance, we must focus on how neoliberal economic regimes have led to labor instability, to the commodification of public services,

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

Structural violence also appears in the form of a global sweatshop economy that exacerbates gendered vulnerabilities. In a thorough 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, with serious consequences for the workers and their self-esteem. Importantly, according to Paz Antolín and Pérez Orozco (2001), 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 3.5, even though the duration of compulsory education is eleven years; by the Guatemalan government's own estimates, more than 95% of the poor have not attended a single grade of secondary education, and 44% have never attended school at all (Manz 2004:16–17).⁶ The literacy rate for men in 2002 was 75% and for women 63% (World Bank 2006).

Eight of the twenty-nine women in San Alejo had never attended school and another eight had only attended elementary school. (Of those who had attended school, some had only learned how to sign their names or to read simple words, and a couple had attended adult literacy classes.) Similar to Paz Antolín and Pérez Orozco's (2001) findings, the women invariably pointed to themselves or their parents as culpable for their lack of education and diminished potential success in life. Hortencia, thirty-four years old and a mother of five, explained why she never attended school as follows:

Because my father was a *mujeriego* (womanizer) and a drunk my mother suffered a lot with him so they never sent me to school. I had to help her. I learned in the literacy [course] how to read and write, and now I have even written letters to the United States for other 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.

While she sees 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, and thus illiteracy is an expression of the systematic forms of structural violence that assault the lives of the poor. 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 these opportunities.

The majority of the women with whom I spoke in San Alejo mentioned different expressions of structural violence in their daily lives, also reflecting 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 they call "*medianía*," which implies "half and half" but it 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, and workers to harvest it. 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.

Many women brought up the injurious consequences inherent in this system; sometimes their partners were not paid after the harvest and would lose money that was earmarked for other purposes, including for medicine and food. Mirna, a twenty-eight-year-old mother of five, complained that the landowner with whom her husband worked would take away money for everything needed to work the land, leaving them with Q100 (about \$15) 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 check-ups 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 check-ups. In her last year of life she was tormented, thinking that she was going to be unable to leave any land, not even a small adobe structure, for her young daughters. While 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, never 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.⁷

Political Violence and State Terror

For thirty-six years political violence and state terror were the order of the day in Guatemalan society. As an intricate aspect of a regional political structure in which the political interests of the United States (U.S.) have weighed heavily (Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005), in 1954 the U.S. government orchestrated the overthrow of democratically-elected Jacob 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 Rodríguez 2005). During Guatemala’s conflict (1960–1996), politically motivated violence became an integral part of the functioning, governance, and maintenance of the state (Jonas 2000; Nelson 1999; Falla 1994). 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 cited in Torres 2005). Repression is in itself a legitimized violent response to social forces perceived to be 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. Throughout this period ladinos continued to be killed, but the atrocities committed against the Maya, described as ethnocide or genocide, targeted “Indians as Indians”

(Grandin 2000:16). According to the 1999 report of the U.N.-sponsored Truth Commission (Historical Clarification Commission), the state responded to both the insurgency and civil movements with unthinkable repression, climaxing in 1981–1982 with a bloodbath in which the army committed over four hundred massacres, disappeared over four hundred Mayan communities, and tortured, murdered, and disappeared over one hundred thousand Guatemalans (Grandin 2000:7–8).

Though 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. 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 and the torching of villages. Writing about the insidious effects of the militarization of life in El Salvador, Ignacio Martín-Baró (1991a:311–312) argued, “The militarization of daily life and 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” (Martín-Baró 1991b:341). 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, unproblematic.

The effects of political violence, then, are seldom contained neatly in a specific geographic area, among only one group, or in only one aspect of life. Thus, it is not surprising that the women 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, television, and on the sides of roads. The regular images and stories contributed to making fear “a way of life” (Green 1999) in eastern Guatemala as well. Indeed, as Gabriela Torres (2005) argues, in the process of making violence quotidian, “natural,” and “cultural,” the Guatemalan Armed Forces relied on a discourse suggested by the patterned and continuous appearance of cadaver reports in the major media outlets 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; its analysis unveils an organized system and a bureaucracy of violence. Mutilated bodies left on the sides of roads, the unidentifiable victims of torture, were meant to send a message to the living. Many victims of terror were “disappeared” from their normal existence, making the disappearance itself a powerful message of what awaited those who contemplated sympathizing with the opposition (Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005).

My comments are not meant to lessen in any way the atrocities committed against the Maya in the Altiplano; on the contrary, they help to underscore the reach of the brutality and violence, in ways that are not always acknowledged as violent. Moving the analytical lens from the Altiplano, where 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 country. The militarization of life, concretized by soldiers and military vehicles on roads even in areas that were supposed to be far from the “conflict” zones, such as in the town in eastern Guatemala where I did fieldwork, served as an eerie reminder that violence was not contained in 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 lined the sides of a semi-paved road; it looked as if they were

waiting for a pageant to go by, and I did not want to miss it. 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 Guatemalan and U.S.—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 quite 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 “post-war” Guatemala.⁸ Thus, it becomes difficult to discern what exactly it means to live in “peacetime” Guatemala, when mutilated bodies are still found on the sides of roads, people live in fear, and kidnappings occur regularly. This situation is exacerbated when impunity has been the hallmark of the post-war regimes and many of those responsible for human rights atrocities have entered politics and been elected to serve in political offices (Menjívar and Rodriguez 2005).

Political violence is also linked to other forms of violence, such as in 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 sometimes they 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 brutalization lens (see Kil and Menjívar 2006), individuals who commit common crimes mimic the state as it metes out punishments on enemies or dissidents. Political violence then is not dissociated from the violence of common crime.⁹

Everyday Violence, Interpersonal Violence, and Crime

Everyday violence refers to the daily practices and expressions of violence on a micro-interactional level, such as interpersonal, domestic, and delinquent (Bourgois 2004b:428). I borrow the concept from Philippe Bourgois, who adapted Scheper-Hughes’s 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 2004b: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 framework these acts become linked to broader structures of inequality that promote interpersonal violence and structures of terror. As Portes and Roberts (2005) note, increasing trends of inequality are very much associated with increasing trends in 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, rather than against the structures that oppress them (Bourgois 2004a, 2004b).

The most immediate threat in post-war Guatemala in the eyes of Guatemalan women and men is common crime, a form of violence not independent from extreme poverty, inequality, political violence, and state terror. In an unsettling twist observed in other societies, street children in Guatemala, the 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, oftentimes making it seem necessary to “eliminate the *maras*,” as a man in San Alejo once told me.¹⁰ 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 of a post-war society.

One of the most striking issues that came up in my initial conversations with the women in San Alejo is that even though 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 misrecognized forms of violence in the women’s lives. It made such an impression on me that in a fieldnote entry I wrote: “Almost everyone in this town seems to have had a relative killed. Is this supposed to be this way here [in San Alejo]?” What I was trying to reconcile was that this was the region of Guatemala 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, like others did, to drunkenness, jealousy, and revenge. Similarly, when Teresa and I were talking about her family, she mentioned that “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.” And Estrella, with a shrug of the shoulder, simply said, “Oh yes, there are always people being 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 to me was the element of “ordinariness” in the women’s accounts. Most women mentioned alcohol as the cause of such killings, but sometimes they would point to young gang members, or *maras*, as culpable.

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* (dances), 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?" In 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 left shaken, to which everyone around me laughed because I had made what seemed a big deal out of just a guy running around with a gun. These observations corroborated the women's perceptions of violence in their town. But again, this was peacetime Guatemala.

Symbolic Violence and the Internalization of Inequality

Symbolic violence, according to Pierre Bourdieu, refers to the internalized humiliations and legitimations of inequality and hierarchy ranging from sexism and racism to intimate expressions of class power. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004:273) put it, "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 (Bourgeois 2004b). In this conceptualization, "the dominated apply categories constructed from the 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 of violence renders it invisible, power structures are misrecognized, 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 (Bourgeois 2004a, 2004b). Thus, according to Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "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" (1997:483).

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 street vendor woman outside the city hall in San Alejo shooed 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 me 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 assured me that it was okay to shoo him away because, "*Estos patojos son peor que animales Usted, son como moscas*" ("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 with the woman's own lack of compassion. I had mistakenly taken this act, from my own viewpoint, as lack of compassion. In a similar fashion as Nancy Scheper-Hughes's (1992) initial reaction to the seeming indifference of the mothers to their infants' deaths and life chances in Bom Jesus do Alto, 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. This is the kind of symbolic violence that the framework I present here seeks to unearth.

The women I met in the Altiplano had countless stories about their experiences with racism, mostly in its overt forms. The stories I heard in the Altiplano were disturbing and provided me with a small window into how racism in Guatemala is 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. These comments usually come 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 couple of women in San Alejo on the steps of one of their homes, and the life and accomplishments of Rigoberta Menchú came up. With a tinge of surprise one of them exclaimed, “Right, right, she isn’t a dummy. You know, people always say 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 misrecognized. I often heard the *ladinas* talk about their perceived inadequacies, their understandings as unequal to men, and how “as women” they had learned “their place.” Such expressions were so commonplace and naturalized that one 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 will discuss this form of violence under gender violence below, as 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 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 (MSPAS 1993), and from Bourdieu’s work on gender violence. According to Hammar’s conceptualization, the gender differences in a gendered-imbalanced political economy that disadvantages women represent *gender violence*, whereas acts of violence, including physical, psychological, and linguistic violence, 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, as both stand as equal. 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” (MSPAS 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. And according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004:273), “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” (emphasis in the original).

Gender and gendered violence, and public and domestic violence work in conjunction, and the double effect of gender violence and gendered violence increasingly hurts women, as new arenas in which gender is a significant principle of stratification multiply. Guatemala’s Gender-related development index is 0.617, which places it at 97 out of 146 ranked countries (UNDP 2003). Literacy rates are unequal by gender, and access to land is equally lopsided. Already 40% 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% of ninety-nine thousand women agriculturalists in Guatemala had permanent salaried employment; the rest were employed temporarily (Fundación Arias 1993). There are also disparities by ethnicity that further exacerbate gender inequality.

The study by the Guatemalan team mentioned above 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, policemen, lawyers, gynecologists, a journalist, and a social worker working in the public and private sectors who, in one way or another, deal with instances of domestic violence. They were asked about their views of men and women and 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 jealousy, alcoholism, or infidelity on the part of the woman, aggression is justified. When the professionals were asked if violence against women affected society in general, the functionaries responded negatively, indicating that these are isolated cases that do not have much effect. Some of the professionals did mention that violent acts against women do have a broader effect, as the children imitate the actions of the father and become aggressors themselves, families disintegrate, women may become public charge if they are left physically unable to work, and society in general becomes more violent (MSPAS 1993). This last point is of interest to me, as from the analytical framework I use here one can easily turn around the causal link and instead argue that violent societal structures create conditions for interpersonal relations in the home. And in the process, institutions like the criminal justice system reinforce those structures, causing more injury and suffering.

Gender and gendered violence in Guatemala are manifest in quotidian events, and it is precisely these 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 to justify “punishments” for deviations from normative gender role expectations. This is manifested in demarcations of 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*”). For instance, sitting outside the front entrance of her thatched 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. It’s too dark for a woman 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 by going to the church’s services. But even during the day time, it’s not safe. I don’t think there is any safe place for a woman walking by herself.”

Often the women with whom I spoke would find their self-perceptions corroborated by their partners’ threats, assaults, reproaches, and orders, while 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 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 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 the naturalization of this form of violence against women, as 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 knew suffer similar (or, in her eyes, worse) assaults routinely, that she does 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 exerted.

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, 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; the "business-as-usual" attitude was particularly noticeable in cases where the women were poor and/or Maya. Gender and gendered violence in Guatemala today has roots not only in gender ideologies that have maintained women's subordination but, importantly, also in Guatemala's violent history, especially the thirty-six-year internal armed conflict that ended with the signing of the United Nations-brokered Peace Accords in 1996.

Even though only one quarter of the two hundred thousand who were disappeared or extrajudicially executed during the country's internal armed conflict were women (REHMI 1998; CEH 1999), 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 published 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. Torres 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 the gender-specific necrographic 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, stripped of their dignity, and, as such, rape and sexual violence have been an integral part of the counterinsurgency strategy (Amnesty International 2005). Susan Blackburn (1999) and Cynthia 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.¹¹ As Diane Nelson notes, the disdain for indigenous life, and particularly indigenous female life, was temporarily extended by counterinsurgency where "probable insurgents" of all extractions were treated "like Indians—expendable, worthless, bereft of civil and human rights" (1999:326). Indeed, in the counterinsurgency violence, indigenous women were dealt an unusually cruel hand (Torres 2005). 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, remain too traumatized to come forward, afraid of reprisals or rejection by their communities (Amnesty International 2005).¹²

Guatemala's regime and militarization of life encouraged different kinds of gender violence, as indicated not only by direct political violence against women, particularly indigenous women, but also by encouraging the abduction, torture, rape, and murder of women workers as a lesson to other

women workers who might think of asserting their rights. According to Amnesty International (2005), overall violent deaths increased in Guatemala from 2002 to 2004, with a noticeable rise in killings of women being of particular concern. According to police records, in 2002 women accounted for 4.5% of all killings, in 2003 for 11.5%, and in 2004 for 12.1%. Figures compiled by the Policía Nacional Civil (PNC) (cited in 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 due to 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 of today are reported in gruesome detail in the national media, sending the same message of uncertainty and terror, only this time it is directed specifically at women.

Thus, the presence of naked or semi-naked bodies in public places, down gullies and city streets, continues to be a quotidian sight in "post-war" Guatemala. To be sure, men also have been affected by general levels of violence, but the brutality and evidence of sexual violence (which in most cases amounts to torture), create a different context for the deaths of women. In the past few years there have been murders of 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," including drug and arms trafficking, 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 authorities' attitudes are linked, in the words of Bob Herbert (2006) when he refers to violence against women in the U.S., to the "core of the wider society's casual willingness to dehumanize women and girls." In this sense, we are all implicated.

The gender of the victim becomes a significant factor in these crimes, influencing the motive as well as the kind of violence inflicted and the manner in which the authorities respond. Many of the women who have been killed come from poor backgrounds; they suffer 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 their mutilated bodies bear many of the hallmarks of the atrocities committed during the conflict, making differences between "wartime" and "peacetime" Guatemala almost imperceptible.

Multi-sided Violence in the Lives of Women in San Alejo

The forms of violence I have described do not exist in isolation or independently of one another. Structural, political, symbolic, and everyday violence converge. Structural inequalities based on economic, cultural, 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,

on their kin and friends, and on their neighbors (see Bourgois 2004a, 2004b). Focusing on violence in the home, 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 even choices alone but, more importantly, they 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). As Paul Farmer (1996:271) observes, "such afflictions are not the result of accident or force majeure but of human agency; human decisions are behind them, and sometimes the same decisionmakers are involved in the creation of different forms of suffering."

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, etc.) dictate the pace of everyday life in many corners of the world. In Guatemala, political violence has been a direct expression of structural violence (Grandin 2000:8) 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). 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." And 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). Death squad operations have not ceased and have resurfaced with even greater vigor, and the targets now are not only perceived political opponents but ordinary poor people, usually the most vulnerable, who are victimized for acting on the conditions into which they have been forced. Thus, as in other post-war societies, a social cleansing is also happening in Guatemala today.

The presence of the armed forces; the everyday evidence of deep and increasing class and ethnic inequalities in the streets, schools, places of work, shops, housing, and infrastructure; the media saturated with images of unresolved crimes perpetrated by allegedly unknown criminals; and the constant fear of violence and death make 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 and funeral processions, in addition to persistent electrical blackouts and 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 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 within 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 illuminates the naturalized, routinized assaults that are so commonplace as to not be noticeable. Often, in these contexts violence follows gender lines and violence itself becomes accepted to solve myriad

problems. It exemplifies what Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994:130) referred to as “normal abnormality,” where suffering becomes internalized and routinized, but the burden and chronicity of it pose existential dilemmas for those who suffer.

Conclusion

In this paper I have assembled an analytical framework to examine the lives of the women I came to know in eastern Guatemala. Three 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. However, I want to give emphasis to their interrelatedness as, in a context like the one I came to know in Guatemala, it is impossible to compartmentalize and isolate these expressions of violence. Second, although this framework allows me to expose the pervasive forms of violence in women’s lives, I would like to highlight the normalization of violence in their everyday lives. Only when discussed or pointed out do routine practices (often 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,” “peaceful,” or “part of the culture” and that do not cause alarm to which I have called attention here. Importantly, I do not mean to portray the women as simply victims. Women cope in various ways, including accepting violence in their lives 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 they know there is not much an individual can do to change deeply ingrained structures. Presenting the conditions of life for women in eastern Guatemala through a framework of violence helps not only to understand the breadth and depth of violence in Guatemala, 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. Third, I would like to call attention to the lives of women who have not received much attention because they have not been deemed “interesting” enough in academia (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 pervasiveness of fear and the normalization of violence.

NOTES

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

² This point is exemplified in the words of one of Daniel Wilkinson’s 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” (Wilkinson 2004:220).

³ Edelberto Torres Rivas notes that the criminogenic conditions of post-war 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” (1998:49, my translation).

⁴ *Ladino* or *ladina* refers to the nonindigenous Guatemalans who speak Spanish and wear Western clothing; they are mostly mestizos (as well as European descendants) who have been culturally Hispanicized. Indigenous Guatemalans wear their traditional attire and speak one of twenty-two Mayan languages. But there are some important social differences between these two groups as well. For instance, indigenous are more likely than *ladinos* to be poor and not have access to formal education or health care; they are also invariably associated with low social status (Menjívar 2002).

⁵ A focus on 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).

⁶ The World Bank (2006) estimates that close to two-thirds of Guatemala’s seven- to fourteen-year-olds work and go to school, while approximately 40% of them only work.

⁷ 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 a “subversive.” So I was not surprised to hear that women would not question the system openly, but sometimes would allude or imply in their words that they knew something was wrong with the way things were.

⁸ For instance, there have been many lynchings in post-war Guatemala. These 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 were former members of the Civil Patrols (Amnesty International 2004).

⁹ In a disturbing passage, Daniel Wilkinson (2004:231) describes a particularly abusive Guatemalan landowner. As punishment to a blind plantation worker, 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; it happened on a plantation, within the context of everyday owner-worker relations.

¹⁰ There is a widespread consensus among local and international observers that the people responsible for acts of intimidation and crimes against the youth 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Also, 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, the victim's husband/boyfriend or father had been apprehended, though they were not necessarily the perpetrators, thus making it look as if it had been domestic violence, when in fact it was a politically motivated crime.

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