Meanings, Myths and Realities: Gender and Violence in El Salvador

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Abstract

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by

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the linkages between violence and gender identities in post-war El Salvador. Widely regarded as one of the most violent countries in Latin America, efforts to establish sustainable peace in this, the smallest and most densely populated country in the region, have been hindered by rising criminality and violence. This context provides the backdrop for the analysis presented. Based on empirical research carried out with men and women in two low-income communities, a prison and a self-help group for violent men, this project explores how individuals perceive and use violence. It argues that, although high levels of violence affect the population at large, contributing to a climate of generalised fear, such forces do not affect all social groups in the same way. Individuals and groups are exposed to many different types of violence throughout their lives. This is mediated by a number of factors, with gender providing the key axis for analysis in this study. The thesis argues that violence has become a normal option for many citizens, who possess few resources to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner. Indeed, this study suggests that the expectation of violent behaviour from men is pervasive, both in the public and private realms. This contributes to current debates on masculinities, arguing

that historic notions of machismo are still relevant and destructive forces in everyday gender relations that continue to support and excuse male behaviour. The thesis examines how and why this process of normalisation of violence has occurred in El Salvador, which has been the site of decades of political oppression and state sponsored brutality.

This research emphasises a holistic approach to the study of gender relations to include both men and women and brings together conceptual tools from gender studies, area studies and conflict theory in order to fill an important gap in the literature. A gendered analysis of the violences of everyday life, absent from the literature to emerge from El Salvador, exposes the different realities of men and women in relation to experience and use of violence. Neither gender nor violence are static concepts; and through an exploration of the life histories of men and women, this project proposes that different meanings are attached to violence at different times in any individual's life. Social perception of violence is therefore mediated not only by the socio-political context but also individual gender identities and the gendered norms accepted by society. Certain types of violence become more visible/hidden at particular social and political conjunctures, which is of particular relevance to situations of full-scale warfare, such as that seen in El Salvador (1980-1992).

Epistemologies of violence have the complex task of reflecting not only the manifold expressions of violence, but its myriad causes and effects. All narrative is necessarily borne out of constructions based on dynamic cultural and social norms. To write about violence invariably requires an attempt to define it. This project recognises that definitions of violence will never be complete, yet this does not negate their importance, both in academic analysis and as a tool for understanding the changing reality we inhabit. The thesis, therefore, questions the process of definition itself. The study, therefore,

constitutes a thorough examination of the gendered social and cultural processes that underpin everyday life for men and women in this violent context.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACRONYM/ ABBREVIATION	ORGANISATION
ARENA	*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (Nationalist Republican Alliance)
CNSP	*Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (Public Security National Council)
ECA	*Estudios Centroamericanos*, publication of the *Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"*
FGR	*Fiscalía General de la República* Attorney General's Office
FLACSO	*Facultad Latinoaméricana de ciencias sociales* Latin American Faculty of Social Science
FMLN	*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* - Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front - El Salvador
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOES	Government of El Salvador
IDB	International Development Bank
IDHUCA	*Instituto de Derechos Humanas - Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"* The Central American University's Human Rights Centre
ISPM	*Instituto Salvadoreño para la Protección del Menor* Salvadoran Institute for the Protection of Minors
ISDEMU	*Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer* - Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women.
IUDOP - UCA	*Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública - Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"* The Central American University Polling Institute
Maras/pandilleros	Youth gangs

ACRONYM/ ABBREVIATION	ORGANISATION
ONUSAL	*Misión de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador* United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
PCN	*Partido de Conciliación Nacional* National Conciliation Party
PDC	*Partido Democrata Cristiana* Christian Democrats
PDDH	*Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights or Human Rights Ombudsman's office)
PNC	*Policía Nacional Civil* National Civilian Police
WB	World Bank

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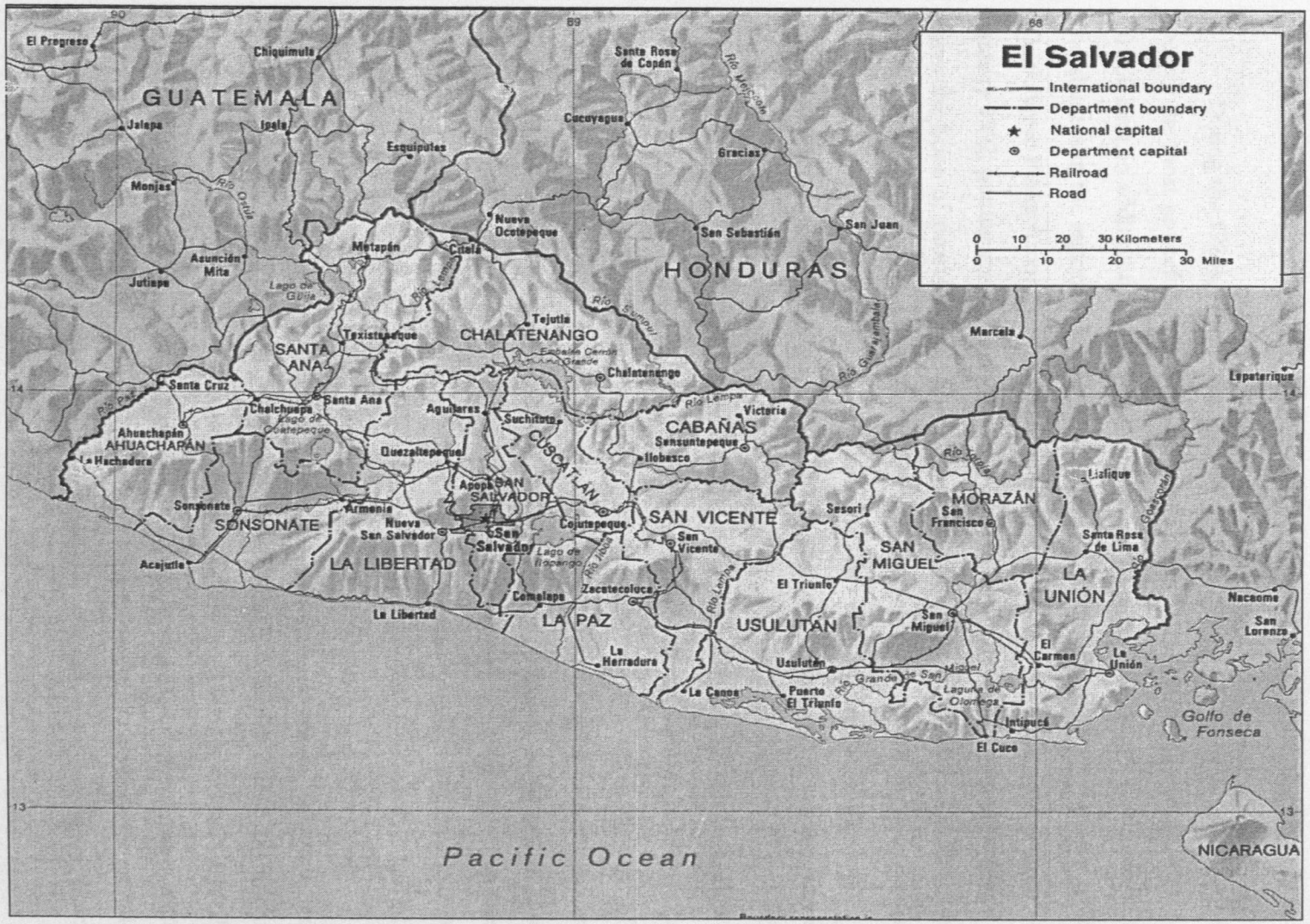

Map 1: El Salvador

Introduction

During the 1980s, Central America was afflicted by a succession of brutal civil wars. One of the most powerful of these conflicts was in El Salvador, which claimed more than 80 000 lives, in addition to the forced displacement of more than one million men, women and children in the region (Ardón, 1998; Thompson, 1996; UN, 1995). In January 1992, the Chapultepec Peace Accord was signed between the government and the left wing FMLN in January 1992, putting an end to the twelve-year civil war. The Peace Accords brought with them the hope of prosperity and the last decade has seen many changes in the country. State sponsored brutality, which had been central to everyday life in the late 1970s and throughout the war, has diminished dramatically. Human rights abuses that once characterised the Salvadoran state have been reduced significantly, though have not disappeared entirely.[1] The military and old security apparatus have been transformed and no longer are omnipotent forces in controlling Salvadoran society (Williams and Walter, 1997). Spaces for political participation have opened up, allowing the FMLN to emerge as a major political party. Civil society has also been strengthened with the emergence of new forces, such as the women's movement, environmental organisations and health workers unions. The process in El Salvador represented an important development for the negotiated resolution of civil war and "set an important precedent for international promotion of human rights principles and democratic institutions" (Burgerman, 2000: 63). Indeed, Boutros Boutros Ghali, speaking in 1995, went as far as to say "El Salvador.... could confidently be called a nation transformed" (UN, 1995: 3).

Nevertheless, the existence and experience of peace in El Salvador remains contested. Although formal peace may prevail, "the effects of such violent conflict are far reaching and still permeate all levels of Salvadoran society" (Murray, 1997: 14). Pearce (1998) emphasises that the everyday lives of much of Central America's population remain marked by exclusion, poverty and violence. Official conflict may have ended, but criminality and gangs help create a situation where insecurity and fear still characterise everyday existence. In this thesis, I focus on how violence plays out in so-called post-

conflict situations; however, I uncover not just the public expressions of violence but those activities that are part of people's private and intimate lives: so much so, that they are not always recognised as violence. In doing so, I focus on the relationship between gender and violence.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to explain the main questions of this thesis as well as offer an introduction to the socio-political context of the research. As such, I present the rationale behind the PhD process, including some consideration of the context, personal considerations for embarking on a PhD and the central questions of the research. I then offer a brief overview of the thesis.

The Context

One of the major criticisms of the peace accords, signed between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government in January 1992 is that they failed to address the social and economic causes of the conflict. Indeed, Pearce (1998: 589) argues "the idea that the region's conflicts have been 'resolved' may be true at the formal level of peace accords between armies and insurgents, but is less so at the real level of people's everyday lives". UN sources estimate that the percentage of the Salvadoran population living in poverty fell from 65.7 per cent in 1991 to 47.5 per cent in 1999. There still exists a huge gap between rural and urban sectors. In 1999 the average rural income only represented 40 per cent of the average urban income. Figures from 1998 indicate that the poorest 10 per cent of the population have 1.2 per cent share of the country's income or consumption. This contrasts with the top 10 per cent who have 39.4 per cent, ranking 50.8 on the Gini index (www.undp.org). As such, El Salvador remains one of the most unequal countries in Latin America.

Dunkerley (1993: 12) cites government figures published on the eve of the final truce in El Salvador, which estimate the direct damage of the war at US$329 million and indirect damage at US $708 million. They calculate the cost of reconstruction at US $1826 million. In addition, the last decade has seen a series of natural disasters that have had adverse effects on the country's development. The widespread devastation caused by

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[1] See, for example, the monthly bulletins from the *Instituto de Derechos Humanas - Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"* Central American University's Human Right's Institute (IDHUCA).

Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and, more intensely, the earthquakes of January and February 2001 have meant that the country must face the task of reconstruction yet again. Figures indicate that 271, 653 houses were damaged in the earthquakes, 163, 866 of which were left inhabitable. It was the poor who felt the extent of these disasters most acutely and the situation brought to the fore existing problems in housing and deprivation. In 2001, the UN estimated that almost a half of El Salvador's population continue to live in precarious conditions (*Informe de Desarrollo Humano*, 2001). It is this context, characterised by inequality and vulnerability, which forms the backdrop of the research. As such, it shapes the questions asked and the data collected. I now turn to the major themes and questions of the research.

Violence from a historical perspective

One of the most critical social effects of the civil war and its preceding years has been the extreme militarization of Salvadoran society and an intensification of the culture of violence (Cruz and Gonzalez, 1997; Sieder and Dunkerley, 1996; Martín-Baró, 1990). An examination of the historical processes at play in El Salvador uncovers a country where violence has been used as a political tool since independence from Spain in 1821. Extreme terror was used by the Salvadoran state in order to ensure continued social and economic hegemony of a small agro-export elite. This group of people, popularly referred to as the "fourteen families," created the conditions in El Salvador to assure maximum control over the resources of the nation and many continue to do so today (ECA, 1999).[2]

Following the massacre of 30 000 indigenous people in 1932 after a tentative uprising, the military took control of the state.[3] Dunkerley (1982: 19) has termed *la Matanza* of 1932 as: "perhaps the single most important event in Salvadoran history; it is indelibly etched into the nation's collective memory both as a momentous occurrence in itself and as the matrix through which all succeeding developments have been understood". Its

[2] As Dunkerley (1982) highlights, there were actually more than fourteen families however the term aptly connotes the tightness of control of a very small number of powerful kinship groups over the country's resources. This marks a pattern of ownership of resources that has continued in El Salvador to the present day. They have merely shifted their investments accordingly. While coffee production may have provided their initial wealth, the same groups have largely managed to maintain control of most of the country's resources. In recent years, they have concentrated their efforts on the financial sector (see ECA, 1999).

[3] Estimates for those murdered oscillate from between 100 000 and 40 000 although most people put the figure at around 30 000 (see Grenier, 1999; Stanley, 1996; Pearce, 1986; Dunkerley, 1982)

consequence lies in the fact that the "Salvadoran oligarchy and its military were quite prepared to resort to genocidal remedies to defend their position" (ibid: 29). Chillingly, Stanley (1996: 43) states that the military had full knowledge that the rising would take place and that it did so while many of the Communist Party leaders were in prison, leaving the insurgents without a clear military strategy. Thus, the "extent of the slaughter was dictated by political calculations rather than internal security" (ibid: 53).

State violence was a fact of everyday life for decades. It worked between and within social networks in the shape of *escoltas militares*, the National Guard and Democratic Nationalist Organisation (ORDEN). At the local level ORDEN served as a unit for intelligence gathering and repression (Williams and Walter, 1997). The organisation provided an effective source of military intelligence with as many as 300 000 members (Holden, 1996). Feldman (1991) stresses that violence is formative - it affects not only the development of individual and collective identity, but also how individuals interact with their social and physical environment. Indeed, Holden (1996: 437) argues that the presence and persistence of state-sponsored violence has had a "pivotal role" in shaping society in Central America. Violence has worked through local networks, co-opting individuals and communities to blur the "distinction between violence carried out by public officials and that by civilians" (ibid: 444). In El Salvador, terror and violence have both characterised relations between the state and society and shaped the formation and reproduction of society itself. The implication of this history of violence - or violent history - is far reaching and its legacy can be seen in contemporary El Salvador relations, where violence remains a powerful and debilitating force in everyday life for many. "*En El Salvador es posible hablar de un discurso violento históricamente construido. La violencia, en este caso y en esta especifica formación socio-cultural, podría entenderse como un código que sirve para explicar y aludir a la realidad cotidiana*" (Huezo Mixco, 2000: 127).[4] One of the first tasks of this thesis is to trace the development of violence in El Salvador from a macro perspective to the everyday lived realities of men, women and communities. How has the history of violence shaped and formed their identities? To what extent has the history of violence affected community networks and collective life?

The absence of war does not mean peace[5]

The end of the war in El Salvador gave way to a dramatic increase in criminality and social violence and the ensuing rise in citizens' concerns about these "new expressions of violence" (Cruz, 2003a: 18). The high levels of violence prevailing in El Salvador suggest that while political peace may have been achieved and new spaces for social and political expression have opened in the post-war period, an "informal war" continues (ECA, 1999). This exhibits itself through a sharp rise in street crime, a growing gang culture and high levels of violence in private realms of existence. Figures for violent crimes are similarly high, with 25 548 violent crimes reported in 1998 alone (Cruz *et al.*, 1998: 4-6). Research undertaken during the 1990s estimated that anywhere between 6000 and 8000 murders occur each year in El Salvador, a country of just over 6 million inhabitants. This recorded average murder rate more than doubled from 1991 (43.5 per 100 000 inhabitants) to 1994 (over 100 per 100 000 inhabitants) (Cruz, 2003a: 19, citing De Mesquita, 2002). These levels are very high: on a global scale more than 10 murders per 100 000 inhabitants is judged as extremely violent (Ramos, 2000: 9). Although these figures have since been questioned due to problems in the gathering of official statistics, El Salvador is still regarded as one of the most violent countries in the world (Cruz, 2003a).[6]

Given this panorama, the thesis explores how the patterns of violence have evolved in the post war context. There is increasing literature on the long-term impact of political violence and recent work has focused on such issues in Latin America, specifically Colombia and Guatemala (Moser and McIlwaine, 2000 a and b; Koonings and Kruijt, 1999; Caldeira, 1996). Consequently this research will expand on this theoretical work and examine the notion of a "continuum of violence" where different types are closely interrelated and the boundaries between them are often blurred (Moser and Shrader, 1999). A key question is what are the linkages between experiences of long-term political violence and social violence?

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[4] In El Salvador it is possible to talk about a historically constructed discourse of violence. In this case, and this particular socio-cultural formation, violence can be understood as a code that explains and refers to daily reality.

[5] This phrase is taken from Galtung (1969).

[6] The quantification of the problem of violence and criminality is analysed in Chapter Two.

Research Questions

A consideration of the context of El Salvador has prompted questions in two key areas: the linkages between gender identities and violence and the meanings, myths and realities of violence. These issues frame the major questions of the research.

Gender identities and violence

Figures from the 1998 IUDOP/ACTIVA poll on cultural norms and attitudes to violence demonstrate that 80 per cent of adult respondents were subject to physical violence as children, highlighting that the problem permeates both the public and domestic realms. Although difficult to quantify, one source estimates that around 57 per cent of Salvadoran women suffer violence at the hands of their male partners (Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri, 2000, citing González, 1997). Instead of diminishing after the war, the question of security remains paramount for citizens during the transition process. The public face of violence has become synonymous with the threat of criminal victimisation, while fear continues to be a pervasive and paralysing force in the lives of the citizens of the region.

Whilst there exists a considerable body of research on institutional peace building in El Salvador and Central America in general, (for example, Popkin, 1999; Sieder *et al.*, 1996; Vilas, 1995; Dunkerley, 1993), few authors have paid attention to the social legacy of violent conflict, and specifically how high levels of violence remaining in all realms of society are perceived at the micro level.[7] Studies that do analyse current manifestations of violence are largely restricted to the public realm. Key themes for analysis have been: citizen security (IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO, 2003), crime (Cruz *et al.* 1999) gangs and youth violence (Smutt and Miranda, 1999; Homies Unidos and IUDOP, 1998; Ramos *et al.* 1998), state weakness (Crustin, 2001; Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri, 2000) and social exclusion (Savenije and Andrade Eekhoff, 2003; Ramos, 2000). Nonetheless, little attention has been paid to the gendered dynamics of such violence and gendered violence remains a subject relegated to the sidelines of mainstream research as an issue for women.[8]

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[7]This is, however, growing area of interest to scholars. See, for example, Moser and Mc Ilwaine (2000b) on Guatemala and Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003) on El Salvador.

[8] For example, Hernández Reyes and Solano (2003) evaluate the service provision of state bodies to the law on "intra-family" violence. Velado (2002) explores sexual violence, with specific attention to the legal framework for dealing with reported cases of rape. PNUD (2000) offer an overview of gendered violence (against women and girls) in El Salvador.

By incorporating a gender perspective, this thesis seeks to make a contribution to current debates on men and violence, both as perpetrators and victims. It also broadens the study to explore women's experiences and use of violence. Perceptions of violence will vary among different social sectors and geographical areas. Gender is the key factor for analysis in this thesis as it determines not only risk, but also experience and opportunity (Moser and McIlwaine, 2000). Different types of violence are interrelated in a complex way and high levels of violence in the public sphere often mirror similar dynamics within family groups, where, conversely, women predominate as victims (Moser and McIlwaine, 2000a; UNDP, 2000). This research seeks to analyse the broad spectrum of violence prevalent in El Salvador and by doing so, it will seek to expand understanding of conflictual relations in both the public and private spheres. Key questions focus on how constructions of gender identity affect individual or group propensity to use violence and the connection between violence in the public arena and in the private realm. By focussing on gender as the axis of analysis in the thesis, I am not discounting other structures of oppression within society based on class or ethnic grounds (see Hammersley, 1995). Rather, my intention is two-fold: firstly, gender issues, as stated previously, have been sidelined by much of the scholarship on violence to date that is not expressly dealing with the issue of violence against women. It is, therefore, an urgent task to address this glaring omission in the literature not least of all given that violence is such a gendered phenomenon. Secondly, the contribution of feminist perspectives on theories of knowledge – specifically how data is gathered, whose knowledge counts and how knowledge is constructed – has been immense. A central objective of this thesis is to analyse how popular epistemologies of violence are produced,. This is the topic to which I now turn.

Meanings, myths, realities and the study of violence

A concern with how individuals understand and recognise violence in their own lives draws out the parallels and common themes of the interview narratives. The aim is to expand the parameters of existing theoretical frameworks for analysing violence, in order to capture the complex web of meanings and myths that pervade and make sense of violent realities. In particular, I am interested in recognising the many forms of violence that have been left out or treated as separate from mainstream analyses. One of the central

preoccupations of this study is concerned with how epistemologies of violence are informed and constructed by the very people that live in violent contexts. A key question of this research concerns the visibility and social meaning of violence, arguing that different types of violence appear more hidden/visible at certain political moments. This empirical assessment of how different types of violence can be regarded in the daily lives of the research participants provides some insight into wider social perceptions and explanations of violence. Without tapping into this popular knowledge, the conceptualisation of violence will fail to incorporate important cultural, political and social considerations that go to the core of understanding such forces. It is here that the benefit of a feminist lens allows us to unpack further popular epistemologies of violence and to question ways of knowing.

Multiple expressions of violence overlap to shape the lives of the men and women who participated in this research and their responses are often contradictory and confusing. This thesis discusses some of the socially accepted myths that contribute to the reproduction of violence, in terms of both its meaning and the lived realities within society. By using the term myth, I do not wish to discount individuals' interpretations of their own realities. Instead, I am referring to the accepted (and often unquestioned) norms and values that shape both the ontological and epistemological appreciation of violence. How do individuals and communities live with the painful and emotive forces of violence in everyday life? How do individuals and groups come to understand and recognise violence in their own lives? To what extent do gendered norms and identities colour this process of definition? What dominant discourses within society inform and shape this process of making violence both visible and hidden?

Motivations for research

All research is essentially a quest for answers to questions that we have posed at one time or another. Such questions are shaped by our "personal, political and intellectual biographies as researchers" (Ribbens and Edwards, 1997: 120). My research is very much a personal response to having worked in low-income communities in El Salvador for the three years prior to beginning my PhD. My time spent working with a local development and gender project exposed me to many of the realities of Salvadoran life. This ultimately laid the foundations for many of the questions I pose in my research. Through my work, I

became increasingly fascinated by Salvadoran society. Each person I met had a story to tell. Their stories of survival and loss moved me deeply and the courage and tenacity they displayed has been humbling. Echoing Dunkerley (1982), this thesis is not only an academic endeavour, but the questions asked are the product of long conversations with Salvadoran friends and my own sense of naive bewilderment and outrage at the continued injustices that pervade life for many in El Salvador.[9]

My own identity as a researcher has been shaped by political violence. I grew up in Northern Ireland and my arrival in El Salvador coincided with the process of peace negotiations in my own country. Like Salvadorans, I had great expectations of what peace could mean to my own context. Growing up in a conflict situation, "peace" was presented as the remedy for all our maladies. Violence was seen almost exclusively as that pertaining to the political realm, with its many other expressions minimised or ignored.[10] Perhaps it is a reflection of my expectations for my own country, but after years of such devastating injustice and loss, the failure of "peace" to bring quality of life to the majority of Salvadorans seems all the more cruel.

One of my first tasks while working for a local women's organisation in 1997 was to conduct some life history research with a small number of women in a returned community in northern Usulutan (see Map 1).[11] The residents, like thousands of their compatriots, had lived for much of the duration of the war in a refugee camp across the border in Honduras. Their testimonies were of suffering, loss and continued pain. The question that stuck in my mind, repeated constantly by all the women, was *para qué?* Why? They had the overwhelming sense that they had gained nothing from the peace process. They still lived in conditions of abject poverty. El Salvador no longer captured world headlines and international donors were now concentrating their efforts on other "crisis" situations. The

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[9] Dunkerley (1982: 1) begins the introduction to *The Long War: Dictatorship and revolution in El Salvador* by asserting that the book is "the product not only of study and political conviction but also outrage". Although this book was written at a very different political moment, I empathised with Dunkerley's "outrage" on hearing the life histories of Salvadorans and witnessing their continued struggle for justice, security and quality of life.

[10] For example, the pioneering study of domestic violence in Northern Ireland (McWilliams and McKiernan, 1993) highlights the minimisation of violence against women compared to politically motivated violence. Ramos (2000) states that other types of violence present in El Salvador were overshadowed by the war. This is discussed further in Chapters Two and Four.

[11] At the time, I was working for *Movimiento Salvadoreño de Mujeres* (MSM), an organisation that, at the time, wanted to assess the necessity of a mental health project for women in the community. A PhD student from New Zealand, who was carrying out research into gender and trauma, was also present at the interviews. See Leslie (1999).

peace process and its expected dividends had eluded them, and, although the actors may have changed, insecurity and fear were still a routine element of daily life. My initial bewilderment and anger fed my intellectual curiosity and my reasons for embarking on the PhD were invariably shaped by this period.

At a conference held in May 2003 at Saint Anthony's College, Oxford, US academic Chuck Call mentioned that he notices a marked difference between scholars working on El Salvador since the 1980s and a younger generation who had no direct experience of the extent of the brutality of the war years. He noted a greater degree of pessimism regarding the country among this new generation than among those who had spent time in the country in previous years and had direct knowledge of the extent of human rights abuses and violence. I do not pretend to begin to imagine what conditions were like for Salvadorans under a heavy-handed state. Indeed, I cannot adequately comprehend the difficulties that living a life of continued poverty, with the constant fear of violence must imply. As such, the questions asked and the subsequent analysis are based on my own interpretations both as a non-local woman and as someone whose life has been shaped by political conflict. In the wake of such devastating loss and destruction, is outrage at the continued marginalisation and impoverishment of much of El Salvador's population not still a valid emotion? This question, which may seem out of place in a doctoral thesis, informs one of the central preoccupations of this study, which is concerned with the visibility and social meaning of violence. I will now offer a brief over view of the thesis.

Overview of thesis

The process of recognising and ascribing meaning to violence will be explored in many of the chapters. A key aim is to demonstrate that a gendered analysis of violence not only broadens our understanding of this highly negative force, but also exposes certain social myths that serve to reproduce the violent realities of many. Chapter One highlights the difficulty of defining violence, yet, at the same time, draws upon feminist scholarship to emphasise the importance of naming in order to make experiences of violence valid. Such a discussion will lead us to question the epistemological values ascribed to different types of violence within a discussion of public and private violence. This thesis argues that pervasive

notions of masculinities and femininities not only shape how individuals may use/experience violence, but also affect how society responds and ascribes meaning to it.

Chapter Two builds upon this theoretical analysis in order to explore some of the major debates emerging from and concerning the Latin American region with specific consideration of El Salvador. For many countries in Latin America, a focus on criminality and violence has occurred in the context of democratic transition and peace building. Research in this field is a growing area of interest for both scholars and practitioners, leading some to contend that the Latin American and Caribbean is the most violent region in the world. Current discussions of violence have a tendency to discount many gendered expressions, especially those that occur in the private realm. For this reason, I explore how patterns of visibility affect social perceptions which do not necessarily reflect the true scale of the problem. Indeed, some attention is paid to the problem of measurement.

The challenges of conducting qualitative social research in this sensitive context are explored in Chapter Three, including emotional reactions to the research, issues of access and ethics, reflexivity and security concerns. Differences in how the research participants ascribe meaning to violence and how I approach the subject from my own cultural and political standpoint are discussed. This is a tension that goes to the heart of this thesis. Whose voice counts in epistemologies of violence? Given the myriad expressions of violence that touch the lives of the interviewees, how do individuals make sense of such a violent world? This chapter is the backdrop for the final three chapters, which explore the empirical findings of the research.

Chapter Four presents a world impregnated with violence on many levels. It explores how the backdrop of violence has evolved in El Salvador, from particularly brutal political expressions in the past, to criminality and gang violence in the contemporary context. Forces that continue to inform everyday life, such as fear, silence and insecurity are discussed. Chapter Five considers issues of visibility and the centrality of gender identities to the normalisation and reproduction of violence. It examines how violence has shaped the lives of the research participants, highlighting that such negative forces do not affect everyone in the same way. Decades of feminist research have exposed the home as a particular site of brutality for women and children, yet pervasive "myths" within society continue to minimise violence against these groups. Finally and in the light of empirical and theoretical discussion, Chapter Six assesses how we construct knowledge about violence,

arguing that there still exists an overwhelming masculinist bias in epistemologies of violence. The chapter suggests that violence is a relational act and that different types of violence are awarded various degrees of meaning. Such a process affects how society responds to, makes (in)visible and makes (in)valid accounts of violence. It analyses how the powerful division of the world into public and private has much resonance in how individuals grade the violence in their lives. Feminist literature is revisited to emphasise the need to be alert to the power of this dichotomy to shape and reproduce popular understandings of violence. Finally, the conclusion brings together the central arguments of the thesis for discussion and points to future directions for research.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has offered an overview of the context of the research and the main questions asked. I emphasise my personal motivations for embarking upon a PhD and highlight that my own identity and life experience have coloured the questions I ask and the interpretations I offer. Given that the research is highly qualitative in nature, it does not pretend to be a representative sample of Salvadoran society. Nevertheless, from an in-depth examination of the life histories of the research participants and a review of published literature, useful parallels and broader conclusions can be reached.

Chapter One

Uncovering meanings, myths and realities: moving towards a conceptual framework for violence

The purpose of this chapter is to explore different approaches to the analysis of violence in order to provide a conceptual framework for this thesis. Writing in 1969, political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1969: 35) reiterated the sentiments of Georges Sorel: "'The problem of violence still remains very obscure' is as true today as it was then" (citing Sorel, 1906: 60). Despite considerable work on the subject, Sorel and Arendt's concerns resonate in much contemporary work on violence. Moore (1994: 138) points out that the subject of violence seems "remarkably undertheorized", due to, "the fact that the causes of violence are clearly multiple and cannot be explained by one set of determinants". Arendt (1969: 8) argues that throughout history violence has played a central part in human affairs yet has been seldom singled out for "specific consideration". She believes that this neglect is indicative of a certain acceptance of violence as a given, stating: "no one questions or examines what is obvious to all" (ibid.).

In recent years, however, there has been an outpouring of academic work on violence.[1] The study of violence has been approached from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, psychology, philosophy and politics, while empirical work has been located in many social and political contexts.[2] Dobash, Dobash and Cavanagh (2003: 49) argue that there has been very little "cross fertilisation" between disciplinary boundaries. In an attempt to address this situation, this chapter draws on analyses from these different fields in order to prompt discussions of how our understanding of the concept of violence affects our approach to the subject. As such, the thesis is based upon a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of violence in terms of both

[1] See, for example, McIlwaine (1999) on violence as a growing issue for concern in development studies and Rodgers (2001) on violence and anthropology.

content and method. Levine (2003: 129) states that one of the central questions of research on violence concerns how the gap between violence and its representation should be negotiated and understood. As the empirical discussion of Chapters Four, Five and Six demonstrate, this thesis is as much concerned about how people understand and give meaning to violence, as the act of violence itself.

Literature on El Salvador exposes a society historically controlled by violence and oppression at all levels, in both the public and private realms (see Chapter Two).[3] Salvadoran historian, Huezo Mixco (2000: 124) states that the great "paradox" of the recent history of El Salvador is that efforts to achieve peace have only succeeded in increasing violence and crime.[4] How can theoretical discussions assist our understanding of the seemingly contradictory processes at play in contemporary El Salvador? It is imperative to ask to what extent do current theoretical debates on violence follow, or indeed help us to frame, the changing realities of the individuals and groups whose narratives will form the basis of discussions in later chapters?

In my endeavour to answer these questions, I explore definitions in order to underline the complexities of naming and recognising the many expressions of violence in different contexts. This draws heavily upon feminist scholarship, where it is precisely the necessity of naming violence in order to make it visible and recognise it that forms the basis of the discussion. I wish to highlight how feminist contributions are ignored in much mainstream conceptual discussion; yet their value is immense when analysing how men and women live with violence on a daily basis. This invariably raises certain epistemological concerns about existing studies on violence that continue to discount violence in the home from the consideration of "real" violence or, indeed, fail to recognise how gender issues

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[2] For a useful and concise critique of different theoretical approaches to the study of violence, see Hearn (1998). See also Chapter Three of this thesis, which offers a discussion of my methodological approach to the study of violence.

[3] Work on violence against women is relatively sparse in El Salvador bar a few internal documents from women's organisations and there is still a tendency to separate issues of domestic violence from issues of wider social and criminal violence. One notable exception is Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003) who offer a comprehensive examination of many different types of violence in the lives of five communities in Greater San Salvador.

[4] Similar tendencies have also been noted in other societies emerging from conflict. For a discussion of Guatemala, see Moser and McIlwaine (2000b), Central America, see Cruz (2003a) and Pearce (1998), South Africa, see Hamber (1999).

play a significant role in how individuals perceive violence in their lives.[5] According to Moore (1994: 154), "[t]he difficult thing to explain is not why gendered relations are so violent, but why violence is so gendered". Perhaps in no other academic pursuit is the evidence of malestream bias more evident.[6]

Overview of this chapter

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the overlapping definitions of crime and violence to clarify the terminology that I use in the thesis. This is followed by an examination of the definitional process. The multiple and changing meanings of violence pinpoint the necessity of placing value on subjective understandings of the phenomenon. Feminist literature is examined to illustrate that definitions are both necessary and practical. Then, drawing upon analyses of political violence, I examine the highly ideological process of interpreting violence, reflecting unequal power relations within society. Galtung's (1969 and 1990) consideration of cultural, personal and structural violence allows for an analysis of the many subtle and barely perceptible forms of violence that affect a society. This is pertinent to this thesis, where I am interested in how certain types of violence are normalised or rendered invisible. Moreover, Galtung's framework is particularly useful to understand how and why violence becomes possible and enduring within social relations.

This is followed by an examination of Moser and Shrader's (1999) continuum of violence. Their three-fold typology of social, political and economic allows us to place the manifold expressions of violence into accessible categorisations. Although this approach is somewhat restrictive for analysing the social meaning of certain types of violence, particularly gendered expressions, the notion of violence existing along a continuum with linkages between each type is important to this thesis. This is developed further with relation to empirical data in subsequent chapters where the notion of the social meaning of violence existing along a continuum is introduced (see, in particular, Chapter Five). The necessity of exploring how social meanings are constructed is framed within a discussion of the division of society into public and private. An examination of feminist literature on

[5] See Stanko (1990) for a discussion of how men and women construct notions of insecurity and danger in the United Kingdom. Stanko's analysis offers some interesting insights from which to explore similar tendencies in El Salvador.

domestic violence highlights that much of women's victimisation becomes minimised and rendered invisible due to a privileging of public realms. This is reinforced by popular prescriptions of male gender identities that consider much violence as part of men's "normal" behaviour. The centrality of violence to masculinities is discussed before a brief exploration of the need to analyse the silences that surround much violence.

Crime and/or violence?

McIlwaine (1999: 455) suggests that one of the most striking issues to emerge from research on violence to date is "the blurring of the boundaries between the terms 'violence' and 'crime' [which are] often used coterminously due to the violent nature of much contemporary crime in the developing world." This blurring of definitions can be misleading, since all crime is not necessarily violent and all violence is not considered a crime. However, I consciously use both terms concurrently throughout much of the thesis. In part, this is in response to literature emerging from Latin America that refers to *violencia* and *delincuencia* in order to distinguish social and economic violence.[7] I wish to highlight the distinction in legal terms, but endeavour to broaden the usage to include expressions of violence that are not generally included in an orthodox criminological approach, such as state violence and violence against women. This approach is broadly informed by Foucauldian notions of "normalisation", where the (il)legality of acts affect social understandings of accepted or "normal" behaviour.[8]

Criminal violence is considered as that which occurs outside the framework of the law. Nevertheless, though political and domestic violence may be illegal, they are rarely analysed as criminal.[9] Indeed, "intra-family" violence continues to be sidelined in much of the literature to emerge from the region: this is discussed further in the next chapter. By

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[6] This is a point addressed by Hearn (1998:40) with reference to the exercise of researching men's violence, which he sees akin to "swimming against the tide of the malestream". Indeed he advocates a multi-perspectivist approach for the study of violence in a bid to undermine the grand narratives of the malestream.

[7] This is discussed further in Chapter Two. See, for example, wwwpncelsalvador.gob.sv.

[8] See, for example, Foucault's (1977) historiography of the prison system, where he traces the patterns by which modern forms of discipline have been accepted and normalised into Western societies. His argument that power is central to the production of knowledge is of particular resonance to the study of violence, where I question both the temporality and the validity of dominant definitions. Powerful discourses that inform both popular and institutional definitions expose the patterns by which epistemologies of violence are constructed to reflect hegemonic interests. This is discussed further throughout the thesis.

[9] See Saraga (2001) for further discussion on this point.

referring to the overlapping categories of criminality and violence, I am not suggesting that they are the same, or that one is a category of the other. Instead, I wish to draw attention to the labels attached to different types of violence that affect visibility levels. The visibility of certain types of violence affects popular perceptions of the phenomenon and associated levels of fear and insecurity. Such notions are generally constructed within the public realm, where the fear of crime takes on great significance. It is, therefore, the social meaning attached to the definition that is of interest.

Muncie and Mc Laughlin (2000: 1) warn that, "the formal concept of crime is an inherently unstable and shifting definition of fear and insecurity... What is conceptualized as crime changes over time and circumstances and is rarely consistent across different societies." They suggest, for example, that murder in one context may be heralded as heroism in another. This is particularly true to cases of extreme political violence, where ideology rather than legality often colours definition. The problem of crime, according to Muncie (2001), is not just a result of its damaging consequences, but also how it is understood. To extend Muncie's argument to violence in general, this thesis argues that, like understandings of crime, definitions of violence are indeed problematic. The definition of violence has very practical ramifications for policy and legal matters. It also has implications for social reactions to violence. Understanding how a society responds, or indeed fails to respond, to different types of violence will be a vital component of any policy that aims to reduce violence in an effective manner. Therefore, different approaches to defining violence are explored below.

The "unenviable" task of defining violence[10]

According to John Keane (1997:65), "it is essential to recognise that the term 'violence' is notoriously contested, and that its scope and meaning change through time and from space to space." The difficult task of defining violence on a conceptual level is mirrored in the sometimes confusing and contradictory narratives of violence of individuals and groups in relation to their own life experiences. Hearn (1998: 15) reminds us that:

[10] Taken from Galtung (1969).

> Violence means many things to different people; it can refer to or involve many different types of social actions and social relations... Most importantly, violence is not *one thing*, it is not a thing at all. Violence is simply a word, a shorthand, that refers to a mass of different experiences in people's lives.

This apparent confusion goes to the core of understanding violence and will be discussed in subsequent chapters, with specific attention to the temporality of violence and the experiential conditions. Arendt (1969: 5) speaks of the "all-pervading unpredictability, which we encounter the moment we approach the realm of violence." Rather than being an impediment, an awareness of the very "unpredictability" of violence, and its changing meanings through time and space, should be key to enhancing our understanding of this highly negative social phenomenon. For this very reason, violence appears riddled with uncertainties, and the process of defining it becomes a conceptual quagmire. In the face of this "unpredictability", this thesis explores how the individuals and communities living with high levels of violence ascribe meaning to this negative, if deeply embedded, force in their lives.

The discussion below addresses the complexities of defining and ascribing meaning to such a slippery concept. It argues that the process of understanding violence is shaped by ideological considerations. It is necessary to look at *how* knowledge is constructed as well as *what* is considered violence. The contribution of feminism to this debate is crucial. It involves an analysis of prevailing social myths that normalise certain expressions of physical and psychological brutality; for example, men's violence against women. The discussion of the highly subjective nature of violence is followed by a brief discussion of the relationship between violence and power.

The multiple meanings of violence: the importance of subjective understandings

Nordstrom (1997: 116) points out that "people are as loathe to accept definitions of violence as they are to ask for them." Meanings change over time and space. Das and Kleinman (2000: 8) point out that "yesterday's terrorist could be today's Prime Minister", highlighting not only the temporality of definitions, but also the potent ideological

undertones of certain labels.[11] Feminist work on violence suggests that, "in order to be able to speak about something, one must first be able to name it and define it... Names provide social definitions, make visible what was invisible, define as unacceptable what was accepted; make sayable what was unspeakable" (Kelly and Radford, 1996: 20). In order to confront violence, therefore, individuals and groups must possess the necessary tools. It may seem incredible today to think that second wave feminists in the 1960s did not even possess a vocabulary with which to describe the "unspeakable outrages" that women had to endure, largely at the hands of men (ibid.). The attempt by feminist activists and scholars to make visible women's experiences has not only had a huge impact on conceptual frameworks and popular assumptions, but also on the legislation and control of different types of violence.

McLaughlin (2002: 285) reminds us that only certain acts of violence within a given social order are classified as illegal. He states that "murder, assault, rape and robbery are the paradigmatic crimes of violence that hold a hegemonic position in legal discourse and public imagination". While not questioning the enormity of such violent acts, it is imperative to interrogate the structures or discourses within a society that regulate or shape these popular (and legal) understandings of violence. Indeed, it is worth noting at this point that "rape" does not necessarily include rape in marriage as a "paradigmatic crime of violence". Torres Rivas (1999: 286) points out that:

> Not every definition of violence takes account of an essential fact, which is that not all members of society recognise the same acts as violent, accordingly such acts may be justified in different and even contradictory ways. There is an *implicit subjectivity* precisely because in this case we are dealing with a political perception and, besides, one with a background relativity since it corresponds to perceptions that are not always culturally determined (emphasis added).

Torres Rivas' discussion is of political violence in Latin America where exposure to decades of political brutality has shaped deep polarisation in society's mechanisms to understand

[11] See Xaba (2001) for an interesting empirical account of how men's use of violence and it social impact changes over time and in different political situations in South Africa. Also Munck (2000) offers a pertinent analysis on the ideologically loaded term "terrorist".

violence.[12] For example, the introduction to the thesis underlined that the rationale for state violence in El Salvador was obscured within a patriotic anti- Communist discourse. Notions of *los malos* (the bad) and *los buenos* (the good) were common throughout the war (Martín-Baró, 1984). As such, the use of violent repression was seen as necessary and legitimate by certain political actors, yet the reality of state brutality meant highly negative repercussions for the population. Depending on the subject position, the violence was given a different meaning. From a government perspective, supported by the US, the "need" to defend against the possibility of a communist insurrection justified the murders of tens of thousands of civilians. By drawing upon this example, I do not wish to suggest that state violence is legitimate, rather highlight how this "implicit subjectivity" affects the meaning individuals and groups give to violence.[13] Further, Tomlinson (1980) highlights how state terror became "normalised" in Northern Ireland throughout the 1970s. He argues that by operating within the framework of the law, coercive practices were awarded a veneer of legitimacy.[14] The construction of the legality of violence is key to its legitimacy.

This is true for many other expressions of violence and raises questions about whether we can ever truly separate ontology and epistemology in our endeavour to understand. Why *should* we attempt to understand that which is arguably undefinable? Can we ever realistically - and responsibly - define such a subjective phenomenon? Nordstrom (1997) makes clear that violence is complex and multi-layered, reinforcing the linkages between its different types as well as the many causes. She states that, "[v]iolence is not a static 'thing' or a passing 'event' unchanging and monolithic, that is variously employed to certain ends. It is a transformational cultural dynamic expressed and resisted within a changing and often contradictory social universe" (ibid: 142). The great dilemma of any research on violence is that we seek to attach meanings and definitions to an inherently personal lived experience. "To sum up the dilemma...violence is not defined... it is a serious statement about the politics of power" (ibid: 115). Yet, following the feminist logic highlighted above, we strive to define violence, however imperfectly, in order to make it visible and uncover the gendered elements of its very definition. Hence, it is necessary to be

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[12] See Chapters Two and Four for a discussion of many other effects of exposure to political violence.
[13] Similar tendencies can be seen in current global parlance with reference to the "war against terror".
[14] Tomlinson specifically speaks about what he calls the "ulsterisation" of security responses in Northern Ireland, where the role of the British Army was secondary to the "indigenous" forces of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (USR). In this way, policing went on as "normal" despite the introduction of practices such as internment.

sensitive to the potentially limited boundaries of definitions and be aware of the subjective interpretations leading to any one definition. Further, it is precisely the questioning of standardised definitions that is of interest (and urgency). Keane (1996: 65) aptly addresses the quandary:

> Like all concepts in the social sciences, categories like violence can be fatal for the imagination eventually because they provide a potentially false certainty about the world; on the other hand without such categories, thinking is wounded, sometimes fatally and it therefore follows that a political theory of violence needs to be aware of the need for sharp-edged categories that are as necessary as they are dangerous

On power and violence: whose truth?

Much feminist scholarship has overcome this difficulty, on both a conceptual and a practical level, by addressing the very "politics of power" that serve to limit the definition of violence.[15] Hanmer and Saunders (1983) agree that this is an intensely political area in which to undertake research, precisely because there is little or no agreement on which behaviours constitute violence. Conflicting standpoints have profound effects on how individuals and groups live with violence. They "tend to see violence not only as their problem, but as one not shared by others" (ibid: 30). Commonality of experience cannot be recognised unless there is some agreement on what constitutes this experience and, moreover, whose experiences count as valid?

Moser and Winton (2001: vi) state that, "[u]nderlying this [the definition of violence] is recognition that violence involves the exercise of power that is invariably used to legitimate the use of force for specific gains." The assumption here is that people use violence to obtain or maintain power. Power, in this sense, is "power over". According to Townsend (1999: 26) this is the "obvious power, and is what we usually think of when

[15] Indeed, it is the political purpose of feminist research that distinguishes it from mainstream research practice. It exists to make a difference, not only to make the oppression of women visible, but also to contribute to the transformation of the patriarchal power structures that underpin this oppression. As such, the origins and *raison d'être* of feminist research are fundamentally political, a factor which must necessarily shape its agenda and content. It is research to promote a change in the existing social order and therefore seeks to transform existing, highly unequal social structures. The international attention now paid to the issue of women's victimisation and changes in policy which have improved the service offered to and treatment of

imagining power. It is the power of one person or group to get another person or group to do something against their will" (citing Rowlands, 1995). Other types of power include: power from within, power with and power to. Power from within is the recognition that "one is not helpless, not the source of all one's own problems, that one is restricted in part by structures outside oneself" (Townsend, 1999: 30). "Power with" represents the transformative possibilities of collective action and "power to" involves gaining access to a full range of human abilities and potential. This is central to empowerment (ibid: 33). Power is, therefore, not only important in the exercise of violence to force an individual or group to do something against their will (power to), but it is also key to resisting violence (power from within/power to/power with).[16]

The relationship between power and violence, as Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003) point out, is not unidirectional. Even when power is taken to mean "power over", violence is not a necessary element. Instead, there may exist a whole range of subtle social rules that enforce the will of the powerful without the explicit use of force. The two may be closely entwined, but they are different. Indeed, Arendt (1969) distinguishes power from violence, seeing them as opposites. In her view, violence occurs when power is missing, as having real power does/should not necessitate the exercise of violence. The distinction is important and helps explain why individuals use violence to rebel against their perceived lack of social, economic and/or political power with the use of force.

Powerlessness is a common, but not unique, explanatory factor for the use of violence. For example, Cruz (1998) associates the proliferation of *maras* in the Salvadoran transition to a search for social power that has been lost, or, indeed, never held. Others explore the complex and indirect linkages between violence and social exclusion (for example, Ramos, 2000 and Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff, 2003). Violence is a factor that can be regarded both a cause and consequence of social exclusion, although this does not suggest that there is an inevitable or linear relationship between the two, nor does it propose that those people who live in situations of exclusion necessarily turn to violence.

However, to suggest that violence only occurs in situations where power is absent would be misleading, especially when the use of both physical force and psychological

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women who are victim of men's violence have largely come about as a product of feminist research and action (Dobash and Dobash, 1992).

[16] The empowerment of women (power to), which is seen as coming from within, is seen as key for women to get out of violence relationships.

abuse is a central feature of gendered power relations. Historically, women have tended to turn to violence less than men or, according to Hearn (1998: 36), it is "men who dominate the business of violence and who specialise in violence".[17] Feminists have endeavoured to expose the family as a site of power struggles. At their most extreme, such struggles are expressed through male violence against women (see, for example, Yllo and Bograd *et al.*, 1988; Hester, Kelly. and Radford, 1996; Saraga, 2001). Indeed, there is growing scholarship on men's changing gender identity, linking weakened male privilege within societies with the increased use of violence (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 1984 and 1994, cited in Townsend *et.al.*, 1999). Others argue that violence is regarded as a characteristic central to the performance of masculinity. It is both an expression of male power and a way of maintaining it (see, for example, Connell, 1987; Bowker *et al.*, 1998; Hearn, 1998 and Hanmer, 1990). Gendered violence not only reflects unequal power dynamics between men and women, but dominant notions of masculinities are linked to discourse that minimises such violence and naturalises male power. The real power of violence is in its perception as normal and, therefore, left unquestioned.

Following Foucault's argument that power is key to the production of knowledge, Whitehead and Barrett (2001: 17) emphasise the importance of "discourse as a means by which power is exercised and resisted, and through which male supremacy and power inequalities become legitimized." Hence, power and masculinity are understood as relational constructions. Dominant ways of being a man are privileged and validated within cultural settings, thus reproducing power differentials and gender inequalities. Connell (1987) has extended the concept of hegemony to refer to dominant notions of masculinity, where violence becomes a key expression of masculine behaviour and a mechanism to ensure continued male privilege. Hegemony, as originally developed by Gramsci (1929), refers to the "dynamic process by which groups create and sustain power, how 'normal' definitions and taken-for-granted expressions come to define situations. Hegemony goes beyond the

[17] I in no way suggesting that women do not use violence. Indeed, Chapter Five highlights the very severe violence that women use against their children. Nevertheless, I share Kelly's (1996) preoccupation that by exposing women's use of violence, there is a risk that this will overshadow the enormity and extent of women's repeated subjection to violence at the hands of men. Throughout the course of the research, men referred constantly to women's violence and their role in reproducing *machismo*. Understanding violence is often bound up with a need to apportion blame and men, in their defence, often pointed to their mothers as the figure that "taught" them how to be men. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

material holding of power and refers to the *process* by which 'normal' and ideal definitions emerge" (Barrett, 2001: 79). According to Whitehead and Barrett (2001: 21):

> [Discourses] contain social and cultural assumptions presented as 'truths' and as ways of being and relating in the world and to others... Discourses are, then, more than just ways of speaking for they send highly powerful messages in terms of knowledges and what counts as (valid and invalid) knowledge, what is seen as 'truth', and in respect of how individuals should behave in given locales.

This thesis is both concerned with how powerful discourses within El Salvador shape individuals' understandings of violence in their lives and how the power relations central to a gendered social order shape experiences of violence. This is interrogated further below in an exploration of how men's violence is regarded as normal behaviour. At this juncture, it is important to emphasise that powerful groups dominate not only the material resources of a society, but also the discourses, myths and practices that serve to uphold their hegemonic privileges. Powerful interests, therefore, shape the meaning of violence: what is considered violent and what is not. Uncovering these myths and meanings is a key element of challenging hegemonic processes that privilege malestream understandings of social reality. It is to these understandings that I now turn to consider the process of interpreting violence.

Whose voice counts in interpreting violence?

Feminist academics and activists have argued that mainstream discourse and theoretical work hides much of the violence suffered by women. Indeed, one of the most consequential outcomes of feminist research and activism has been the recognition of violence in the home, or the private sphere, as a social problem and not merely, an unpleasant, if inevitable, extension of women's existence.[18] Much of the violence of the

[18]Feminist research emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s as a response to the hitherto "masculinist" bias manifest in the social sciences (Roberts, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Under the influence of second wave feminism, early research aimed to "make women visible" (Oakley, 1974) claiming that "not only is women's

private realm is still minimised in comparison to its more public expressions. Questioning the process of definition is of great consequence when looking at the gendered dynamics of violence. Individuals and groups, who have been historically without voice, may be confronted with high levels of violence in their lives. These same groups, women, children, the elderly and those marginalised from society, are also those who are least likely to have recourse to formal justice. Furthermore, as feminist research has highlighted, popular myths surrounding violence may even contribute to a minimisation, or, indeed, negation of the validity of their experiences. In many cases, alternatives to violence are not readily available and many of those women who do "choose" to avoid violence are punished by societies that eulogise the family above women's individual and collective well being (Bogard, 1988 and Radford and Stanko, 1996).[19] In light of the previous discussion on power, it is, therefore, essential to examine *who* defines violence and *what* they define as violence.

It is for this reason that the interpretative process by which definitions are reached becomes equally important, if not more so, as the definition itself. Meanings and myths become enmeshed with the everyday realties of living with violence to shape the identities of the men and women whose life histories inform this research. Their narratives are based upon a range of social, cultural and political discourses that affect how individuals interpret and give meaning to the world around them. Gendered norms are of particular consequence in shaping how individuals and groups interpret and live in society. Developing Gramsci's (1929) allusion to contradictory consciousness, Gutmann (1996: 14) uses this concept to "orient our examination of popular understandings, identities and practices" in his examination of men in Mexico City.[20] Contradictory consciousness is seen as reflective, therefore, of changing and multiple male gender identities. This notion proves particularly useful to the analysis of the dialectic relationship between gender and violence, allowing us to recognise both the "consciousness inherited from the past... that is largely

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experience often ignored, but also where it is noted it is distorted" (Stanley and Wise, 1983: 15). Initial efforts to "correct" this bias sought to explore different aspects of women's lives in order to fill in the "gaps" in our knowledge. One key issue for research was in the area of violence.

[19] It must be stressed here that I use the term "choose" with a certain irony. The notion of avoiding violence as a choice infers that this is a straightforward and linear process. This is clearly not the case. See Chapter Six for more discussion on the notion of the choice to use or avoid violence.

[20] Gutmann stresses that Gramsci's references to "contradictory consciousness" were brief, but that they provide a useful starting point from which to analyse how male identities develop and transform in societies. See Gramsci (1929-35: 333).

and uncritically accepted, and another, implicit consciousness that unites individuals with others in the practical transformation of the world" (ibid: 15).[21]

The distinction between inherited and transformative consciousness permits us to examine both prevailing male (read hegemonic/dominant) discourses that "make sense" of the world and the transformative possibilities offered by feminist scholarship. The goal of such an approach is to expose and dismantle historic ways of knowing and being in the world. This allows us to hear the multiplicity of voices that are often lost in dominant epistemologies of violence and to explore how individuals and groups resist and subvert existing structures. It also reveals how these epistemologies have been informed by what Bourdieu (2001: 1) has termed the "paradox of *doxa*". In other words, how individuals and entire societies perceive the "order of the world as we find it" to be natural and, therefore, eternal. As Chapters Five and Six illustrate, this is particularly true of gendered violence, which relies on a host of social and cultural values that normalise men's violence against women and children. Bourdieu warns that, "the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural" (ibid.). Indeed, McHoul and Grace (1993: 16) make reference to the Foucauldian notion of "official discourses", a concept particularly important to the subject of study where the validity and meaning of violence can vary in different social and political contexts. According to Foucauldian thought, this process is often dependent on the relations of power than underpin and actively produce knowledge. In this sense, both power and knowledge are not only intimately linked, but active agents of each other. Hence, in the study of violence, it is essential to be alert to the conditions - or strategies of power - by and within which knowledge is constructed. The tremendous power of "official discourses" is determinant to how individuals and societies interpret violence. It is to this process of interpretation to which we now turn.

Interpreting violence

As argued above, the processes of interpretation are understood as highly ideological. Curle (1995) points out that violence causes harm. It is, however, rare that violence be regarded merely as the simple act that causes harm to an individual or group

[21] Chapter Five explores the process of constructing memories of violence. It analyses how certain types of

(Feldman, 2000). Instead the perceived harm, which can be material or psychological, is exposed to a whole range of ideological manipulation giving meaning to the act. Feldman (ibid: 55) calls these the "recognition codes built into any violent enactment". He suggests that:

> In terms of the sheer materiality of violence, these acts are basically undifferentiated in terms of their concrete human consequences. They are polarized and differentiated through the instantaneous infusion of idealising national, ethnic and other cultural codes into material performance and its debris, rendering the latter inexcusable (ibid.).

Although Feldman is speaking of political conflict in Northern Ireland, similar patterns are discernible for the many types of violence present in the life histories of men and women in El Salvador. Political violence is reliant upon ideological interpretation as its *raison d'être* (Apter, 1997). Nevertheless, the recognition codes that offer meaning and definition transcend the whole spectrum of violences and, as mentioned above, are coloured by hegemonic interests within the social, political and economic relations. This is explored further below in relation to Galtung's (1990) triangle of cultural, direct/personal and structural violence

Cultural, direct/personal and structural violence

Galtung (1969 and 1990) adopts a broad concept of violence to include issues of social justice and exploitation, which he terms "structural violence".[22] Structural violence is understood as different from "personal" or "direct" violence, which is, as the term suggests, from one person or group of people to another in a clearly identifiable situation, for example, murder or wounding. [23] Galtung (1990) builds upon this distinction to add the concept of "cultural" violence. Cultural violence brings together those aspects of culture

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violence are accepted uncritically within narratives leading to their normalisation/acceptance.

[22] Coming from the conflict resolution perspective, Galtung uses this model to unpack the concept of peace to give it more meaning than merely "the absence of war". This broader definition of violence, and therefore, peace, is of particular consequence in the case of El Salvador where, despite the formal ending of the war, social relations remain extremely violent and there has been little or no change in the structures of inequality. Pearce (1998) uses this model in order to assess the peace processes in Central America in the context of endemic poverty and violence.

that can be used to justify or legitimise the other two types. Culture, in this sense, is regarded as a site in which hegemonic interests are naturalised and appear enduring (see Yanagisako and Delaney, 1995 on culture and power). Religion and language are two such elements mentioned by Glatung, but it is also important to consider the norms that inform gender relations within different cultural contexts.[24]

This differentiation between the three - cultural, personal and structural - is important. Not only does it permit us to understand violence as a manifest action, that can be perceived by its object (victim); it also nuances our understanding of the conditions - both material and symbolic - within society that serve to maintain and reproduce inequality and injustice. As highlighted above, examining such conditions is of particular relevance to the study of gender relations where inequalities between men and women have become normalised to the point of being seen as inevitable (Bourdieu, 2000). The structures that uphold male privilege are not necessarily identified as violent, yet they range from direct physical violence to processes that diminish an individual's freedom of choice. An example: "when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence" (Galtung, 1969: 171). Interrogating these structures allows us to make visible inherited practices that have become so ingrained in social relations that they are viewed as normal.

> Personal violence *shows*. The object of the personal violence perceives the violence usually, and may complain - the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this at all. Personal violence represents change and dynamism - not only ripples on waves but waves on otherwise tranquil waters. Structural violence is silent, it does not show - it is essentially static, it *is* tranquil waters. In a *static* society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us (ibid: 173, emphasis in the original).

The process of interpreting personal violence is not clear-cut, nor is it necessarily dependent on the degree of force used. To draw upon an example used previously, murder in one context may be heralded as heroism in another (Muncie and Mc Laughlin, 2000). For this reason, it is key to look at how violence is understood and legitimised within different

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[23] Galtung (1969) uses the term "personal" violence, although in his later work (1990) he prefers the term "direct" violence, with little definitional variance.

[24] See Chapter Five for a discussion of language and sexuality.

social groups. What structures of power or oppression inform discourse of violence? For instance, Crawley (2000: 96) argues that there is "nothing to differentiate the position of a man locked in a torture cell and a woman who is repeatedly abused within the confines of her own home." She points out that the "same processes used to break the will of the prisoners are used by domestic aggressors to break the will of battered women" (ibid.). Although the same degree of physical and psychological force may be used, the social interpretation of these two acts is quite distinct.

Decades of feminist research have highlighted that society generally awards more significance to the case of the man in a cell than the woman in her own home. To a certain extent, the act of violence becomes lost - or normalised - in the interpretative process. This process, according to Galtung (1990), is termed "cultural" violence. Galtung's triangle of cultural, personal and structural violence is useful in this thesis in order to explore the ways in which violence affects the lives of the research participants: how it is recognised, reproduced and normalised within the everyday norms and values that characterise human interaction.

Underlying the meaning ascribed to violence is the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. Where the victim and perpetrator know each other in an intimate or familial relationship, the act of violence is often minimised. Individuals and groups consciously and unconsciously grade violence according to what is perceived as more/less serious. This process of gradation, from the initial act of violence to the reaction it provokes, passes through a prism of socially constructed ways of interpretation - or recognition codes - to affect how different types of violence are perceived by society. Individual and group reaction within societies, different political contexts, age cohorts and social categories will move along that continuum in both directions. Their appraisal of violence is affected not only by individual subjectivity but also by the dominant cultural and social norms within the context. The notion of a continuum, explored below, allows us to unpack further different categories of violence, such as economic, political and social.

Economic, social and political: a continuum of violence

Kelly and Radford (1996) point out that the law suggests that there is a clear distinction between violent and not violent. The reality of violence, as demonstrated by its

very definitional quagmire, suggests that this is clearly not the case. Indeed, continued dichotomous interpretations of violence wound the process of conceptualising the phenomenon. Kelly (1988) sustains that much of women's lives are marked by a continuum of male violence. The notion of a continuum, echoed in the work of other authors does not equate all acts of violence as the same, rather it reinforces the point that there are important connections between different types and that the boundaries between then are fragile.[25] For example, Moser (2000) highlights the linkages between political, economic and social violence (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Categories of violence

Category	Definition	Manifestation
Political	The commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power.	Guerrilla conflict; paramilitary conflict; political assassinations; armed conflict between political parties; rape and sexual abuse as a political act, forced pregnancy/sterilization
Economic	The commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, for economic gain or to obtain or maintain economic power.	Street crime; carjacking; robbery/theft; drug trafficking; kidnapping; assaults, including rape occurring during economic crimes.
Social	The commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, for social gain or to obtain or maintain social power.	Interpersonal violence such as spouse and child abuse; sexual assault of women and children; arguments that get out of control.

Source: Moser (2000)

Wary of the static nature of categorisations, Moser and Shrader (1999) envisage the conceptualisation as a continuum with important reinforcing linkages between different types of violence. This allows us to understand how, in the context of Latin America, the historic dynamics of violence nourish the current climate of fear, or, for example, gender

[25] The notion of a continuum of economic, political and social violence has been developed in the work of Caroline Moser. See Moser and Shrader (1999); Moser and Mc Ilwaine (2000a and b); Moser (2000) and Moser and Winton (2001).

based violence can be both a weapon of war and a pervasive force in times of peace. The use of a continuum is helpful in understanding the causal relationships between different types of violence. Further, Moser and Winton (2001) argue that the continuum moves in both directions: in the primary direction, intra-household violence may prompt youths to leave home and thus put them at risk of "street violence". In the secondary direction, state violence results in the lack of trust of the police and judicial system (ibid: 10). Nevertheless, it is unclear whether you must pass through social, economic and political violence in a linear fashion (as suggested by the use of a continuum). Perhaps more useful is to borrow from Galtung (1990) to envisage social, economic and political violence as three points in a triangle. The notion of a triangle rather than a continuum for this purpose suggests that violence does not begin with one particular element but that three types nourish and feed off each other. In this way, social, economic and political violence are regarded as three interrelated, multi-directional and multi-layered manifestations of violence.

The notion of linkages between different types of violence is key to the context of El Salvador where historical processes have bearing on the current situation. A history of political violence has not only increased society's threshold for tolerating violence, but has contributed to the disintegration of social networks and the atomisation of communities that are associated with containing further violence (Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri, 2000). As a tool for identifying expressions of violence, these categorisations are a useful starting point, especially in terms of the broader macro context of violence. For the purpose of this thesis, however, they fall short in providing a more detailed analysis of how violence becomes possible, how it is reproduced and how wider cultural patterns shape the recognition of an act as violent. As feminist critics are at pains to point out, no violence occurs in a vacuum. Instead, violence reflects the power dynamics of unequal social relations. The above categorisation analyses the social, political and economic motivations that underlie violence. The gendered dynamics of economic, social and political violence, however, often go ignored or have been sidelined to a discussion of women's issues away from the real business of violence.[26] The emphasis placed upon the public sphere in analyses of violence has minimised the meaning and attention paid to violence in the private sphere. The

[26] See, for example, Levine (1999) who is critical of the huge gap between rhetoric and reality in terms of incorporating a gender focus in human security and peacekeeping. She (ibid: 24) cites Zalewski (1995: 348): "it is not enough rhetorically or theoretically to 'add women and stir'. We need to completely change the empirical focus."

different levels of recognition awarded public and private expressions of violence are discussed below.

Public and private violence

Crawley (2000) suggests that the public/private dichotomy has effectively insulated the most common - private - forms of violence from sanction by propagating the notion that it is a private affair, a personal matter to resolve outside the public glare. "Indeed, it often tends not to be viewed as violence at all; it is seen as a 'personal', 'private' or a 'family matter', its goals and consequences are obscured and its use justified as chastisement or discipline (ibid: 92). Nowhere is this more evident as in popular justifications for not reporting incidents of violence in the domestic sphere, in order to "keep the peace" (Kelly, 2000). By silencing women's experiences of violence, patriarchal structures are strengthened and their reproduction is secured. The silences that mark private and intimate relations are intensely political, reflecting and reinforcing gendered power relations. In this sense, silences both reflect a violent reality and form part of its construction. [27] Craske (1999) sees the public and private are two ends of a relational continuum. Rather than a realistic description of peoples' lives, the division serves as an idealised account of social and gender relations that prescribe appropriate behaviour. It is this dominant discourse of what is considered appropriate that serves to regulate normal gendered behaviour for men and women. By "bounding" the public and private spheres, women have been historically confined to reproductive chores and their political voice has been ignored, as has their subjection to violence (Crawley, 2000).

Further, Jabri (1996: 48) maintains that the two domains are "inseparably connected", so much so that "the tyrannies and servilities of one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other". This distinction is indicative of the pattern of cultural gendered norms, which give precedence to public realms of existence. These "norms" ascribe greater significance to public forms of violence. This pattern is accentuated during times of war or political conflict, often when violence against women is seen as an issue of lesser importance, or an "inevitable" outcome of war (Kelly, 2000). Unless an act is recognised and ascribed meaning as violence, it will not be defined as such. This has very real

implications for how violence is addressed in policy terms. Historic masculinist epistemologies have privileged the public realms of existence and thus have missed the many types of violence that affect women and children. The non-definition of much of women's subjection to violence is a telling statement about male privilege. For example, in the context of Great Britain, Stanko (1990) explores how women overwhelmingly construct notions of fear and insecurity in the public realm - the threat of stranger violence - despite the fact that most women who experience violence do so at the hands of known men. In Chapter Six, similar tendencies are identified in the context of El Salvador. This is explored below both in relation to violence as normal behaviour for men and the notion that violence is both a central element of social relations and, at the same time, incompatible with ideal notions of "civil" society.

Violence as normal behaviour?

Segal (1991: 234) states that the "first job of feminists was to expose the myths" about violence. In the tradition of Foucault, this involves recognising that the development of knowledge about violence cannot be separated from the exercise of power.[28] Not only is it urgent to expose the myths that surround violence, but also key is to challenge how such myths have become so embedded in popular thought that they have been normalised. Recognising and deconstructing the potency of a normalising logic within the social order is key to understanding how violence is perpetuated and reproduced. Furthermore, the very lack of definitions of violence and the many myths that legitimise certain types have made the task of validating women's lived experiences all the more difficult. In the light of arguments presented above, how do women recognise that their subjection to violence is not merely a normal element of their gendered identity, as the exercise of violence is to men? How can women begin to understand what is happening to them if neither they, nor the system, possess the resources with which to understand? For example, Radford and Stanko (1996) point out that the notion of "family violence" implies a gender-neutral problem affecting all members of the family unit equally. This term is widely used throughout Latin America and effectively disregards the fact that it is usually women and

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[27] For further discussion of this point, see Chapter Six.

[28] See, for example, *Discipline and Punish* (1977) or an interview that appeared posthumously in *L'Express* on power (1984). For further discussion, see McHoul and Grace (1993).

children that are subject to violence at the hands of men. Indeed, many feminists have argued that women have been systematically encouraged to minimise the violence that they have suffered at the hands of men in order to preserve romanticised notions of intimate relations and the family (Yllo, 1988; Kelly and Radford, 1996). Feminists criticise the family as the institution in which "private struggles around patriarchal power are enacted, and hence one in which violence frequently features as a form of control of the powerless by the powerful" (Radford and Stanko, 1996: 69). Connell (1987) highlights the difficulty of seeing beyond individual acts of violence to the structures of power that underpin much of personal violence.

Kelly (2000) has stated that one of the most powerful findings of three decades of feminist research is that women are most likely to be assaulted by men known to them. This runs contrary to popular assumptions that continue to inform fear and danger. These are "typically linked with violence committed by strangers in public places" (Stanko, 1998: 78). Stanko (1994: 102) emphasises that "women are almost always harmed by ordinary men, who... are not characterised as presenting a criminal threat to women... 'Criminals' at least those who attack women whose complaints are sometimes upheld in court, are portrayed as savage beasts not as the guy next door". This social fact "starkly illustrates a profound difference in the structure of gender oppression compared to other structures of power, not only are women required to live alongside and respect their oppressors, they are expected to love and desire them" (Kelly, 2000: 52). Indeed, Kimmel (2000: 257) suggests that the home constitutes the "single most dangerous place for women and children". Such pervasiveness leads some to offer an ahistorical interpretation. According to Websdale and Chesney-Lind (1998: 55), it cannot be explained away as a deviant phenomenon that lies outside the otherwise "harmonious relationships between men and women. Rather violence against women is endemic to the social condition of women, across both time and cultures."

Violence as a measure of civil/uncivil social relations

According to Keane (1997: 63), violence is a chronic feature of all (un)civil societies. "All known forms of civil societies are plagued by endogenous sources of incivility, so much so that one can propose the empirical - analytical thesis that incivility is a chronic

feature of civil societies." Indeed, it is this delicate balance between what Keane terms "civility" and violence that is central to the problem of understanding how violence is enacted and reproduced in social relations. Violence, by definition, according to Keane, is "unwanted", for it is incompatible with the rules of solidarity, liberty and equality. It is considered "any *uninvited* but *intentional* or *half-intentional* act of physically violating the body of a person who had previously lived in peace" (ibid: 6, emphasis added).[29] Nevertheless, it remains a central feature of social relations. It is precisely this apparent contradiction between how violence is perceived as negative, and its continued presence in social relations, that emphasises the need for broader conceptual frameworks. Therefore, according to Keane (ibid: 67), violence is regarded as "a relational act in which the object of violence is treated, involuntarily, not just as a subject whose 'otherness' is recognised and respected, but rather as a mere object potentially worthy of bodily harm or even annihilation."

In a similar vein, Nordstrom (1997: 16) stresses that the great irony of much of what has been written about violence is that, on one level, it seeks to "tame it" and remove it from our own lives. In a sense, we seek to "other" violence, remove it from the *normal* and relegate it to the realm of a pathological few. On another level, however, violence is ascribed with "tremendous power" and regarded "integral to the human condition". This irony is key to understanding not only the complexity of the phenomenon but also the nature of violence, or in the very least, how we attempt to define it. It is for this reason that it is essential, as this chapter argues, to examine not only the definitions, but also the processes by which these definitions have been reached. Rodgers (2001: 3) reminds us that it is not simply the act of violence that matters, "but the reasoning and justification that place it within a moral framework". This is explored below in relation to men's violence as normal behaviour, where dominant notions of masculinities serve both as explanations and excuses for men's "natural aggression" (Greig, 2000).

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[29] The notion of intentionality has been awarded significance by many scholars. For instance, Concha-Eastman (2001: 44) states that for an act to be considered violent, there must be three components. They are the "intentionality of the use of force or power", the infliction of injury and finally, "the pursued end, behind which stands the exercise of some form of power, be it at level of home, public or group". The notion of intentionality is also shared by Hearn (1998) and Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003). Following Galtung, I do not consider that intentionality is central to understanding violence. Instead I think it is important to analyse many of the structures and norms that legitimise and reproduce violence within society.

Normal men, routine violence?

If violence is seen as "integral to the human condition", gendered violence, therefore, is very much a part of the existing social order. Indeed, violence against women and, specifically sexual violence, is considered an effective tool for securing male power.

> Rape ... routinely presented in the media as individual deviance, is a form of person to person violence deeply embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy. Far from being a deviation from the social order, it is in a significant sense an enforcement of it (Connell, 1987: 107).

This challenges our perception of what are the boundaries of normal behaviour for men.[30] Kimmel (2000) considers that gender is a central organising principle of social life. As such, gender will contribute to the construction of social identities and roles. It is, therefore, a key factor in shaping both our experience and use of violence, within a particular social context and at particular moments in our lives. It follows, therefore, that men and women experience violence differently. Kimmel (2000: 254) states:

> Men learn that violence is an accepted form of communication between men, and between women and men. This is so commonplace, so deeply woven into the fabric of daily life, that we accept violence as a matter of course - within families, between friends, between lovers, Most victims know their attackers, many know them intimately.

As argued previously, Connell (1987) proposes that dominant notions of masculinity - "hegemonic masculinity" - laud the use of violence by men as an expression of dominance and power. In the context of Latin America, one of the most dominant expressions of masculinity is considered to be "machismo" (Gutmann, 2003). Although not unique to Latin America, machismo has become an ubiquitous force in analyses of masculinities within the region (see, for example, Martín-Baró, 1983; Gutmann 1997;

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[30] In a recent study of homicide in the UK, Dobash and Dobash have concluded that men who kill their partners are just like "ordinary" men. See *Times Higher* (19 September 2003). See also Dobash, Dobash and Cavanagh (2003) for a consideration of the methodology used.

Melhuus and Stølen, 1996; Welsh, 2001). Martín-Baró (1983: 166) distinguishes four central characteristics pertaining to machismo. Firstly, he suggests that there is a "*fuerte tendencia y gran valoración de la actividad genital*"[31]. Secondly, a frequent tendency towards "*la agresividad corporal*".[32] Thirdly "*una sistémica actitud de 'valeverguismo' o indiferencia frente a todo aquello que no se relaciona con su imagen de 'macho'*"[33] and finally, what he terms "*guadalupismo*",[34] which refers to men's extremely close relationship with their mothers. Machismo and, one of its central elements, the subordination of women, is learned as a way of being a man in Latin America from an early age. Machismo is reinforced by individuals and structures within society, such as the Church, the family and the education system (see Welsh, 2001). Notions of machismo not only ascribe value to men's violence, but also help to maintain the enduring myths that support and normalise violence. Such behaviour has become so associated with cultural constructs of masculinity that they are seen as natural and, therefore, individual men cannot be held responsible for conforming to socially prescribed roles (Greig, 2000).

The examination of constructs of gender identity and gendered relations is central to this thesis. In particular, I am interested in how dominant notions of masculinities and femininities minimise and reproduce violence. To date, the literature has tended to separate men and women in discussions of gender relations. In the study of violence, there has been a concentration on women's victimisation or the use of violence by men. These studies have provided invaluable material for discussions of gendered violence and they have provided an important foundation from which to adopt a more holistic approach to the study of gender relations. It is for this reason that I endeavour to look at the processes by which both men and women understand and use violence in their lives. This involves listening as much to what is said about violence to what is not said. The importance of being alert to silences is explored below.

Silences and violence

Following this logic and the arguments presented above, women's silences surrounding violence and the meaning given to gendered violence, therefore, are shaped by

[31] A strong tendency towards and value ascribed to genital activity.
[32] Bodily aggression.
[33] A systematic nonchalant attitude or indifferent attitude towards everything thatis not related to his image of "macho".

unequal social structures and institutions underpinned by a patriarchal social order. Obviously, the use of violence to maintain oppressive systems is not confined to gender relations, since it crosses a whole range of economic and social faultlines. This was addressed previously in relation to power and also in the discussion of social, political and economic violence. Kelly (2000), however, suggests that the use of interpersonal violence is more characteristic of women and children's oppression than that of other groups, and sexualised violence is differentially targeted at women and girls. Like other injustices embedded into any given social order, silences imposed by patriarchal structures may not be obvious and, indeed, often go unrecognised or are regarded as "normal". The theme of silence runs through this thesis. Different types of silence are influenced by dominant notions of what constitutes violence and who uses violence. These underlie popular discourse on blame, guilt and justification. Chapter Four looks at silence as an element of political violence and Chapter Six analyses how continued silences serve to reproduce certain types of violence within the lives of the research participants.

Kelly and Radford (1996) point out that women often feel that they have no other option other than to keep quiet and deal with abuse by themselves. Dobash and Dobash (1988: 57) have termed this "patriarchal privacy". Patriarchal norms and values which give meaning to violence can also lead to many women blaming themselves for their victimisation at the hands of men. The notion of "dishonour" attached to rape that is still common in many Latin America countries is a case in point. This is closely linked to constructions of sexuality for both men and women, where women must be the guardians against attack. Mythologies of rape, propagated by dominant patriarchal discourse, suggest that women may in some way "provoke" or "invite" attack (Kelly, 2000). Segal (1991: 233) suggests that rape is the "symbolic expression of male power". Indeed, the very meanings ascribed to "rape" have evolved in the last thirty years, from an exclusive focus on brutal attacks by strangers, to include sexual abuse by intimate partners.[35] In many countries throughout the world, rape in marriage had previously been excluded from legislation against sexual violence thus effectively denying a voice to women who had been raped by intimate partners. This process not only bears testament to the importance of feminist work, but also has led to very real changes in law and service provision. Supposedly

[34] Guadalupism - the cult of the virgin Mary.

"neutral" or mainstream methodologies will not have the central objective of confronting male power, central to feminist research, and thus run the risk of having a negative impact on policy recommendations and implementation. Issues such as violence in the private sphere, and the fundamentally gendered nature of violence, are often ignored. This is demonstrated in the next chapter on violence in El Salvador, by the almost total absence of a gendered analysis in discussions of violence to emerge in the region. An inadequate response from the state and related agencies to address women's (and children's) victimisation from men's violence plays a significant part in reproducing or allowing violence to be reproduced over time (Hearn, 1998).

It is, therefore, as important to be attentive to what is *not* said about violence as to what is said. "People protect themselves through silence as well as speaking. People define themselves in narration, but they equally constitute themselves in the silent space of the unsaid" (Nordstrom, 1997: 24). Silences surrounding violence are shaped by cultural norms underpinning how violence is understood and talked about in any given social situation. Silences serve, as Nordstrom (ibid.) states, to protect. In the light of feminist work on violence, questions also emerge as to how silences serve to reproduce, and even justify, further violence. This is closely linked to the construction of official discourses that shape the interpretation of violence. Silences are important in the thesis.

Violence in this thesis

Galtung (1969) has suggested that perhaps arriving at a conclusive definition of violence is not a necessary exercise. However, drawing on the contribution of feminist scholarship, without defining the problem we cannot begin to understand it. At the same time, static or simplistic frameworks that invariably fail to capture its many dimensions and, as discussed above, have led to a privileging of certain types of violence over others. "To study violence, even to talk about it, is to make a determination as to what constitutes violence, where and among whom. Before we can study it, before we can even ask about it, we must situate what we deem to be violence" (Nordstrom, 1997: 117).

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[35] Rape within marriage has only been viewed as a crime in recent years. For example, Townsend *et al* (1999) point out that it was not considered a crime in the UK until the 1990s.

To address the difficulty of understanding such a multi-faceted phenomenon, Moser and Shrader (1999) advocate a holistic approach to its study. They argue that narrow definitions and a "compartmentalisation of knowledge and understanding" have undermined much theoretical work to date (ibid: 1). These authors argue that the only way to understand the manifold natures of violence and its many causes is to approach it from a multi-disciplinary perspective, which recognises its different expressions (McIlwaine, 1999; Moser and Shrader, 1999; Moser, 2000). Epistemologies of violence need to be able to operate within conceptual frameworks but, at the same time, are faced with the challenge of reflecting the manifold perceptions of violence. It is for this reason that I draw upon many disciplinary perspectives in analysing violence. For instance, analyses of political violence can offer valuable insight into how society responds to and ascribes meaning to other expressions. In El Salvador, the survival strategies and discourse learned during times of political conflict have become an enduring feature of the post-war scenario. A legacy of and respect for authoritarianism are confronted with the pervasive fear of crime and youth gangs. Bourdieu (2000) alerts us to the fact that deep injustices can be perceived as normal and, therefore, left unchallenged. Social relations in different contexts are constructed upon a whole series of "official myths" which offer neat and often dichotomous interpretations of everyday life. Political violence, in particular, is often reliant upon a binary ideological discourse for its legitimation and it is possible to separate opposing factions and identify their rationale for using force as right or wrong. The contradictions that are central to many other expressions of violence prescribe a binary logic where violence is demonised on the one hand, yet lauded on the other. An exploration of these contradictions, the impossibility of fixed categories and the implicit subjectivity are recognised and explored in the following chapters.

Official myths become, "effective means of normalisation and social control" (Sawicki, 1991: 22). Chapter Five examines how in the process of narrating their lives, men and women ascribed different levels of meaning to the violence present in their public and private lives. Although the *acts* of violence are arguably similar, they are distinguished by a discourse that grades violence. It is my intention to make explicit such myths, since they are central to popular understandings of human reality. Strict notions of perpetrator and victim are questioned as the boundaries between them become blurred within everyday life.

The analysis presented and the methodological approach are informed by feminist interpretations. Although much of the theory that I have consulted is constructed from a northern feminist perspective, I consider that it is of use to the context of the research. Cross fertilisation between disciplines and empirical contexts provide a richer framework for the study. Stanko's (1990) work on constructions of fear and insecurity in Britain has provided an interesting platform to uncover notions of insecurity and fear in the context of El Salvador. Likewise, the work of feminists to uncover and demythologise violence against women provides a useful framework from which to explore the many myths and meanings that individuals give to violence on an everyday basis. It also benefits from Gramsci's concept of hegemony as developed by Connell (1987) and Whitehead and Barrett (2001) in relation to masculinities. Informed by feminist critiques of the public/private divide, Chapter Six examines how the continued division of the world into two spheres shapes popular understanding and, therefore, social reaction to violence. The above discussion referred to the different social meanings ascribed to a man tortured in a cell and a woman tortured by her husband. Crawley (2000) reminds us that in terms of the degree of force used, there was little to distinguish these two acts, but that society treats them differently. It is here that cross fertilisation from the study of political violence is pertinent. Feldman's (2000) notion of socially constructed "recognition codes" alerts us to the fact that violence has different meaning and value within a social and political context. This is useful to analyse why gendered violence continues to be sidelined in mainstream academic and policy work. It is also pertinent to my analysis of the many interpretations that individuals offer to violence in their own lives, where some expressions appear more damaging than others regardless of the violent content.

Moser and Shrader's (1999) threefold typology of violence - social, economic and political - is useful to categorise the many types of violence in the macro context. However, I am interested in the occurrence of violence that is not always visible, hence the importance of being aware of silences and latent violence. Galtung's triangle of cultural, personal and structural violence is of particular importance, since it provides a broad framework for identifying the manifold expressions of violence present in everyday life. It is for this reason that I endeavour to listen to the voices of those individuals and groups that live with violence on a daily basis.

A central objective of this research is to explore the ways in which gender and violence interact. Examining the processes by which individuals and groups ascribe meaning to violence is highly gendered. This not only affects whose voices are deemed relevant in the process of recognising violence but also contributes to its reproduction. If society does not identify an act as violent, it cannot begin to move beyond violence. Violence, as this chapter has argued, can never neatly fit into clear-cut definitions. Nevertheless, interviewees seek to make sense of the violent world that surrounds them. Throughout I examine what interviewees accept as socially validated "truths" about violence.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored some of the main ideas that will provide the focus for further discussion in this thesis. Notions of the complexity of arriving at a definition of violence have examined how epistemologies of violence are constructed, and namely *whose* voice counts in such processes. This is reflected in the myriad narratives of individual perception and use of violence that are to be explored in the subsequent chapters. The theoretical examination of the process of definition provides the foundations with which to interrogate some of the enduring myths and powerful fictions that underlie popular discourses of violence. This chapter has argued that such myths are based upon hegemonic interests, which effectively promote a narrow conceptualisation of violence. For example, the dichotomisation of social life into public and private spheres highlights the existence of a normalising logic. This affects how violence is recognised and given meaning. Each society, therefore, possesses a whole variety of recognition codes that affect the legitimacy and toleration of violence. This process of recognising violence and making it visible is not static. It is shaped by dominant social and cultural norms in a particular context. Such norms are constantly changing and evolving, which is reflected in how violence is perceived and used by citizens at different moments in their lives. The gendered dimensions of violence have been emphasised in relation to feminist work on the subject. The important contribution of feminist scholarship in nuancing our understandings of violence, and making valid individual's perceptions of violence, will guide much of the analysis in subsequent chapters. Through an exploration of the life histories of men and women, I

endeavour to recognise (and challenge) the process by which dominant notions of violence inform popular epistemologies of violence.

Ultimately, this chapter has argued that violence affects people in a negative way, whether they are conscious of it or not (Galtung, 1969 and 1990). In the words of Curle (1995: 9): "[v]iolence is something which does harm to people; harm in the sense of words, deeds, or situations which damage the ability to develop fully the human potential for feeling, creation and happy maturity." Perhaps it is only by exploring from a multi-disciplinary perspective, as this thesis attempts to do, the cultural, political and social conditions of violence and how it is perceived and used by individuals and groups that we can ever begin to develop a suitable framework to begin understanding the phenomenon. Indeed, Das and Kleinman (2000: 16) argue that it is perhaps a "radical reconceptualization of everyday life" that seems necessary where there are important linkages between "the embedded violences of everyday practices of the state and institutionalized science in order to understand and delineate the varieties of social suffering." The next chapter will, therefore, analyse the different expressions of violence in El Salvador and how these are analysed in academic and policy writing to emanate from the region.

Chapter Two

Contemporary Violence in El Salvador

This chapter will provide an overview of violence in contemporary El Salvador. A brief outline of El Salvador's turbulent history was offered in the Introduction, which was followed by a theoretical exploration of violence in Chapter One. The theoretical examination argued that a certain tension exists between naming violence on the one hand, and the highly subjective nature of violence on the other. This tension is central to this thesis, since it questions whose voice counts in epistemologies of violence. Social perceptions of violence will be examined in this chapter. The contrast between perceptions and reality, the incidence and scale of violence will be addressed. Instead of diminishing after the war, the question of security remains paramount for citizens during the transition process since 1992, due to high levels of violence, criminality and the perceived randomness of victimisation patterns (Cruz, 2000; Ramos, 2000; Pearce, 1998). The public face of violence has become synonymous with the threat of crime, while fear continues to be a pervasive and paralysing force in the lives of the region's citizens. The social and political implications of this climate of fear will be discussed throughout this chapter.

As Chapter One argued, epistemologies of violence have the complex task of reflecting not only the manifold expressions of violence, but the myriad causes and effects. Accounts of violence are necessarily borne out of constructions based on dynamic cultural and social norms. This chapter introduces a discussion of some of the cultural and social norms concerning violence in El Salvador that will be interrogated further in the following chapters. How do individuals and groups come to understand and recognise violence in their own lives? How do they live with the painful and emotive forces of violence in everyday life? To what extent do gendered norms and identities colour this process of definition? What dominant discourses within society inform and shape this process of making violence both visible and hidden? The objective of this chapter is, therefore, twofold. Firstly, I will give an overview of violence in El Salvador, in order to provide the contextual backdrop for the theoretical

and empirical analysis of the thesis. Secondly, following feminist debates discussed in the previous chapter, I explore to what extent local/regional analyses of violence promote a gendered perspective. This thesis argues that a feminist lens, notably absent from much of the published literature to date, is of great benefit to the study of violence, as it offers a more holistic framework for recognising different types of violence.

Latin America: one of the most violent regions in the world? [1]

> The subject of violence is foremost in the minds of citizens. Few in the region have remained unaffected by what is widely recognised as a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted problem; nearly everyone has a story to tell, often in graphic terms. Survey after survey consistently underscores the gravity and prevalence of the concern (Buvinic, Morrison and Shifter, 1999: 1).

According to recent research by the World Bank, the Latin American and Caribbean region is one of the most violent in the world, following only Africa which, based on criminal victimisation rates, is considered the most violent continent (McIlwaine, 1999). Regional figures from Latin America in 1990 demonstrate a murder rate of 22.9 per 100 000, which is over twice that of a world average of 10.7 per 100 000 inhabitants (ibid: 2, citing Murray and López, 1996).[2] (See Table 2.1 for murder rates from Latin America). The current phenomenon of violence, although in many ways expressed differently from the violence of previous decades, is not new. Rather, as this chapter will argue, it is intimately linked with political authoritarianism and unequal social relations, in both the public and private spheres.

[1] As discussed in Chapter One, the terms "violence" and "criminality" appear to be used interchangeably in much of what has been written about current violence in El Salvador.

[2] Murder is, of course, not the only way to measure rates of violence. Nevertheless, figures for murder are widely used to reflect the problem of violence. This is discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

Table 2.1:

Homicide rates in Latin America and the Caribbean (per 100 000 population)

Country	Late 1970s/ early 1980s	Late 1980s/ early 1990s	1990s
Guatemala	-	150	75.3
El Salvador	-	150[3]	41.3
Colombia	20.5	89.5	89.5
Jamaica	-	35.0	-
Brazil	11.5	19.7	-
Nicaragua	-	18.3	18.3
Mexico	18.2	17.8	17.8
Venezuela	11.7	15.2	16.0
Trinidad and Tobago	2.1	12.6	-
Dominican Republic	-	11.9	-
Peru	2.4	11.5	11.5
Panama	2.1	10.9	10.9
Ecuador	6.4	10.3	15.3
United States	10.7	10.1	-
Honduras	-	9.4	45.0
Argentina	3.9	4.8	-
Costa Rica	5.7	5.6	5.6
Uruguay	2.6	4.4	4.4
Paraguay	5.1	4.0	4.0
Chile	2.6	3.0	-

Sources: PAHO, Health Situation Analysis Program (1997, cited by World Bank, 1997).[4] Figures for 1990s are taken from Cruz (2003a: 17).

Kooning and Kruijt (1999) argue that social and political violence have been endemic in Latin America since colonial times. Indeed, Cruz (2003a) highlights that El Salvador is widely considered one of the most violent countries in the region (reflected in Table 2.1). Furthermore, Salvadoran historian, Huezo Mixco (2000: 119), claims "*la historia de la cultura salvadoreña bien podría formularse como la historia de la construcción de un poder asentado sobre el ejercicio de la violencia* ".[5] He asserts that violence has always been a key tool for political and religious leaders, but has only become a source of preoccupation for policy makers and academics in recent years. This has mirrored wider trends throughout the region where both national and international organisations have placed issues of violence and security high on their policy agendas. Violence and criminality are increasingly viewed as development issues by multilateral agencies such as the World

[3] El Salvador was still at war when these figures were recorded.
[4] See: http://iadb.org/sds/publication_660_e.htm.

Bank (WB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and various branches of the United Nations (UN), since high levels of criminal activity and insecurity are seen as hampering social and economic development (see Cruz *et al.*, 1998,). In 1997, for example, it is estimated that social violence cost El Salvador almost a quarter of its Gross Domestic Product (see Table 2.2).[6] This is higher than the costs of Colombia, which is in the midst of a civil war and over twice that of Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela.

Table 2.2:
Economic costs of social violence in six Latin American countries (expressed as percentage of 1997 GDP)

	Brazil	**Colombia**	**El Salvador**	**Mexico**	**Peru**	**Venezuela**
Health losses	1.9	5.0	4.3	1.3	1.5	0.3
Material losses	3.6	8.4	5.1	4.9	2.0	9.0
Intangibles	3.4	6.9	11.5	3.3	1.0	2.2
Transfers	1.6	4.4	4.0	2.8	0.6	0.3
Total	**10.5**	**24.7**	**24.9**	**12.3**	**5.1**	**11.8**

Source: Londoño (1998), cited in www.violenciaelsalvador.org.sv

Quantifying the problem of violence

> The measurement of criminality and violence in El Salvador faces a fundamental problem. Strictly speaking a unified and completely credible register or file on criminal violence in the country does not exist. In spite of the fact there is common agreement that generalized violence has reached extremely high levels in Salvadoran cities as well as in rural areas, the Salvadoran government has not succeeded in formally validating any of the registers, which diverse institutions maintain on the problem (Cruz *et al.* 1999: 11).

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[5] The history of El Salvador could well be formulated and understood as a history of the construction of a type of power based on the practice of violence.

[6] Both the World Bank the Inter-American Development Bank have sponsored large-scale research on violence and criminality throughout the region. For example, Buvinic *et al.* (1999); Moser and Shrader, (1999); Moser and McIlwaine, (2000a and b). Examples from El Salvador include Cruz, *et al.* (1998 and 1999). In El Salvador, the UNDP have a programme entitled "violence in a society in transition" which has been responsible for various publications, campaigns and advocacy initiatives with the media. For more information, see www.violenciaelsalvador.org.sv.

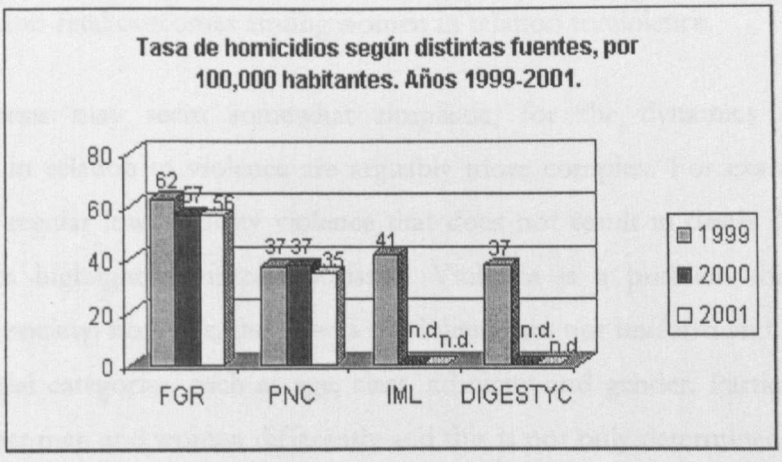
As the next chapter discusses, quantitative methods have come under scrutiny for failing to examine the processes that underscore individual perceptions and use of violence. Nevertheless, this does not deny the urgent necessity for reliable recording systems, in order to approximate the scale of the problem, as well as register its many expressions. Although there have been notable improvements in the quality of information generated and recorded by state bodies in recent years, there is still a dearth of unified and accurate data for certain types of violence. The quality of information is often dependent on the type of violence under scrutiny, due to chronic problems of under-reporting and misclassification (Shrader, 2001). The under-reporting of crime and violence still remains a problem, the implications of which are discussed below. Cruz *et al.* (1999) maintain that different state records can present contradictory views of the scale of violence and that certain areas (namely San Salvador) and certain crimes are better recorded than others. For example, figures from the Attorney General's Office (FGR) were considered more reliable for murder until 1998 and since then, the quality of PNC records are seen as having improved significantly (interview with Miguel Cruz, August, 2001).

Murder Rates

Registers on violence tend to be limited to physical effects because it is considered much more difficult to assess psychological or emotional impact (Arriagada and Godoy, 2000). From an orthodox criminological approach, figures for murder are used as one of the most reliable reflections of the scale of the problem of violence because they are easily identifiable and measure an extreme endpoint of violent engagements that can be compared within and across national boundaries. Given the serious nature of such crimes, they tend to be recorded more carefully (ibid). Even then, however, actual figures are open to query, since different bodies may have their own criteria for the recording of intentional deaths.[7] Furthermore, a reliance on murder rates to determine levels of insecurity detract attention from the many other forms of violence that affect a society. This is particularly true of those types of violence that are difficult to quantify, such as domestic violence.

[7] Interview with Miguel Cruz, IUDOP (*Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública - Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"* The Central American University polling institute), 21 August 2001. Some registers, including the FGR, record deaths caused by traffic accidents among intentional deaths, i.e: murders.

Figure 2.1:
Murder Rates per 100 000 inhabitants according to different state bodies (1999-2001)



Source: Registers from DIGESTYC (General Director of Statistics and Census), FGR (Attorney General's Office), IML (Institute of Forensic Medicine) and PNC (National Civil Police).[8]

Depending on the source, murder rates in El Salvador have fallen from 150 per 100 000 in the late 1980s/early 1990s (see Table 2.1) to 57 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2001, according to the FGR records (see Figure 2.1). Ramos (2000) has suggested that the 1990s witnessed more violent deaths than during the war, although the veracity of such a statement is dependent on the source used. On average, Cruz (2003b: 8) sustains that there was a minimum of 80 murders per 100 000 in the years following the signing of the peace accords (1994-1997), with a slow, but consistent decline from 1998 onwards.[9] The highest rates have been recorded in the Western departments of Santa Ana, Ahuachapan and Sonsonate. Interestingly, this is the part of the country that saw least direct combat during the war. When disaggregated by age and gender, these figures are particularly high for young men between ages 15-34. The average homicide rate for this group is greater than two hundred deaths per 100 000 inhabitants, while for women in the same age cohort, it is not greater than twenty (ibid: 20). Shrader (2001: 7) suggests that an emphasis on this highly gendered disparity:

> may overestimate male impact: men are socialized to resort to violence and to be confrontational, behavior that could put

[8] See http://www.violenciaelsalvador.org.sv/indicadores/indicadoresd1.htm.

[9] Politically motivated murders all but disappeared after 1994 (Cruz, 2003a). Nonetheless, during the 2003 election period, an estimated twelve political assassinations occurred.

> them at risk for being murdered. Women, socialized to be less confrontational and less likely to use deadly force, may tend to demonstrate self-preservation behavior in a potentially violent situation. This gendered behavioral response may explain in part the lower mortality rates among women but higher rates of non-fatal outcomes among women in relation to violence.

Shrader's thesis may seem somewhat simplistic, for the dynamics of gendered socialisation in relation to violence are arguably more complex. For example, women may sustain regular low-intensity violence that does not result in death. Nevertheless, Shrader does highlight an important issue. Violence is a problem that affects all members of society; however, the effects of violence are not uniform and are mediated by other social categories, such as age, class, ethnicity and gender. Particular types of violence affect men and women differently and this is not only determined by gendered social roles, but also by cultural and social norms that regulate levels of violence.[10] Jimeno (2002b: 1) attests that "*el acto de violencia sí discrimina personas, circunstancias y creencias*"[11] and, as this thesis argues, the process of discrimination extends to how acts of violence are recognised and ascribed meaning. The next section analyses the impact of criminality on social perceptions of violence.

Crime and Violence: the blurring of boundaries and the absence of gender analysis

Shrader (2000) is critical of the dependence on homicide rates as a proxy for assessing levels of violence in society because there is little scope for understanding underlying causes.

> Anecdotal evidence from coroners' reports indicate that there are deaths where domestic violence is an obvious contributory factor, but there is no way to note this on file nor pursue and arrest... Data such as the relationship between the offender and victim, circumstances surrounding death, and previous history of violence or domestic abuse would allow policymakers to differentiate between political, economic and social violence or other categorization correlates (Shrader, 2000: 7, citing Mc Kay, 1996).

[10] This will be discussed further in Chapters Four and Five with reference to empirical data.
[11] Violence discriminates persons, circumstances and beliefs.

Although, both the media and popular opinion attribute many murders to the high crime levels that plague the country, the PNC suggests that 65 per cent of murders fall under the category of "*violencia social*", such as family disputes, conflicts with neighbours, etc. (Cruz and Beltrán, 2000: 15, citing *La Prensa Gráfica*, 13 April, 2000: 18).[12] The PNC make a distinction between social violence and "delinquency." Their official website states that "*violencia delictiva es aquella que utiliza la violencia para delinquir propiamente, es decir, se vuelve un instrumento para la obtención de un 'bien' deseado.. especialmente de carácter lucrativo. El delito más representativo es tal vez el secuestro*".[13] There is an implicit assumption in this definition that delinquency is related specifically to what Moser and Shrader (1999) term "economic violence" - that which is motivated by a desire for economic or material gain. This is a myopic definition, given that much violence occurs outside the framework of the law, therefore rendering many expressions of social violence criminal. Nevertheless, the distinction - between social violence and crime/delinquency - is not uncommon in the literature to emerge from Latin America, affecting popular understandings of violence. This was introduced in the previous chapter and will be discussed below in relation to the visibility of certain crimes and certain types of violence.

Shrader (2000) highlights that key dimensions of crime and violence, namely age and gender, are all too often ignored, thus limiting policy intervention.[14] Gender issues rarely appear except in discussions of domestic and sexual violence.[15] This is illustrative of the manner in which gender issues continue to be sidelined in discussions of violence and has very real implications for institutional and society's capacity to address this problem. Data on gendered violence, such as domestic and sexual abuse, are extremely difficult to quantify. Again, this is rooted in the under-reporting by victims, but it can also be linked to misrepresentation or non-recognition of this violence as criminal (Shrader, 2001; PNUD, 2000). Victims are not only less likely to denounce the aggressor, as he is likely to be known to the victim, but the legal system has been

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[12] See also Moser and Shrader (1999). A definition of social violence was offered in the previous chapter.

[13] Criminal violence is that which is used to commit a crime; in other words, it becomes an instrument to obtain a desired "good"... especially of a lucrative kind. The most representative crime is, perhaps, kidnapping. See www.pncelsalvador.gob.sv.

[14] This was discussed in the previous chapter, in relation to domestic violence. See also Hearn (1998).

[15] See Moffett (2001) for a discussion of the subject and object of rape in South Africa. Some interesting parallels can be drawn between the way in which rape is talked about and reported in South Africa and El Salvador. Moffett argues that men are effectively made invisible in reports and popular discourse on rape and Chapter Five offers some discussion on popular understandings of rape from one of the case study communities.

accused of demonstrating serious shortcomings in its capacity to address such issues (Velado, 2001: 57; Hernández Reyes and Solano, 2003).

Figures indicate that 57 per cent of Salvadoran women have suffered physical abuse in the home (Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri 2000: 99, citing González, 1998: 5). However, bar initiatives from the women's movement and the international community, no serious attempt has been made to date to analyse the extent of the problem in El Salvador (Velado, 2001; PNUD, 2000). The reliability of statistical information from ISDEMU (*Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer* - Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women), the governmental body responsible for compiling information on gendered violence, has been called into question (PNUD, 2000).[16] Attitudes towards gendered violence, however, are said to have changed and more women are reporting abuse, largely as a result of feminist advocacy and international pressure.[17] International and national campaigns have succeeded in making the issue of gender violence visible, and some initiatives do exist to address the problem. Examples include the self-help group for men that I observed as part of my fieldwork, support structures for women offered by the women's movement and the PNC's programmes to address the specific problem of domestic violence. Nevertheless, such initiatives tend to be chronically under-resourced and merely constitute the tip of the iceberg in what is needed to tackle these issues.[18] The problem of gendered violence in the region, therefore, remains largely under-studied and continues to be conceptualised in isolation from mainstream studies of violence. Moreover, the impact of such violence is still minimised in comparison to other expressions of violence in both official and popular discourse. This is discussed in the following section on social reactions to different types of violence.

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[16] Indeed, a recent UNDP sponsored study, carried out by *Comité 25 de Noviembre*, a network of non-governmental bodies, found that state bodies had serious problems in both their recording of information and implementing the necessary protocol to address the problem of gendered violence. The report is particularly critical of offices of the justice of the peace that deny responsibility for attending cases of "intrafamily" violence. In addition, family courts are only open office hours from Monday to Friday, leaving women with very little recourse to justice at other times (Hernández Reyes and Solano, 2003).

[17] Interviews with Sub-Inspector Ramirez (March, 2002) and ISDEMU (May, 2002). This will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

[18] For instance, the self-help group for men that I attended on Thursdays was a held in a state-funded office. The group, the initiative of the director of the centre, was the only state-sponsored initiative with men who had been convicted of "intra-family violence" that dealt expressly with issues of masculinity. According to the staff, they received no specific funding for this initiative.

Social reaction to violence

While, as this thesis argues, violence is a pervasive force in everyday life for many Salvadorans, this is not uniform. Social categories such as age, class and gender affect individual perception of violence and, concurrently, reactions to different categories of violence. The implicit subjectivity of this process was discussed in the previous chapter, together with an examination of how different types of violence are recognised (Torres Rivas, 1999: 286). Violence does not exist in a vacuum and, as Ramos (2000) points out, high levels of violence reflect deeper tensions within society. Likewise, prevailing social attitudes and prejudices are reflected in different social reactions to certain types of violence. This will be discussed below in relation to society's treatment of *maras*. At this stage, however, it is important to highlight that:

> Certain types of violence provoke less indignation than would be expected. One finds that there is more indignation about the rise in violent crime against property than toward the rise in crime against life committed mostly by young men from the poorest neighbourhoods. This lack of indignation may be the result of various factors: it may indicate the existence of a normalisation or acceptance of interpersonal violence when it is committed against those who are thought to be 'certain types of people', or in order to resolve certain types of arguments such as drug trafficking (Cárdia, 2001: 153)

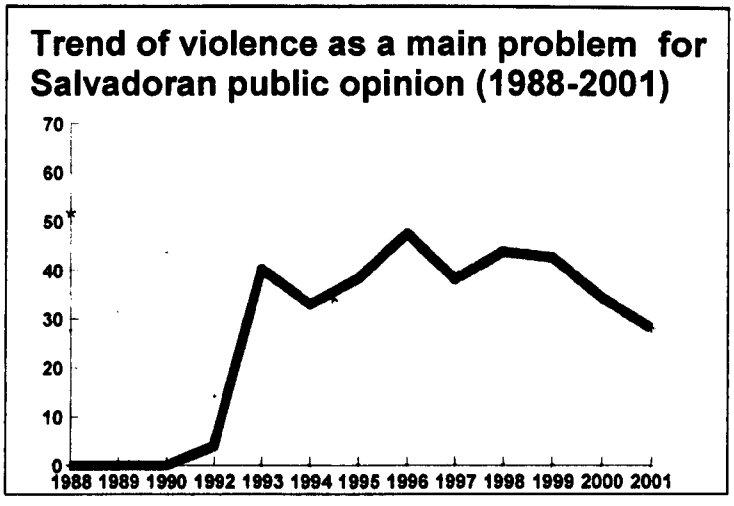
Torres Rivas (1999) speaks about the population's "conspiratorial silence" in relation to political violence. Nowhere would the conspiracy of silence seem more evident than in the attitudes towards gendered violence. As the discussion in a subsequent chapter will suggest, domestic violence on a day-to-day basis, appears to provoke "less indignation than would be expected." While levels of indignation are invariably context specific (Jimeno, 2002a and b), myths constructed around the legitimation and acceptance of certain types of violence reflect deeper prejudices within society. The social recognition codes that perpetuate the widely held belief that the domestic realm is "private," not only illustrates deeply entrenched patriarchal structures within society, but, more dangerously, that "the rule of law all too often accommodates, rather than challenges, sex and gender discrimination" (Acosta, 1999: 185).[19]

It would be erroneous to suggest that there is little public awareness of the problems of gender violence, especially in the domestic realm. Nonetheless, its effects

are minimised in comparison to other expressions of violence of a more "public" nature by a tacit acceptance of its perceived normality. The glaring absence of discussions of the linkages between the "public" and "private" faces of violence should raise questions on how epistemologies of violence are being constructed in the region. Whose perception of violence is made valid by such knowledge? How are historic silences and myths reinforced by the meagreness of the discussion of the subject of "private" violences?[20]

The visibility of certain types of violence

Figure 2.2: Salvadoran opinion poll on violence



Source: Cruz (2003b: 9)

[19] See Jelin (1997) for a critique of women's legal representation within existing frameworks in Latin America.

[20] For example, Moser and Winton noted very different epistemological approaches to the problem of violence and criminality in their consultations with the governments of Honduras and Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan government highlighted the need to understand the dynamics of violence in the home, as this is not only a major social problem, but the home is considered a site of socialisation where violence is learned. In contrast, the government of Honduras looked principally at the public dynamics of violence, which provides a very different analysis of the problem and, therefore, distinct policy approaches. Such issues will be discussed below, in reference to the pervasiveness of crime as a major source of preoccupation for citizens (DFID workshop, July 2002). In El Salvador, Marcela Smutt (interview, 21 January 2002), of the UNDP Violence in transition programme, stressed that the problem of violence in El Salvador has largely been understood as a problem of criminality, missing problems of gendered violence and largely resulting in coercive measures to tackle it.

Unreliable data and popular myths not only affect the effectiveness of policy intervention, but also influence the visibility of certain types of violence. Levels of visibility may lead to false perceptions on the severity or the incidence of some types of violence. For example, as Figure 2.2 indicates, crime (read social violence and criminality in the public realm) is seen as one of the major problems affecting Salvadoran society. This process of making some types of violence more visible than others, whether conscious or not, is context specific and inextricably bound with dominant cultural discourse that: "*trazan límites al uso de la violencia... Sin embargo, no todas (las sociedades humanas) lo trazan de igual manera, no todas ellas aceptan ciertos tipos de expresiones de violencia que nosotros, por ejemplo, lo aceptamos, y a la inversa, otras sociedades aceptan expresiones que nosotros juzgamos como extremadamente violentas o agresivas*" (Jimeno, 2002b: 1).[21]

Table 2.3:
Number of procedures initiated by the Attorney General's Office for crimes against persons on a national level 1994 - 1998

Offence	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Injury	6433	16182	14352	8403	9251
Rape	1876	1666	2019	1506	1250
Kidnapping	No data	126	161	59	64
Threats	3667	3650	4790	5321	5246

Source: FGR Registers, cited in Cruz *et al.* (1999: 22)

Such concerns are not, however, without foundation, for rates of criminality are indeed high. A victimisation poll carried out by IUDOP in 1998, showed that members of almost a quarter of households had been subject to crime in the previous four months (Cruz *et al.*, 1999: 26). Figures for the 1990s illustrate that 47 per cent of households in El Salvador were victim of crime. This compares to 55 per cent in Guatemala and 37 per cent in Honduras (Cruz, 2003a: 17). Table 2.3 offers data from the FGR (Attorney General's Office) on the number of legal proceedings initiated on four types of violent crime.[22] Kidnapping is the crime that is recorded as occurring least,

[21] Define the limits of the use of violence... Nevertheless, not all [societies] have the same definitions, not all of them accept some types of violence that we, for example, accept, and, in the same way, other societies accept expressions that we judge extremely violent or aggressive.

[22] These figures are only for cases that were brought to court. They do not reflect the numbers of cases effectively tried. Velado suggests that as few as 9 per cent of reported rapes cases lead to conviction, which is significant given that most women know the identity of the perpetrator (interview with Margarita Velado, Las Dignas, 17 July 2001). Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri (2000) suggest that in 1996 and 1997 respectively, only 6.11 and 8.17% of murder cases were processed to conviction.

yet it appears to receive the greatest coverage in the media and, indeed, is mentioned by the PNC as the most representative crime. This may be due to the fact that it largely affects those sections of the population that enjoy most economic, political and social power, highlighting an uneven access to public security, which is dependent on economic position (Arriagada and Godoy, 2000). Rape, on the other hand, perhaps the most brutal expression of gendered violence, is rarely talked about in the media except in a sensationalist and even voyeuristic manner.[23] The media are seen to play a significant role in reflecting, shaping and even distorting public opinion and reinforcing fears of victimisation from a stigmatised "other":

> *A diario, los medios de comunicación salvadoreños reportan, con lujo de imágenes sangrientas y lenguaje sensacionalista, sobre casos de violencia y delincuencia. Muchas veces, por el estilo de reportaje, más que informar a la ciudadanía, contribuyen en su de-formación o percepción equívoca. El enfoque estigmatizante y reforzante de prejuicios hacia determinados grupos sociales (juventud = pandillas = delincuentes, homosexuales = aberrantes e inmorales, mujeres = cuerpos para satisfacer deseos masculinos), puede generar y hasta justificar mayor violencia hacia estos grupos. Además, la saturación con contenidos altamente violentos en sus programaciones y espacios informativos, presentados sin un contexto adecuado, tienden a distorsionar y a trivializar la violencia* (Van Acker, 2000: 15)[24]

One of the effects of the sensationalist treatment of crime is in a magnification of perceived insecurity. Despite the fact that official rates for crime in El Salvador have been falling since 1998, the "*impacto social de la delincuencia es mucho más poderoso*" (ECA, 2000: 494).[25] This contradiction is illustrative of several key issues for discussion in this thesis. To reiterate the point made above, the visibility of certain types of violent crime can exert great influence on public opinion and policy decisions. Awareness colours popular assumptions about threat and insecurity, which may not correspond to the real situation (Arriagada and Godoy, 2000). Popular understandings of violence, therefore, contribute to how the wider problem of violence is perceived and addressed. This has

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[23] See, for example, *La Prensa Gráfica* and *El Diario de Hoy*. An example is the headline *Niña de 14 años fue violada con permiso de abuela* "Girl of 14 raped with permission of grandmother" (*La Prensa Gráfica*, 29 November 2002). One of the local television channels is popularly referred to as *Sangrevisión* (Bloody Vision) due to the sensationalist manner in which it presents the news.

[24] On a daily basis, the Salvadoran media report cases of violence and criminality with gory details and employing sensationalist language. In many cases, due to the reporting style, more than informing citizens, they contribute to a deformation and inaccurate perception of the problem. The stigmatising approach reinforces prejudices towards certain social groups (youth = gangs = criminals; homosexuals = deviant and immoral; women = bodies to satisfy masculine desire) can generate and even justify greater violence against these groups. Furthermore, the highly violent content of programmes and news slots, presented out of context, tend to distort and trivialise violence.

particular implications for policy, when governments promote heavy-handed policies against certain crimes in order to placate a scared electorate.[26] The next section of this chapter will build upon the previous analysis to explore the effects of a legacy of authoritarianism on the cultural, political and social context. It will discuss how structural inequalities and conjunctural factors combine to create a climate of pervasive fear and high levels of violence in many realms of social existence.

Violence and criminality: the indicator of an elusive peace?

The effects of violent conflicts still reverberate in economic, political and social terms throughout much of Latin America. As the introduction to this thesis has highlighted, government controlled death squads, operating in the 1970s and 1980s, were famous not only for their brutality, but also for the very symbolic and public "disposal" of their victims. Their actions were as much about instilling fear and terror into the population as wiping out specific targets. This led to a feeling that external events determined citizens' lives and not the other way around, effectively curbing all sense of individual freedom.[27] Subsequent government policies of "*Perdón y Olvido*" (Forgive and Forget) have come under criticism for not permitting the space for any healing process or "*reparación social*" (social healing) (Miranda, 2000: 58). The general feeling that impunity still reigns has weakened the credibility of the judicial system, contributing to greater incidences of the administration of "justice" through extra-judicial measures.[28] This will be discussed below with reference to social attitudes that legitimise the use of violence, as well as in relation to the under reporting of crimes and violence. Discourses that legitimise the use of violence will also provide the focus for analysis in the empirical chapters.

Pearce (1998: 589-590) argues that "while Central America has ceased to be 'at war', it remains anything but peaceful."[29] She argues that poverty and violence remain

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[25] Social impact of criminality is much more powerful.

[26] A recent anti-gang law passed in Honduras and copied by President Flores in El Salvador is a case in point. It has come under heavy criticism for being a populist gesture in the run up to the presidential elections (to be held in March 2004). Salvador Samayoa, president of the CNSP (National Council for Public Security), points out the hypocrisy of the proposal as it advocates that young people cannot carry knives, yet at the same time the country has very lax gun laws (*La Prensa Gráfica*, 24 August 2003).

[27] For more discussion of the notion of violence as a denial of individual freedom, see Keane (1997).

[28] See Popkin (1999), for a discussion of the legal system in El Salvador since the end of the war.

[29] Pearce uses a framework originally developed by Galtung, which distinguishes positive and negative peace. "Positive" peace is seen as the construction of a more equal and just society and the absence of structural violence, whereas "negative" peace is merely equated with the end of the direct violence

features of everyday life in the region, concluding that: "only a certain type of peace prevails in Central America" (ibid. 614). The importance of understanding the nature of peace in the region is fundamental to understanding how the many expressions of violence are enacted in the transition period. Again, we are confronted with Huezo Mixco's (2000) "paradox", that peace building has succeeded in increasing violence and crime, compelling us to contemplate the particular context of El Salvador where manifold cultural, economic, historical, political and social forces converge to underpin the current climate of fear and aggression.

The 1992 peace accords in El Salvador are widely recognised as having put an end to the twelve-year war, but have been accused of failing in their mission to build a new and more equal society (ECA, 1999; Pearce, 1998; Cruz, 1997). Indeed, Concha-Eastman (2001: 37) asserts that violence "has recently acquired alarming proportions and dimensions in many countries." Efforts to achieve peaceful and more democratic societies throughout Latin America have been undermined by existing (and, in many cases, deepening) social cleavages. These cleavages, which Kooning and Kruijt (1999) call "governance voids", provide key spaces for the propagation of violence: "In spite of the demise of authoritarian rule - violence is seen as a *normal* option with which to pursue interests, attain power or resolve conflicts" (ibid: 11). Chapter Four of this thesis explores further the notion of a process of normalisation of violence, while analysing the many different expressions of violence to affect the men and women whose life histories inform this research.

Violence: a political problem? The structural context of violence

Given the current panorama, some authors have suggested that contemporary forms of violence are also political, since they result from political choices, such as policies that have exacerbated inequalities and the continued failure of governments to address structural problems (see, for example, Tedesco, 2000 on Argentina and Pinheiro, 1996 on Brazil). Dunkerley (1993: 7) emphasises that matters of political economy "remain crucial and enforce clear structural limits to the human condition in Central America." Echoed by other observers (see, for example, Pearce, 1998; Murray, 1997; Vilas, 1995), he is vociferous in his criticism of the economic policies of Central American governments in the early 1990s and condemns privatisation incentives for

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associated with war. For further discussion of "positive" and "negative" peace in the Colombian and

increasing the gap "between a restricted private affluence and a generalised public squalor that was already formidably wide"(Dunkerley, 1993: 14).

Ramos (2000: 9) also calls for an examination of the "*factores desencadenantes o posibilitadores*," suggesting that in certain conditions, social groups or individuals appear to be more vulnerable to violence.[30] Among these elements that facilitate violence, he highlights the unprecedented growth of Greater San Salvador, as a result of population displacements and migration during the war. This dramatic and unplanned urbanisation put extra pressure on the already inadequate housing and service provision. This led to an increase in economic vulnerability, as well as weakening community, familial and social networks. Chapter Four explores some of the community reactions to the population influx during the war. In a study of eighteen low-income communities in Guatemala, Moser and McIlwaine (2000a) highlight how pervasive violence can erode social capital.[31] In other words, violence diminishes the structures and values that bond communities together and give them the sense of identity necessary for collective well-being. Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri (2000) suggest that these structures in El Salvador, such as the community, had historically served to suppress or control violence and were broken down throughout the war. Thus, a vicious spiral is created where criminality and violence both contribute to and are facilitated by the atomisation and weakening of communities:

> *En el caso salvadoreño, si la guerra significó la disolución de muchas de estas estructuras o redes sociales de contención de la violencia, el auge delincuencial y de la violencia social del período de posguerra ha contribuido a acentuar el desgarro del tejido social y incrementar la alarma ciudadana frente a un entorno considerado hostil y violento, en donde la única forma de tener cierto contro es a través del uso de la fuerza. Es aquí donde se cierra el círculo vicioso, pues una vez la persona ha introyectado todo un bagaje cultural y normativo, no sólo habrá de conducirse conforme los valores y esquemas del mundo que le fueron transmitidos, sino que habrá de reproducirlos a las nuevas generaciones.* (UNDP, 2003: 20).[32]

Salvadoran contexts, see Mc Donald (1998).

[30] Factors that trigger or facilitate [violence].

[31] The use of the concept of social capital reflects growing interest in the term on the part of multi-lateral agencies such as the World Bank and Inter American Development Bank (see, for example, Putnam, 1993). According to the World Bank, "social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable collective action" (http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital)

[32] In the Salvadoran case, if the war meant to the disintegration of many of these structures or networks that served to contain violence, the rise in criminality and social violence in the post-war period has contributed to an unravelling of the social fabric and an increase in citizens' alarm in the face of a environment which is considered hostile and violent, where the only possibility of having any certainty is through the use of force. It is here where the vicious circle is closed. Once the whole range of cultural

Together with existing structural inequalities and the weakening of social fabric, the end of the war left a huge inactive workforce. This was, at least in part, a result of the demobilisation of military groups, who received very little support for reinsertion into civil life, but it was exacerbated by the scarcity of sources of employment. Added to the massive circulation of arms and a historic lack of respect for the rule of law, Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri (2000) suggest that this combination of factors allowed other long-standing social conflicts/problems to be brought to the fore and generate new spaces of violence.[33] According to Ramos (2000: 13):

> *La violencia en una sociedad suele ser un síntoma de deficitarios niveles de integración y cohesión social - sean éstos causados por la inequidades en la distribución de los recursos o por cualquier tipo de segregación o discriminación-, así como de la escasa capacidad del Estado para generar instrumentos de integración social, ejercer autoridad y administrar justicia.*[34]

Continued impunity and violence have contributed to the erosion of democratic expectations, undermining confidence in a fledgling democratic political system such as that found in El Salvador and other Latin American polities (Méndez, 1999). [35] The continued pervasiveness of violence in the region, therefore, has been linked with weak notions of citizenship (Moser and Winton, 2001; Kooning and Kruijt, 1999; Méndez, 1999; Vilas, 1996). Such notions cast doubt on the viability of the democratic project, to such a degree that Rotker (2001: 18) states that current levels of violence attest to an "undeclared civil war in major Latin American cities", resonating with the ECA editorial's (1999: 967) assessment of El Salvador's current "*guerra informal*".[36] Both Rotker and the ECA editorial propose that current levels of violence are rooted in protest, albeit

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baggage and normative behaviour has been internalised, people will not only have to behave according to the values and ways of the world that they were taught, but will be reproduced for the new generation.

[33] Given the high levels of brutality exercised by the state security apparatus and the corruption of judicial bodies in the pre-war era, it is hardly surprising that citizens felt that they had little access to justice. This is discussed further in Chapter Four in relation to the resolution of conflicts in one case study community. See also, Popkin (1999) and Aguilar *et al.* (2001). Some demobilised groups have been accused of getting involved in organised crime, especially ex-military. This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

[34] Violence in a society tends to be symptomatic of the deficiencies in levels of social integration and cohesion - whether these are caused by the inequalities in the distribution of resources or by other forms of segregation or discrimination - as well as the weak capacity of the state to generate instruments of social integration, to exercise authority and administer justice.

[35] In El Salvador, for example, those individuals responsible for the massive human rights abuses during the war have still not been tried due to an amnesty declared by the government after the publication of the report of the Truth Commission. See Popkin (1999) and Kaye (1999).

[36] Informal war.

random and unorganised, against pervasive structural inequalities. ECA (ibid: 969) suggests that "*El Salvador como tal no es viable sin cambios estructurales radicales*," claiming that the transition has not addressed the roots of the conflict.[37] Rotker argues:

> This undeclared civil war clearly engages elements of fear and rage, but it is no longer a question of planting bombs or hiding in the mountains to take up arms against a dictator or corrupt government. It deals instead with a violence that resists a whole system, creating it in a more profound way, at the heart of its social relations. As it makes victims of us all, this undeclared civil war obliterates spaces of difference and differentiation, making all of us experience injustice, insecurity and inequality (Rotker, 2001: 18).

In such a situation, where so many factors combine to undermine social cohesion and equality, the causes and effects of violence become blurred, as their manifestations are embedded in social practices and codes of behaviour. It is a complex, if not impossible, task to separate the causes of violence from its effects. Excluded groups may employ violence as an instrument for recognition or inclusion; however, the effect can be that society excludes them even further, thus creating a vicious circle, where violence indeed "nourishes" and reproduces itself in other forms (Ramos, 2000.). The boundaries between different types of violence - social, political and economic - become blurred, as does society's capacity to define them.[38] As Arendt (1969: 80) cautions, although violence may "pay" in the short term, the consequences for the longer-term are devastating. She warns "[t]he practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world." In this vein, the next section turns to the legacy of state violence in relation to four key areas: the historic dimension and evolution of the problem; violence as a threat to the democratic project; the effect of fear and insecurity on political culture, social reaction to gangs and the lack of confidence in state bodies.

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[37] El Salvador, as it stands, is not viable without radical structural change.

[38] See previous chapter for definitions of social, political and economic violence.

A legacy of authoritarianism

1. Violence is not new but it is different

Kooning and Kruijt (1999: 11) state that violence "increasingly appears as an option for a multitude of actors all pursuing different goals." They argue that current levels of violence have created a climate of social and political insecurity different from that of previous decades. Insecurity and fear that characterised life throughout years of dictatorship and war have not only left their mark on contemporary social relations, but continue to permeate the daily lives of the citizens of many Latin American countries. Pearce (1998: 589) claims that the type of violence to plague Latin America today may be "of a more social and multifaceted kind than the polarised and political violence characteristic of the 1980s." Indeed, Méndez (1999) suggests that the victims of current violence are now anonymous: anyone and everyone is at risk, resonating closely with Kooning and Kruijt's (1999: 11) somewhat cynically termed "democratisation" of violence. While the violence of previous decades arguably had some "logic" to it, contemporary violence is characterised by its arbitrariness.[39] This propagates a generalised insecurity and fear, where the population becomes a collective victim and mistrust the common currency. "*Para algunos ciudadanos, la situación es 'peor, porque antes si uno no se metía en política no lo mataban; ahora sí: en la casa puede estar y ahí lo matan*" (Cruz *et al.*, 1998: 3, citing IUDOP, 1996a: 240).[40]

In previous decades, political violence and threat effectively permeated all levels of social existence in El Salvador and were highly visible. Threat and violence had extreme repercussions on how society functioned, destroying not only material structures and weakening institutional capacities, but marking social attitudes, behaviours and norms. Indeed, the political climate of previous years has arguably contributed to the levels of violence affecting much of the Latin American region today. The political conflict overshadowed much of day-to-day existence, but it co-existed alongside other expressions of violence that were effectively rendered invisible and sidelined:[41]

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[39] See Apter (1997) for a discussion of political violence. He asserts that political violence is dependent on individuals regarding it as legitimate.

[40] For some citizens, the contemporary situation 'is worse, because, before, if you did not get involved in politics, you did not get killed, now it is different: you could be at home and you could be killed there.

[41] This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. See also Mc Williams and Mc Kiernan (1993) whose study on domestic violence proposes that a similar dynamic has occurred in Northern Ireland.

> *En la década de los 80, el fenómeno 'violencia' se expresó fundamentalmente en su carácter de conflicto político militar interno. Con la confrontación armada coexistieron otras formas de violencia, pero sus manifestaciones y sus efectos se vieron disminuidos, oscurecidos o confundidos con los propios de la guerra. La dualidad de los poderes y la profunda polarización social generadas por la guerra posibilitaron, por un lado que muchos hechos de violencia fueran atribuidos al conflicto y, por otro, que algunos fenómenos sociales que incorporaban patrones de conductas violentas 'extra conflicto' no fueran incorporados a la agenda de preocupaciones sociales y políticas del país* (Ramos, 2000: 8).[42]

Historical data are scarce for rates of violence and criminality in the region. Cruz and Beltrán (2000:9), however, cite Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) figures from the 1960s and 1970s, which indicate that El Salvador had a murder rate of around or greater than 30 per 100 000 inhabitants, compared to Colombia and Nicaragua's 22 and 25 per 100 000 inhabitants respectively. They consider such figures to be demonstrative of a historical problem of endemic violence in the country, since they are not only over and above contemporary world averages, but well over what is judged as extremely violent, i.e.: more than 10 murders per 100 000 inhabitants. Added to this, figures from the IUDOP/ACTIVA survey (1998), demonstrate that 80 per cent of adult respondents were subject to physical violence as children, highlighting that the problem of violence permeated both the public and domestic realms. Empirical data presented in this thesis support the notion that violence, in its many expressions, is a historic problem in El Salvador. Testimonies are permeated with incidences of brutality and force since birth (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). Indeed, Cruz *et al.* (1998) argue that the upsurge in violence in the post-war period is no coincidence, but that the war exacerbated existing patterns and left in its wake, the conditions that facilitate the existence of high levels of violence:

> *La verdad es que según las evidencias recogidas sobre el pasado período antes del conflicto, los salvadoreños ya tenían un problema serio de violencia; en tal sentido la problemática no es nueva y no fue creada por la guerra, pero ésta contribuyó enormemente a que la violencia se institucionalizara en el sistema de valores y normas que rigen el comportamiento social de forma tácita en las interacciones sociales. Cuando*

[42] In the 1980s, the phenomenon of 'violence' was expressed fundamentally by its political dimension, in the shape of an internal military conflict. Other forms of violence coexisted alongside the armed confrontation, but their manifestations and effects were diminished, overshadowed or confused with those of the war itself... Social phenomena that incorporated patterns of violent behaviour, external to the conflict, were not included in the list of social and political preoccupations.

la violencia dejó de tener un sentido en el orden sociopolítico, se reforzó el espacio para la misma en las relaciones interpersonales (ibid: 40).[43]

The repercussions of this climate of continued violence on the Salvadoran democratisation process are discussed below.

2. High levels of violence: a threat for democracy?

Torres Rivas (1999 and 2000) agrees that the contemporary mass production and consumption of violence is directly related to the history of political violence in the region. He highlights that "*la ritualización de la violencia camina en diversas direcciones hasta ser o hacerse aceptada como un hecho cotidiano de la vida pública y privada de la gente común; del ciudadano aterrorizado que sólo sabe que aún está vivo, pero no la causa de la muerte del otro*" (ibid: 54).[44] According to Torres Rivas, and as mentioned above, this process will have long-term consequences for the development of a democratic political culture: "[*n*]*o hay peor complicidad que la indiferencia consciente, razonada. También este clima alimenta otras conductas disociativas como la venganza pagada, la justicia por mano propia, la delincuencia que ha aumentado de modo considerable*" (ibid: 55).[45] Threat effectively became a valid means of control during the years of political conflict, with a marked deterioration in the quality of social relations. Miranda (2000) argues that a crucial effect of authoritarianism is that it is internalised on an individual level, thus making each Salvadoran an active agent in its reproduction. She claims that "[*u*]*na de las características más sobresalientes de las relaciones cotidianas de los salvadoreños es la violencia*" (ibid: 50).[46]

Cruz (2000: 518) points out that the authoritarianism latent in Salvadoran social attitudes ultimately privileges order over civil liberties and human rights. The popular notion that the promotion of human rights only serves to defend criminals translates into 75 per cent of citizens agreeing that "*derechos humanos favorecen a los delincuentes y así no*

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[43] The truth is, that according to evidence gathered about the period before the war, Salvadorans already had a serious problem of violence. In this sense, the problem is not new and was not created by the war. However, the war did contribute greatly to the institutionalisation of violence in the system of values and norms that regulate social behaviour in a tacit way as a part of personal interaction. When violence ceased to have a meaning in the socio-political order, the space for it was reinforced in interpersonal relations.

[44] The ritualising of violence has many directions until it is, or makes itself, a daily presence in the public and private lives of normal people, of the terrorised citizen, who is only aware that he is alive but not of the causes of the death of others.

[45] There is no greater complicity than indifference... This climate also encourages other disassociate behaviours such as paid vengeance, taking justice into their own hands and delinquency, which has gone up considerably.

[46] Violence is one of the most striking characteristics of social relations between Salvadorans.

se puede acabar con ellos".[47] Over 50 per cent of Salvadorans affirm that they would be in favour of a coup d'état in order to combat criminality (IUDOP/ACTIVA, 1998). As argued, such attitudes undermine the very possibility of the democratic project, with huge implications for the creation of mechanisms to resolve social conflicts in a non-violent manner:

> *La percepción del caos, de la incertidumbre cotidiana, promueve actitudes y valores que surgen para responder rápida y eficazmente al problema de la anarquía percibida a causa de la criminalidad. En otras palabras, se fortalecen actitudes y normas que privilegian el orden, la sumisión absoluta a la autoridad y el uso de la fuerza para mantener el status quo o lo que debería ser el status quo. Estos componentes subjetivos se orientan, más bien, al autoritarismo y no a la democracia* (Cruz, 2000: 518).[48]

3. Fear and insecurity: an authoritarian political culture?

> The transition to democratic regimes and their consolidation in some countries initially fostered hopes for a decline in violence, repression and generated fears. Unfortunately, this has seldom been in the case... Fear is now as much a threat to democracy as violence itself, since it may again justify repression, emergency policies that circumvent the constitutional rule, and, more broadly, alienation from the democratic political process (Balán, 2001: 5).

This climate has exacerbated a "culture of violence" in El Salvador which has been. identified by Alvarenga (1996) as a historical feature of Salvadoran society. This has become more acute through the militarisation processes of war, which has led to the current situation in which violence has become a pervasive, if not overtly valid, instrument of social relations:

> *[C]onstituye la creación de sistemas de valores y normas sociales que legitiminan y priveligian el uso de la violencia en cualquier ámbito por sobre otras formas de comportamiento social... El conflicto armado exacerbó esa cultura existente y le dio un carácter casi universal... la guerra civil militarizó la sociedad, deterió la convivencia social y adiestró a*

[47] Human rights favour criminals and therefore you can not deal with them [criminals].

[48] The perception of chaos and general uncertainty promote the emergence of attitudes and values to respond rapidly and effectively to the problem of perceived anarchy, due to the high levels of criminality... Attitudes that prioritise order, absolute submission to authority and the use of force to *maintain* the status quo, or that which should be the *status quo*, are strengthened. These subjective components are more oriented towards authoritarianism than democracy.

> *los ciudadanos en el uso de la agresión como medio instrumental universal para dirimir las diferencias* (Cruz and González *et al.*, 1998: 33).[49]

Violence, in this situation, has become both something to fear and a tool with which to address problems. Mistrust and fear have nourished a situation of "*hypervigilencia*", where citizens have become prisoners of their own fear (UNDP, 2003). For many, who live in communities where negotiating high levels of violence is a central element of everyday life, such fear is an understandable reaction to the context in which they live.

> Real people experience fear. The response depends on the individual; nonetheless, it is society that constructs the notions of risk, threat and danger, and generates standardised modes of response, updating both - notions and modes of response - according to historical period (Reguillo, 2001: 192).

Social constructions of fear are based upon a logic of the "other". This was analysed in the previous chapter with reference to both political and gender based violence (see, for instance, Feldman, 2000 and Stanko, 1998):

> *Un mundo dividido en 'blanco y negro', o en propios y enemigos en donde lo externo no se conciba como parte del esquema valorativo personal) no es sino una amenaza, un potencial agresor, frente lo cual es necesario prepararse bajo la lógica de la hipervigilancia y la actitud defensiva ante el posible ataque. .. tierra fértil sobre la cual germinan todas las ideas y medidas aprobatorias de la violencia* (UNDP,2003: 21).[50]

On one level, the existence of the "other" - the potential enemy - becomes a necessary element for citizens' efforts to survive in and make sense of the violent world around them. On the other, however, it feeds a vicious circle of violence, where fear and chaos become legitimising agents for increased repression and a continuance of authoritarian measures. This is reflected in a recent declaration by the current president, Francisco Flores: "*estoy convencido que esta actitud pasiva que ha generado una serie de leyes que no protegen a*

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[49] It constitutes the creation of a system of social norms and values that legitimise and prioritise the use of violence above other forms of social behaviour in any realm... The armed conflict exacerbated this existing culture and gave it an almost universal character.... The civil war militarised society, it damaged social relations and trained citizens in the use of aggression as a universal and instrumental method to dissolve differences.

[50] A world divided into "black and white" or into allies and enemies (where the outside is not conceived of as part of a personal scheme of values), is nothing but a threat, a potential aggressor. In the face of this, it is necessary to prepare oneself with a logic of hyper vigilance and a defensive attitude against possible attack... a fertile ground on which ideas and measures that support violence are sown.

los ciudadanos, debe terminar".[51] Violence is graded according to the different levels of "recognition codes" adopted by society (Feldman, 2000: 55). Such codes not only determine levels of fear, but also legitimise violent responses on both an individual and state level. Empirical evidence to analyse community responses to violence and crime are interrogated in Chapter Four.

These attitudes are indicative of a dearth of non-violent alternatives for resolving conflict within society, as well as the legacy of respect for authoritarian measures. Citizens use and applaud violence to attack criminality and violence. Polarisation and the "other" are fundamental to this logic. "*Ha contribuido a que la violencia misma sea ignorada, justificada y, a veces, estimulada por aquellos que se ven a sí mismos como ciudadanos rectos y ejemplares que están en contra quienes consideran una lacra social*" (Cruz and Beltrán, 2000: 5).[52] The IUDOP/ACTIVA study (1998:42), found that 46.6 percent of respondents would "understand" another person/group killing "*gente indeseable*"; 15.4 per cent would condone it, while only 38 per cent would disapprove. [53] Some 58. 2 per cent of respondents declared themselves in favour of the death penalty (ibid: 51). Such figures are indicative of a certain "complicity", or in the very least, a conspiratorial silence regarding the use of social cleansing mechanisms, reflecting a tolerance, if not overt respect, for authoritarian measures. This will be discussed below, in relation to the social reaction to gangs.

4. Social reaction to gangs

Cruz (1998) associates the proliferation of *maras* in the Salvadoran political transition with a search for social power that has been lost, or, indeed, never held. The previous chapter stressed that the relationship between violence and power is not straightforward. Nevertheless, Cruz argues that gang membership is linked to poverty and exclusion, and marked by a lack of alternatives for young people:

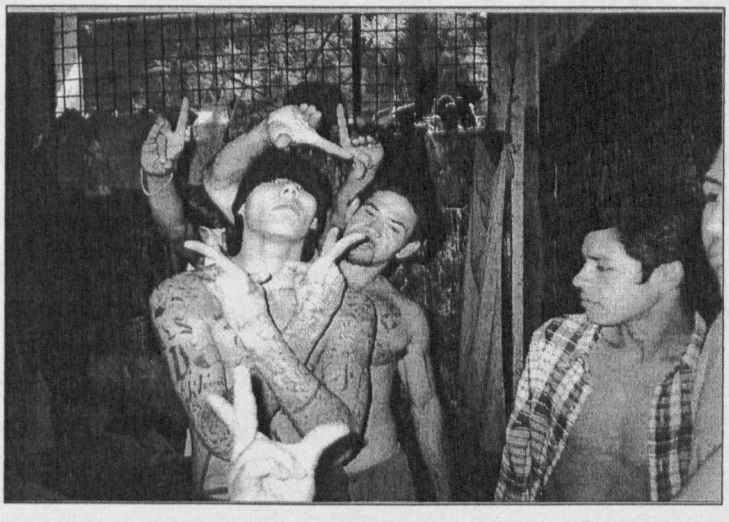
> *Es mejor ser importante, ser valorado en unas condiciones peligrosas, en un mundo violento y viciado (y probablemente tener el poder que les ha sido negado en otros ámbitos a no ser 'nada' o 'nadie')... Es una forma alternativa de vida que busca recuperar un espacio social perdido o*

[51] I am convinced that this passive attitude has paved the way for a series of laws that do not protect citizens; it must end (cited in *El Diario de Hoy*, 24 July 2003).
[52] It has meant that violence itself is ignored, justified and, sometimes, stimulated by those who see themselves as upstanding and exemplary citizens, against those they consider the scum of society.
[53] Undesirables.

contemplado como inalcanzable a través de la convivencia con los pares (ibid: 710).[54]

It can therefore be understood as an expression of the difference between the "potential" and the "actual" (Galtung, 1969), where prevailing social and economic inequalities restrict the options available to young people. "*Donde la escasez está acompañada de la negación de las posibilidades de ejercer un poder que permita la modificación del propio entorno. La integración a las pandillas es una respuesta a la obstrucción de esas posibilidades a las que cualquier ciudadano aspira*" (Cruz, 1998: 275).[55] According to Ramos (1998) gang membership outnumbers that of the guerrilla forces during the war twofold, indicating the pervasiveness of the phenomenon in the Salvadoran context.[56] In a recent speech to launch the anti-gang law - *Operación Mano Dura* - president Flores stated: "*existen más mareros armados que policías y efectivos militares juntos, son ya entonces una amenaza para todos los salvadoreños*".[57] Recent figures indicate that there are anywhere between 17 000 and 30 000 active gang members in El Salvador (*El Diario de Hoy*, 24 July, 2003).

Plate 2.1:
Members of detained Mara 18 displaying gang signals and tattoos (Cullen, 16 January 2003)



[54] It is better to be important, to be valued in dangerous conditions, in a violent and vicious world and probably have the power that has been denied to them in other areas, as 'nothing' or 'nobody'.... It is an alternative way of life, which seeks to recuperate a social space that has been lost or is seen as unreachable through relations with peers. Paradoxically, it appears that what attracts young people to gangs is exactly what they wish to leave behind

[55] Where scarcity is accompanied by the denial of opportunity.... gang membership is a response to the denial of these opportunities that any citizen may aspire to.

[56] See Rodgers (1999).

[57] There are more armed gang members than police and military units combined; they are, therefore, a menace to all Salvadorans (cited in *El Diario de Hoy*, 24 July 2003).

De Cesare views the *pandilleros* as an image of:

> The new El Salvador, caught between a peasant past and the dislocations of the present, caught between the generation of romanticised rebel fighters and that of vilified young "gangstas." [Their] search for identity parallels El Salvador's search for a shared definition of justice, respect and participation (1998: 29). (See Plate 2.1)

Indeed, Smutt and Miranda (1998), highlight that the life histories of Salvadoran youth provide an important reflection of the social context in which these new generations grew up. Young people learned from an early age that violence forms part of every-day life and thus respond with violence. This notion of a vicious circle of violence is resonant in the work of many theorists. Keane (1997), for example, asserts that violence begets violence, whereas Gilligan (1998 and 2000), believes that violence is learned behaviour.

In this context, young people have internalised violence as a habitual form of dealing with conflict and establishing social relationships. Smutt and Miranda (1998) suggest that young people now use violence as a way of expressing themselves and of being recognised. They argue that young people did not choose violence but that violence chose them. Violence has become a means of surviving in a hostile environment and is both a cause and a consequence of their participation in gangs. Cruz (1998: 705) agrees: "*Los llamados 'mareros' son parte de una subcultura que privilegia la violencia como manera de relación con los demás; ello les convierte no sólo en agresores sino también en agredidos, y multiplica esta dialéctica de una manera cíclica que, en varios casos, sólo concluye en la muerte*".[58] In reference to youth violence in Latin America generally, Cárdia (2001: 176) asserts that young people hold a series of beliefs that legitimise the use of violence, but, in effect, these only serve to heighten their vulnerability to violent situations: "These include believing that violence is right, that it is a type of retribution that works to repair harm to one's self-esteem, removing the traces of insults and offences makes one more inclined to respond violently when provoked." The value attached to violence is not just characteristic of gangs. Empirical data reveals that violence is seen as functional in many levels of social relations, providing the basis for discussion in subsequent chapters.

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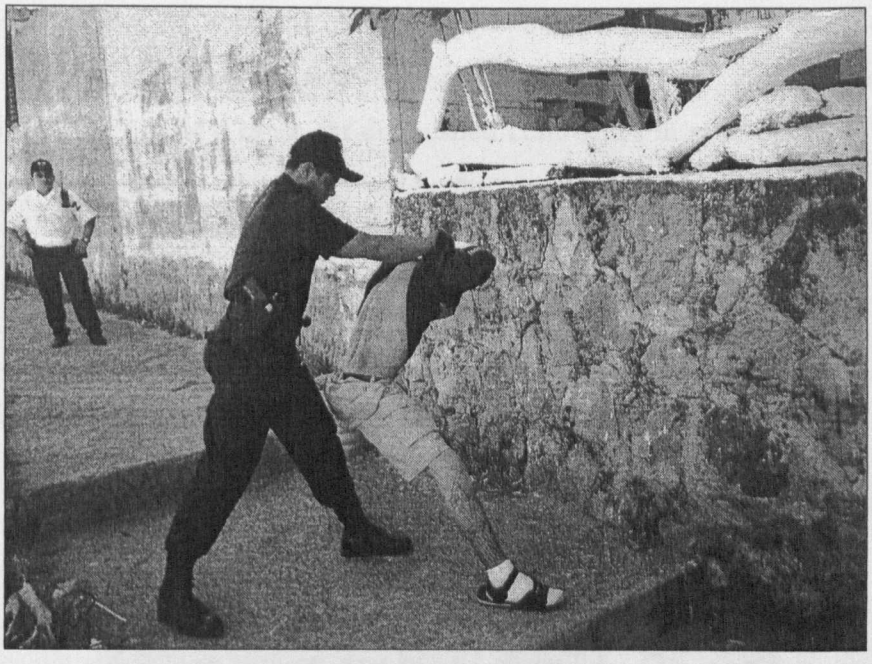
[58] *Mareros* are part of a subculture that sees violence as a way of relating to others; this means that they are not only aggressors but also victims and they reproduce this dialectic in a cyclical fashion which, in various cases, only concludes in death.

Plate 2.2:
Street arrest and search of a member of Mara 18 on suspicion of theft and attempted murder (Cullen, 16 January 2003)

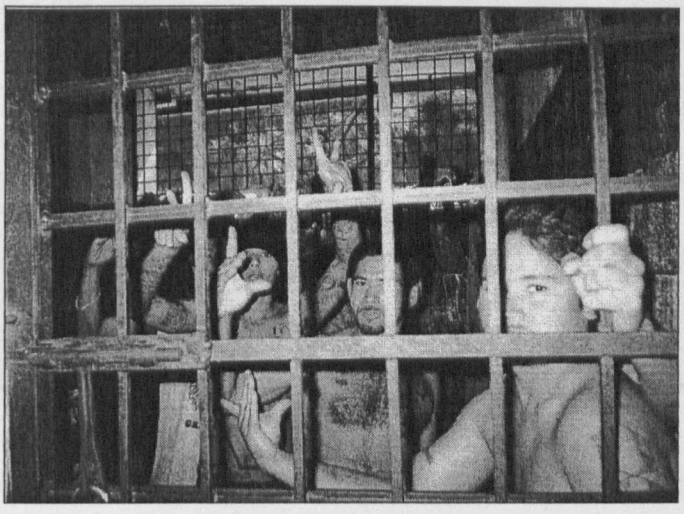


In El Salvador, the popular response to gangs is to vilify and exclude them further. In the mid-1990s, a group formed to kill gang members in San Miguel was seen as a "*mal necesario*" (necessary evil) by the then governor of that department (Ramos, 1998: 207). Recent incidences of decapitated corpses found in San Salvador have been likened to tactics used by the death squads in the late 1970s and 1980s. The authorities have attributed these murders to gangs. The murders have coincided with the promotion of a new anti-gang law that promotes stricter penalties and trying of all gang members as adults. Advocates of the law have used the murders as justification for more draconian measures.[59] In the course of this research, one informant suggested that the only way to deal with the "gang problem" in his community was to "*Matarlos. Quitarlos de raiz, matarlos todos*" (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[60] This is a telling statement of how visible the phenomenon has become in citizens' perceptions of violence and how threatened individuals and communities feel by gangs. Young people, as a social group, appear to be stigmatised by the gang phenomenon. Collectively, they have become an object of social fear, despite the fact that figures demonstrate that fewer young people than adults commit crimes (Ramos, 1998). It is here that the logic of the "other" takes

[59] Similar laws were implemented in Honduras earlier this year (2003) and there has been talk of a regional anti-gang strategy.

on great significance. In the eyes of the authorities, gangs have replaced the "communist threat" as the great danger to society: "*A juzgar por la retórica a la que se hace referencia anteriormente por parte de las autoridades, con la desaparición de quienes en el pasado constituían un peligro para la sociedad, los 'comunistas', se ha hecho necesaria la identificación del nuevo estereotipo de amenaza social y los elegidos han sido precisamente los jóvenes*" (Cruz, 1999: 269).[61] This situation is both a product of and a cause for diminished confidence in state bodies.[62] A lack of confidence in the police and judiciary will be discussed below.

Plate 2.3:
Detained pandilleros, Soyapango (Cullen, 16 January, 2003)



[60] Kill them. Attack them at the roots. Kill them all.

61 Judging by the [government] rhetoric... with the disappearance of those groups who were considered a danger to society in the past - the communists - the identification of a new stereotype of threat has become necessary and the chosen ones have been young people.

[62] Indeed, in a workshop held in one of the case study communities, El Boulevar, young people criticised the PNC's harassment of them. They argued that they were marginalized simply for living in El Boulevar, since there is a gang and number of know criminals who live in the community.

5. Lack of confidence in state bodies

Plate 2.4:
On patrol with the PNC in Soyapango (Cullen, 16 January 2003)

The National Civil Police (PNC) was formed in El Salvador after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992. The new police force replaced the old security apparatus (National Police, National Guard and the Treasury Police), which were considered responsible for some 95 per cent of the serious human rights violations that occurred between 1980 and 1992 (Aguilar *et al.*, 2001, citing Truth Commission, 1993). The numbers of security agents were reduced drastically from 75 000 (including the army, the guerrilla, civil defence and the old police forces) to 6000 (Stanley, 1996). Initially this severely reduced force enjoyed the support of the population. In 1995, 45.9 per cent of the population considered that the new police force was better that the old apparatus, 24.6 per cent felt it was the same and 21.3 per cent that it was worse. By 2000, 64 per cent of respondents believed that the PNC was losing the respect and support of the population, with 38.5 per cent agreeing that it was worse than the old regime and 26.3 per cent seeing it as the same (ibid: 15-16).

As well as being unable to address, in an effective manner, the wave of criminality in the post-war period, the credibility of the new institution has been

detrimentally affected by a series of high profile cases, implicating agents in criminal activities (Crustin, 2001). In addition, the radical reform of the police was not accompanied by a similar reform of judicial bodies, compromising the very foundations of the peace process and contributing to what Ramos (2000) has termed the erosion of democratic expectations. Popkin (1999: 157) argues that El Salvador combines the "disadvantages of a peace process that did not involve a change in government with a compromised judiciary."

To a certain extent, this loss of confidence is reflected in the proliferation of private security companies to defend businesses and properties. There are currently an estimated 70,000 private security agents, compared to the PNC, which has an active force of approximately 20,000 officers (Melara, 2001). More worryingly, this lack of confidence reinforces the prevalence of social attitudes and behaviour that legitimise and propagate the use of violence in *certain* circumstances and by *certain* individuals.

6. The widespread circulation of firearms

High rates of violence and crime in El Salvador have been linked to the easy availability of firearms. Nevertheless, guns are widely accepted as being "necessary" for personal security and laws regulating gun ownership are lax (Cruz and Beltrán, 2000: 54; See also UNDP, 2003):

> *Las armas de fuego no constituyen la causa original de la violencia que azota al país desde que se firmaron los acuerdos de paz, pero sin duda determinan la frecuencia, la letalidad y las consecuencias que deja la violencia y la delincuencia que prevalece en las relaciones sociales de los salvadoreños. La violencia y su expresión más evidente, la delincuencia, tiene causas más profundas, estructurales, las cuales se ven favorecidas por una serie de condiciones circunstanciales que facilitan su aparecimiento y su prevalencia* (ibid: 4)?[63]

Recent surveys indicate that there are as many 400 000 firearms in circulation, with only 35. 7 per cent registered as legal (ibid.). As one interviewee (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar) said: "*Para defensa propia... yo para protección de mi familia porque uno sabe que no con malas intenciones... y no es por machismo ni cosa que se le parezca, por protección, se la da uno mismo*

[63]Firearms do not constitute the original cause of the violence that has been scourging the country since the signing of the peace accords, but, without a doubt, they determine the frequency, deadliness and consequences of the violence and delinquency prevalent in Salvadoran social relations. Violence, and its most obvious expression, delinquency, has more profound causes, that have been assisted by a series of conjunctural circumstances that facilitate its appearance and prevalence.

ya que las autoridades no se la dan a uno".[64] His justification for carrying a gun is not only linked to fear of criminal victimisation, but also to the opinion that the authorities will not offer citizens necessary protection. Such issues are explored in the context of the case study community, El Boulevar, in Chapter Four. According to one elected deputy (cited in Cruz and Beltrán, 2000: 4): "*[c]omprararía el caso de las armas con el invierno y la compra de paraguas: ante el invierno de la delincuencia, todos se arman*", effectively supporting citizens' right to carry weapons in the struggle against *delincuencia.*[65] This statement hardly represents a vote of confidence in state bodies.

The widespread availability and use of firearms is yet another factor that contributes to high levels of violence in El Salvador. The massive circulation of firearms has been attributed to both a hangover of weapons from the war, as well as the knowledge to use them acquired by many during the conflict (Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri, 2000, Ramos, 2000; see Chapter Four). Furthermore, lax laws and huge numbers of illegal firearms in circulation make the task of acquiring weapons relatively simple.[66]

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the context of violence and fear in which contemporary El Salvador is immersed. The ways in which high levels of violence have emerged in El Salvador and the difficulties incurred in measuring and identifying different types of violence have been examined. The conceptual exploration of the intimacy between violence and authoritarianism constitutes an important frame in which to analyse how violence has become normalised and legitimised in daily life in the region. Cruz (2000) considers that lack of social confidence in state bodies, namely the judiciary and PNC, is not enough in itself to erode the popular legitimacy of the political system. However, when accompanied by a preference and respect for authoritarian leadership, it soon begins to have negative repercussions on the legitimacy of the state, creating "governance voids" where violence is propagated (Kooning and Kruijt, 1999).

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[64] For self-defence... for the protection of my family because everyone knows that, not with bad intentions... and not because of machismo, nor anything like that, for protection, you protect yourself because the authorities do not.

[65] would compare the case of guns to winter and the purchase of an umbrella: before the winter of criminality, everyone arms themselves.

[66] For example, one 29 year old internee, Daniel, who was interviewed as part of this research, said that he had easy access to an arsenal of weaponry through his ex-commanding officer in the army. This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

Conjunctural factors, such as the widespread availability of guns and high unemployment have combined with structural problems and the legacy of authoritarianism to create a climate of fear and violence that serves to undermine efforts to build a more peaceful society.

Citizens respond to such dynamics by demanding greater security and heavy-handed policies, which appear to contradict and undermine the process of democratisation. The post-war context has created an environment in which sizeable numbers of people have turned to illegal activities and there has been a dramatic increase in criminality. Young people, in a search for some kind of collective identity, have joined youth gangs in their thousands and find themselves trapped in world where violence is the common idiom. State representatives and the media sensationalise the problem and grade violence according to hegemonic power interests, stigmatising certain groups, such as young people. At the same time, the state response to growing criminality has been inconsistent, creating problems of governance and legitimacy. The discussion has focused on highly visible forms of violence, reflecting both state discourses and popular understandings of violence. This serves to mask "private" aspects such as domestic violence. Such a backdrop will frame the analyses presented in subsequent chapters, which interrogate how citizens live with high levels of violence on a daily basis, while the following chapter analyses the implications of carrying out research in this context.

Chapter Three

Unpicking the threads: reflections on researching violence and everyday life in El Salvador

This chapter constitutes an overview of the fieldwork process, which was conducted during a period of twelve months in El Salvador. The bulk of my research took place in one low-income community in the municipality of Soyapango in greater San Salvador (see Map 1), which I call El Boulevar. I also carried out interviews in another community in the same municipal jurisdiction, La Vía, in a state sponsored self-help group for men who had been convicted of domestic violence and limited research in a prison.[1] In addition, I interviewed policy makers, academics and organisations such as the PNC that worked in the area of violence prevention and rehabilitation.[2] The different research locations and the range of interviewees offered me a variety of perspectives. Throughout pseudonyms are used in order to disguise the identity of the research participants.

At any given time throughout the year, I was simultaneously working in more than one context. I encountered both similar and very different obstacles in each research setting. Issues of access were often unique to a particular location, as were the internal dynamics. In some sites, I had to be more creative to gain the trust of research participants and each space provided me with lessons, which I could employ in other contexts. The following discussion outlines some of the issues that I grappled with throughout the fieldwork. I have located many of the issues discussed below in concrete examples from different research settings. By doing this, I am in no way suggesting that these issues are unique to this particular setting, rather I am placing them in the day-to-day realities of my research in order to enhance appreciation of the complex process of researching violence.

[1] See Appendix One for community histories and brief biographies of research participants. The pseudonyms for the communities were initially used by FLACSO, where I was affiliated and who were also conducting research in these communities. All interviewee names have been changed throughout to protect their identity.
[2] For list of those people interviewed, see Appendix Two.

My approach to the research process was influenced heavily by feminist theorising.[3] The subject of feminist methodology has been the focus of much debate within academic circles (see, for example, Wise and Staley, 2003; Ribbens and Edwards, 1997; Hammersley, 1996; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Stanley *et al.,* 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1983). While there is general agreement that a distinct mode of feminist enquiry does exist, there is little consensus as to what this actually constitutes (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). As such, there is no strict set of guidelines for carrying out feminist research, no "right way of doing things" (ibid: 2). More than strict notions of method, I am concerned with the broader methodological process: the questions asked, how data is gathered and how knowledge is constructed - "the framework within which [methods] are located, and the particular ways in which they are displayed" (Kelly *et al.* 1994: 46). I agree with Redclift (1997: 223) when she argues that "theory is shaped by real-world working practices and commitments. Critical perspectives themselves have social effects, both purposeful and unforeseen." The confluence of post-modernism and feminism fashions an approach that allows research to deconstruct the given, the "norm" and recognise the multiplicity of "truths" inherent in social relations. Concurrently, the political underpinnings of a feminist standpoint offer a critical perspective from which to challenge the status quo. This involves recognising the individual subjectivity of the research participants, the power dynamics of the research process and my role as a researcher. I do not propose that such an approach offers one feminist – or superior - "truth", but that the interpretative process is shaped from a feminist standpoint where questioning the pervasive nature of structures of gendered oppression and my role within such structures becomes intrinsic to the research (Maynard, 1994).

The chapter begins with a reflection of how my own identity and life experience have coloured my approach to the research. I then discuss the need for flexibility throughout the research process. Issues such as local understandings of time and meanings given to violence are discussed. I then talk about some of the problems I encountered in the different locations of the research. In a section on working in a prison, I explore some of the emotional responses to working on violence in this sensitive context. This leads us to

[3] It is important to emphasise that I concur with Freedman (2001: 1) that feminism is "a diverse and multi-faceted grouping of ideas, and indeed actions." Therefore, I recognise that there are many feminisms and diverse feminist standpoints (See, for instance, Freedman, 2000 on feminist theories; Craske, 1999 on Latin American feminist politics; Maynard, 1994 and Olesen, 1994 on feminist research practice).

a brief consideration of ethical issues and changes in the direction of the research. I then discuss the feelings that interviewing men about violence provoked for me as a woman. Gender dynamics of interviewing are examined briefly, before moving on to a reflection on how respondents' definitions of violence may differ from my own. I then look at the silences encountered in the context of La Vía and the difficulties of gaining access and the fear I experienced in El Boulevar. Finally, I ask some questions about the ownership of research and explore power dynamics in the context of interviewing key actors and policy-makers. Throughout, I provide some reflexive accounts of how I believe that issues in my own life may have affected my interpretations of the realities I encountered during the fieldwork period.

The importance of reflexivity

Hearn (1998: 56) suggests, "violence is a potentially powerful topic to research because it connects with other powerful experiences in researcher's own lives." Research is not a value-free endeavour and throughout my fieldwork, I found myself continually referring to episodes in my past to enhance my understanding of the realities that I was researching. I grew up in the North of Ireland in an intensely nationalist area, one of a generation born into the somewhat euphemistically termed "Troubles." My formative years were embedded in the political turmoil that surrounded me. Certain periods of the political calendar invariably meant high levels of violence and, thinking about it in retrospect, I grew up expecting/accepting bombs, riots and shooting as a *normal* element of daily existence. It would be wrong to say that I was oblivious to the violence of my surroundings but I had learned from an early age to negotiate such a context. Yet, on the surface, it seemed instinctive.

On one level, I was conscious that the violence on our streets was a "terrible thing" and that I was politically opposed to it, yet on another, violence was just "there", another dimension of living where I lived. As Robben and Nordstrom (1995) usefully highlight, in this politically charged context, everyone was aware that violence existed but no one agreed on what constituted the phenomenon. The violence that was talked about openly was of a politically motivated kind and even then, the old rule of thumb "whatever you say, say nothing" prevailed. I will, therefore, provide some reflexive accounts of how I believe that

my own identity and socialisation in a violent situation have nuanced my understandings of the violence in the context of study.

Developing a methodology

Given that the central focus of my research is an exploration of the dynamic relationship between gender and violence, I was acutely aware of the methodological challenges that such a study provided for a non-local female. The biggest challenge from the outset was to find a location for my research and participants willing to talk to me. I opted for a qualitative life history approach, not solely as a result of my personal allergy to numbers, but after careful consideration that certain "sensitive" subjects, such as violence, "require extraordinary delicacy in eliciting information from respondents" (Herzberger, 1993: 34). I felt that this "extraordinary delicacy" would be best achieved by establishing a certain rapport with the participants in my research. I was concerned with understanding how people live with violence throughout their lives and what meanings and interpretations they offer. I hoped that a qualitative approach would enhance my understanding of the changing social and cultural processes of this violent context (Dobash and Dobash, 1988). I was also conscious that interviewing individuals solely on violence could be perceived as overly intrusive and arguably a violent act in itself. Robben and Nordstrom (1995: 6) advocate that violence should be understood through "expressions of everyday". Added to this, my previous experience in working with local women's groups, which included some research, had exposed me to a world impregnated with violence on many levels and this had invariably provided the impetus for many of the questions I asked. Violence, according to Bruno Moro (2000), is the "*hilo central*"[4] of social and political relations in El Salvador. Unpicking this "central thread" from the tapestries of individual lives is not a straightforward endeavour, neither on a theoretical nor practical level. I chose to mix methods, collecting individual life histories from two members of the same family (usually in an intimate partnership), observation of community dynamics and group therapy sessions, as well as participatory research workshops. The advantages and obstacles that these mixed methods presented are explored in later sections of this chapter with reference to specific incidents that occurred during the research.

[4] Central thread.

Going back and locating my research

Although I had worked in El Salvador during the years prior to beginning the PhD and had considerable "local knowledge" (Lee, 1995:16), I still found it difficult to redefine myself in this context as a researcher and, specifically, a researcher on such an overwhelmingly negative subject like violence. Before leaving the UK to embark upon my fieldwork, I had established contact with a number of institutions researching violence and working on projects concerning the prevention and rehabilitation of violent groups and areas.[5] I had negotiated formal affiliation to FLACSO-El Salvador, who offered me desk space and access to bibliographical material soon after I arrived. My initial task was to consult the literature produced in the country on violence, identify gaps and not only locate, but redefine, my own research in this context.

Hearn (1998: 40) stresses that researching violence "involves questioning research methods at every stage and research methodology in every respect ". I frequently found myself having to go with the flow and "let" things happen. I had developed a methodological proposal in my first months in El Salvador, which had to be redefined on a continual basis throughout the fieldwork. "No matter how carefully one plans in advance, research is designed in the course of its execution" (Becker, 1965: 602-3 cited in Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991: 23). Such a scenario, based to a certain extent upon chance, can be frustrating at times. I often felt that I had no idea whether my research was progressing or not. Like many PhD students, this was my first major research endeavour and I was frequently racked with the doubts and insecurities common to the field-researcher (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991). My early experiences of interviewing prompted a revision of my research plans and reinforced the notion that flexibility should be a vital part of all research. As Hearn (1998) cautions, nothing can be taken for granted when researching violence.

Having lived in El Salvador before, I was perhaps a little too adept at conforming to *hora salvadoreña.* I soon became aware, however, that time works at varying speeds in different locations and indeed ***within*** each space, individuals have differing amounts of time to offer. Policy-makers may offer one hour from their busy schedules whereas some

[5] Examples of these are UNDP *Violence in a Society in Transition* Programme, National Council For Public Security, Homies Unidos and women's organisations such as MAM and Las Dignas who work specifically on violence against women.

individuals, particularly the older residents, in a community are delighted to see the *chele* appear and would gladly spend all day chatting.[6] Others were extremely busy and I worried that my request for some of their time was merely another burden on them. As a researcher, I had to be sensitive to this and soon recognised that no two interviews are the same, just as no two people understand violence in exactly the same way (Morrissey, 2000: 107). I discuss these issues in greater detail in the following section.

Meanings of violence

Many different narratives of violence, in diverse spaces and alternative historical moments, marked the lives of my research participants and, therefore, the substance of their interview testimonies. Expressions of violence are connected and interrelated in highly complex ways and the boundaries between them are often blurred, which can make the task of making research on violence fit into a feasible project all the more daunting. Unfortunately for the inexperienced researcher, as Chapter One highlighted, universal theories of violence do not exist and few actually coincide on what violence *means,* therefore the exercise of researching violence has certain epistemological implications. Gleaning knowledge about violence is mediated not only by my identity and value systems, but also by the understandings and meanings afforded to violence by the research participants. That which is not defined as violence can sometimes be as important as what is. Individual and collective understandings of violence are not static and my own research questions evolved and changed on a daily basis (Kelly, 1988). Hearn (1998: 40) emphasises that "pure truth" is not to be found. At all times during the research process, I had to be open to new definitions of what constitutes and what does not constitute violence. Indeed, the shifting definitions of violence have influenced the focus of this thesis. Added to this, Ptacek (1988: 151) warns us of "socially approved rationalisations for violence" that are standardised within cultures. As a researcher, I have been exposed to similar processes of "rationalisation" in my own life, sometimes blurring my own understandings of violence and reinforcing my need to be sure of my own standpoint *vis à vis* violence. This will be

[6] Central American term for white person, usually referring to foreigners but also used in reference to light-skinned Salvadorans/locals.

discussed in greater detail in the next section with reference to my reactions on interviewing men as *doers* of violence (see Hearn, 1998).

Researching men who do violence in the context of a prison and a men's self-help group

Initially it was the contacts that I made that influenced my decision to begin the research in prisons. It is worth underlining that I recognised from the outset that a study of internees in the prison system in no way accounts for all those responsible for the violence in El Salvador. Indeed, given the level of impunity and the inefficacy of the legal system, they are probably not even "those who best 'represent' the kind of population which practices criminal violence" (Cruz *et al.*, 1999: 57).[7] Nevertheless, I was persuaded by the counter-arguments of the same authors who suggest that: "all in all, the persons interned in the penitentiary for delinquential acts make up the population closest to the kind of people who tend to practice criminal violence and who can be approached with less difficulty considering their situation as prisoners"(ibid.).

Influenced by this logic, and invariably swayed by the interest and co-operation of people who work closely with the prison population, I initiated my research with men convicted of different types of violent crimes. Before this, I had never entered a prison in my life. I secured permission from the director of the prison services after a lengthy bureaucratic process. He decided in which prison I could carry out research and he set up the necessary meetings with the prison authorities. In this scenario, my gatekeepers were exclusively the prison authorities. I offered them copies of my research proposal; they chose my interviewees and arranged the meetings for me. In the context of a prison, therefore, could I be sure that the interviewees were informed participants in the research or were they merely seeking to placate the prison authorities? Despite the fact that I explained who I was and offered each man a brief outline of my research, they invariably identified me with the authorities and on one occasion, a respondent asked me for advice on seeing his children. I advised him that I could not help and referred him to the prison

[7] According to the National Public Security Council (CNSP), the PNC solved an average of 6.11 per cent and 8.17 per cent of murders for the years 1996 and 1997 respectively. This translates into an average of five hundred arrests for every seven thousand murders committed. This points to an inefficient police force, incapable of dealing with such high levels of crime (Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri, 2000: 101). There is general agreement that their efficiency has improved in recent years for certain types of crimes.

social worker. The men appeared to participate willingly, however, as I indicated above, I was uneasy about whether their consent was informed or not, given the authoritarian nature of the prison system. I went through the standard procedure of explaining my research to them and asking for their permission to record the interviews. All participants were assured of anonymity and both individual names and locations have been changed.

Emotional reactions and gender dynamics

The prison research was my first experience of interviewing men about personal issues. Just as in the other settings, I set no time limits and interviews lasted anywhere between one and three hours. Unlike the later work in communities, where I carried out multiple interviews with the same individuals, in the prison I only had one meeting each with the four men that I interviewed. In all settings, I endeavoured to have a generous supply of batteries and blank cassettes at all times. As far as possible, the interviewee directed the process; it was, after all, his/her "show" (Morrissey, 2000: 108). As I mentioned above, however, no two interviews were the same and in some cases, I needed to ask more questions that others. The interviews themselves were extremely emotional processes for all the men involved. One man openly cried, while the others fought back tears on occasion. This obviously had an effect on me and prompted me to question, and even doubt, my own ethical standpoint in this process.

I felt that I was asking these men to open up, to talk about a life, that in many cases, they have lost forever - a family that has rejected them and in some cases, that they will probably never be able to recover - for whatever reasons. Slater (2000: 39) suggests that the recollection of life histories is "akin to freeing flood-waters that had been held back for years", yet in this particular scenario, the question about how to channel potentially destructive waters was foremost in my mind as I talked to the men. According to one internee, who is serving a thirty-year sentence for murder:

> *No, casi no hablamos de eso porque, muchas veces, el recordar es vivir como dicen y, tal vez, se puede dañar a la persona al recordarle eso. Tal vez si es muerto, cometió el delito en defensa o en base a su estado de ánimo más*

depresiones que, a veces, lo descomputan a la gente. (Julio, 57 years old, prison).[8]

Like Anderson and Jack (2000), I became acutely aware of my lack of training as a counsellor. I was alone with the men in a room offered by the prison for the duration of the interviews and became increasingly worried that I would have serious ethical difficulties if I were to continue. Many of El Salvador's prisons, as in other countries, are grossly overpopulated and under-resourced.[9] Staff and inmates alike complained to me about the lack of medical and psychological support, the dearth of educational facilities and the overcrowded and subhuman living conditions.[10] I had to ask myself some serious questions about the direction of my research.

On one hand, I had invested time and energy into securing entry to the prisons and was reluctant to change track. On another, and after persuasive arguments from members of FLACSO on the benefits of community-based research, I opted to continue my research in two communities where FLACSO was already working on similar issues, as well as in a men's self-help group located in the same rural town as the prison. My grant status changed half way through the fieldwork, allowing me money to pay a research assistant. My awareness of my own lack of counselling skills prompted me to ask José Manuel Ramirez, an old friend and trained psychologist, to be my assistant. We often had to fit interviews with men around his and their schedules, but I felt that the nature of the interviews required that at least one of us have some professional skills.

Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat contradictorily, I did not feel the need to have him present when I interviewed women in a community setting. They seemed more comfortable when I interviewed them alone. José Manuel came to one interview with a woman and we decided that it was better if I continued alone. I was a non-local woman

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[8] No, we [fellow inmates] don't usually talk about it [why they are in prison], because often remembering is living it, as they say, and maybe remembering can hurt the person. If it is murder, maybe he committed the crime in self-defence or because he was depressed, which sometimes makes people mad

[9] The prison capacity in El Salvador is 6 137. In July 2002, there was a population of 10 278 distributed in the various centres. The most overcrowded prison is near San Salvador and, at the time of research, Mariona held around three times as many men as it had been designed for.

[10] Since I carried out the research in the prison, the inmates have been on hunger strike in protest against the conditions. They have also accused the temporary director of mistreatment.

whereas he was a local man and thus arguably inhibited her willingness to talk. This factor does raise certain questions about for whom his presence in interviews was actually beneficial: the interviewees or me? In my defence, however, I did feel that I had had some professional experience in talking to women from my time working in a local women's organisation. I had a reasonable knowledge of the resources available to women locally and, in one case, I did refer an interviewee to a local therapy project.

In addition, in the self-help group, I conducted two further interviews with men by myself. This was in addition to observing weekly therapy sessions, during which I was allowed to conduct some participatory research activities with the group. The in-depth interviews were carried out after the group therapy sessions and I was aware that the situation of these men was different from that of the men in prison. They both had regular sessions with a psychologist and I had already been sitting in on their group therapy for a couple of months in order to establish trust. Indeed, both men communicated the perceived therapeutic element of "getting things of their chest":

> *Para mí, el comentar mi vida pues, narrar mi vida pues, para mi es desahogarme y es desahogarme de lo que está mucho tiempo oprimido aquí dentro. Creo que para mí pues es de mucha satisfacción pues, el poder compartir contigo todo esto... Pues, me desahogaba solamente bebiendo ya yo tomado pues, me ponía a chillar. No había otra salida más que solamente ponerme a llorar donde me acordaba, pues, de todo mi sufrimiento* (Teofilio, 37 years old).[11]

What is to be learned from these situations is that each interviewee and each interview situation should be approached with extreme sensitivity. What is regarded as therapeutic for one person, might possibly be painful for another. No element of the research process, as Hearn (1998) cautions, should be taken for granted. Research participants are individuals with different life histories and a whole range of coping mechanisms. Their individuality, in this type of research, should be paramount throughout. An interview is a two-way process and, for ethical research to be effective, both the interviewer and the interviewees must feel

[11] For me, talking about my life, narrating the story of my life is a relief, and it is getting things of my chest that have been suppressed here inside. I think that it is of great satisfaction to me, to be able to share all this with you... I used to just let go by drinking and when I was drunk, I would cry. There was no other way except to cry when I remembered all my suffering.

comfortable. The next section will examine how *my* identity as a non-local female may affect the research process.

Is my gender as a researcher an issue?

The question must be asked as to why I felt that I could reasonably interview women alone but had doubts about my ability to interview men, when so many other variables such as age, class and education may affect interview dynamics. Does my gendered identity constitute an obstacle to my ability to interview men? Slim and Thompson *et al.* (2000) advocate that the narrator and the interviewer should be the same sex. Stanko (1994: 103) warns that as a woman "I do not have the personal resources to tap into my own experiences to explore what men say about violence. I am not a man and do not have the accumulation of gendered knowledge against which to balance what men are saying and sharing about their lives". While I would agree with these sentiments on some levels, my experience would suggest that gender is one of a host of variables, albeit an important one, that affect our attitudes and values. This works both for the researcher and the researched.

My life experience has little in common with the women (and men) I researched. I have not lived in dire poverty, nor have I been physically abused from an early age unlike most of the women I interviewed. I am not a mother so do not share the "accumulated knowledge" about such a central element of women's existence (all the women I interviewed had children bar one fourteen-year-old girl). Added to this, I was younger than most of the men and women I interviewed and have had more access to formal education. Indeed one man in El Boulevar told me that he did not see me as a "normal" woman, due to the fact that I have "an education" and seem "intelligent", the inference being that "normal" women are neither. My overwhelming sense is that gender *can* be but is not *necessarily* an inhibiting factor in the interview process. I think that my own gender identity and feminist principles colour my interpretative process of much of what men may say about their lives. Moreover, not being a man, I cannot be sure if they consciously censored what they were willing to say in my presence or not. After one session during which the interviewee made some extremely misogynistic comments, my sense was that he did not feel the need to hold back because of me! Nonetheless, he did apologise to me when giving

me his views on women: "*No es porque yo sea el hombre si no por que así me divierto, o sea como, disculpa porque eres mujer, pero para mi son diversión o sea a mí hasta cierto punto me divierte ver como se desesperan como tratan de cumplir lo que yo pido mujeres mas jóvenes que yo*" (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[12]

Nevertheless, there were still certain issues, such as sexuality, that *I* felt more at ease talking about with women rather than men, but even then, only in second or third interviews when I sensed that a certain degree of trust had been established. As I expressed previously, key to any interview is that it is a two-way communication process and both the researcher and the researched must feel that a certain rapport and trust have been reached. Gender is a significant factor in whether that trust can be established or not in the first place, but this does not signify that it is by no means impossible for women to research men and vice versa. Sensitivity and awareness of the researcher's own subjective positions, however, must be made clear throughout the process.

Men's self help group - guilt of judgement and my need to "other"

The process of building trust with the participants in the research and confidence in my own role as a researcher was assisted greatly by the months that I spent observing a state-sponsored self-help programme for violent men. In the early days of my research, the deputy-governor of the prison where I was conducting interviews introduced me to a female psychologist who facilitated the group, the only one of its kind in El Salvador at the time. I expressed interest in learning more about her work and arranged an interview with her. Throughout the course of the interview, she explained her rationale for working with violent men with alcohol and substance addiction and invited me to come along to a session to observe pending the agreement of the members of the group. Agreement secured, I began observing the weekly meetings, which I found very useful in terms of becoming familiar with how men talk about their violence. It also helped me get used to asking personal questions and carry out participatory research techniques.[13] In this space, as

[12] It's not because I am the man, but that's the way I enjoy myself. I mean, sorry because you are a woman, but for me they're for fun. I mean, to a certain degree, I enjoy watching how they become desperate, how women who are younger than me try to do what I ask.

[13] These included asking questions about men's life experience, what characteristics they consider central to manliness and what makes them feel like men. The findings are explored in Chapter Five.

in interviews with other individuals, I found it difficult to reconcile my inner reactions of horror at the events people narrated in the course of interviews and my need to establish a rapport with them to further my research ends. Fielding (1993: 149) asks "should we be, or aim to become, fond of our subjects?" I certainly did not want to become fond of a man who testifies to having raped a woman or abused his wife but was confronted with the contradictions and complexities of being a researcher in such a situation in one of my first observation sessions when I was placed beside a man who had been convicted of killing his wife in a very brutal manner. Listening to his "rationalisations" for killing her, I felt nauseated by what he was saying and uncomfortable that he was so close to me. How was I to establish rapport in a non-judgmental, non-moralistic way when the enormity of this man's actions horrified me? This proved to be a recurring problem throughout the research and I sometimes felt that it was "wrong" of me to have feelings of revulsion on hearing accounts of violence (see Kleinman, 1991).

I did, however, manage to establish better rapport with some individuals than others; their narratives of *doing* violence did not dictate my ability to communicate with them. This sometimes bothered me as I was acutely conscious that I was very uneasy with the levels of violence that pervaded the lives of my research participants, as much in their roles as victims as perpetrators. Critics have argued that violence is culturally constructed and what is deemed as tolerable in one society may be condemned in another (see Jimeno, 2001; Robben and Nordstrom, 1995; Ptacek, 1988). While, in principle and practice, I share Hearn's (1998: 52) view that "working on violence... demands a personal and political commitment against violence in all its forms", this is very much dependent on our understandings of such a "slippery" concept (see Chapter One). While I oppose all forms of violence on both political and personal levels, I found that, in my "reaction" to the narratives of interviewees' lives, I empathised more with certain episodes of violence than others. I unconsciously "forgave" certain individuals more than others for violent acts. I was painfully aware of being guilty of judgement. Much of this thesis is concerned with how individuals and groups ascribe meaning to acts of violence. The meanings I, as a researcher, ascribed to the violence perpetrated by the interviewees was often dependent on my rapport with them. For example, a gang member interviewed in El Boulevar struck me as a sensitive and thoughtful man who had joined a gang in order to escape bullying. His father had been killed during the war and his mother was severely traumatised. The gang

offered him a sense of family and he spoke of his *homeboys* as brothers. He spoke candidly about the high levels of violence in his life, how he had killed, raped and robbed. He had resigned himself to the notion that he would soon die. He had killed many others and soon it would be his turn. His only regret was that his daughter would be left an orphan. My reaction was one of overwhelming sadness, which contrasted with the testimony of a community leader, whose narrative did not contain as much reference to direct violence. Nevertheless, from my perspective, his arrogance towards his partner, children and society in general repelled me. In effect, I separated the men from the acts of violence and accepted some rationalisations of violence more readily than others.

In many cases, I reacted viscerally to what I was hearing rather than adopting the recommended "critical" response (Hearn, 1998). I felt a definite tension between "listening, coping with listening and critique" (ibid: 52). There were times that I consciously avoided going to the research setting, with the logic that putting some physical distance between my research participants and myself may offer some critical distance with which to analyse my subject. At other times I "endured" the interview "with gritted teeth" (Renzetti and Lee, 199: 110). In the end, I realised that I needed to analyse my own response to the interviews as much as the questions I was asking. They nuanced my feelings towards the interviewees and were indicative of my changing relationship with my subject. My feelings serve as "resources" (Kleinman, 1991: 184). This involved analysing my own subjective and changing positioning along the "continuum" of violence to develop a more critical understanding of the phenomenon, as well as looking deeper into the social and cultural contexts that underpin such standpoints.

Adopting an interview persona: self-preservation or copping out?

There were times throughout the research that I was called upon to make political decisions about what my desired "impartiality" as a researcher should and should not entail (Ptacek, 1988: 151). This led, in one case, in the course of an informal conversation with a

resident of El Boulevar, to a long debate. The man in question informed me that he did not believe that rape actually exists. Instead, he assured me, it is an invention of sexually active/promiscuous women. Using concrete examples he persuasively argued that women have the ability to prevent sexual violation. I was faced with a dilemma here. As a researcher, should I detach myself from this man's opinion and aim to listen critically to his narrative to glean a perception of how he understands and recognises different types of violence? Yet as a woman and a feminist, can I remain silent? In the event, my political beliefs proved stronger. A lengthy, but amiable, discussion ensued, resulting in the disclosure by his partner that both her mother and sister had been violently raped and that her sister's partner, a man I knew, had been systematically abusing his stepdaughter for many years. This not only hinted at the prevalence of sexual violence in the community, which had been alluded to in many of the individual interviews, but also was suggestive of a socially acceptable negation and "rationalisation" of certain types of (highly gendered) violence. The episode, however, reinforced a certain tension I felt on a personal level throughout the fieldwork period between my role as a researcher and my identity as a gendered social being and a feminist.

This incident also prompted me to question how and to what extent are different types of violence tolerated? Again, I realised that I had to be sensitive to what research participants actually identify as violence in their lives and be aware of the gendered social and cultural processes that serve as foundations for such identification (Hearn, 1998; Robben and Nordstrom, 1995). In retrospect, I wonder whether I would have challenged him if he had said these things in the course of an interview. I often felt that when interviewing, I adopted a persona of an interested yet uncommitted listener actively remaining silent, or nodding, when interviewees spoke about difficult or, from my standpoint, politically and personally contentious interpretations of incidents in their lives. My identity, and in specific cases my gendered political identity as a feminist, often contradicted my interviewer persona. Indeed there were moments when I worried that my silence would in some way serve as approbation for the acts of violence that were being narrated. This "paradox" between my professional detachment and deep involvement in my research participants' lives was one that I struggled with on many levels in the course of the fieldwork (see Felterman, 1991: 89). Indeed, although it was more of an issue at certain

times than others, I am not sure that I ever really dealt with it completely and I would question whether it is possible or even desirable to overcome this tension.

La Vía - frustrating silence?

Silence was not only a resource used by myself but was something that I encountered on many levels, and in many forms, throughout the research. This section, a brief account of some of my experience in La Vía community, will allude to the frustrations that encountering silence can pose for the researcher.

The directive of La Vía was extremely welcoming and agreed readily to assist me in my research. Within a short time of arriving in the community, I was, along with the other FLACSO researcher, invited to become a *madrina* in a community fundraising event.[14] As in the other settings, I began carrying out some interviews to elicit background information with members of the directive and to establish rapport. The FLACSO researcher had aptly summed up her experience of researching in this community with the words of one inhabitant she interviewed *ver, oír y callar* and I, too, was immediately struck by the "silences" I encountered on many levels. [15] One man went to great lengths to assure me that the community had always been perfectly safe: "*Si la comunidad siempre ha sido a pesar que ha tenido sus problemas siempre ha sido segura ha sido bien segura la comunidad*" (interview with Don Chepe, 55 years old, La Vía).[16] Another woman told me that her father had never used physical violence yet her body language suggested that he thumped her (she moved her hands in the way people do when they are miming someone slapping them). So, while she verbally assured me that physical violence was not used against her, her body language suggested that it was. In this way, I had to be sensitive to other forms of communication and look beyond verbal silences. I had expected to encounter "silences" as part of the process of researching violence but that did not ease my frustration when I actually had to confront this silence in my own research. I was working within a time frame and my research outcome was dependent on the fact that I *needed* people to talk to me.

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[14] This involved sponsoring a prize for the *carrera de jinetes*, a pony race, in which men and boys endeavour to collect as many ribbons as possible to win prizes. The role of the *madrina* is to sponsor one prize. It is considered an honour in El Salvador to be asked to be a *madrina*.

[15] See, hear and shut up. Silva, (2003) offers a detailed case study of La Vía.

[16] Yes the community has always been safe, even though it has had its problems, it has always been safe; the community has always been really safe

I soon realised that I was guilty of similar reactions in my own life. On one occasion during my fieldwork in El Salvador, I was at a mass with a delegation from Derry. The North American priest, who was conducting the service, explained to some of his parishioners that the city I was from was akin to "hell". I immediately became very defensive of my hometown and felt an overwhelming need to downplay the violence endemic in my society. Nonetheless, a certain uneasiness lingered. Here was I, eager to downplay my own context of violence yet, at the same time, frustrated with respondents who were equally as keen to paint a harmonious picture of their communities. I thought of an incident that had occurred when I was a child. In the early 1980s, I was asked to escort an American friend of my family out of a riot situation to the relative safety of our home. On the way, I innocently asked her was she not afraid living in New York. My child's knowledge of New York, like most of my contemporaries, was based on Saturday evening's viewing of "Starsky and Hutch", where murders and crime were an integral part of existence. In my eyes the unknown world of New York seemed much scarier than the streets of Derry or Belfast. Her take on the situation was understandably very different, added to the fact that she was likely not too confident in a ten-year-old's ability as a bodyguard!

The purpose of this story from my own past is more than merely anecdotal. My own background has not only shaped the questions that I ask but will invariably nuance the interpretations that I offer. It suggests that by living in a context of political violence, I had become attuned to the discourses concerning its rationale and logic. Whether I chose to believe in this rationale or not is irrelevant. I had become accustomed to the violence in my life and regarded it as normal. Moreover it is illustrative of my need to downplay the violence of my surroundings and believe that there are places much more dangerous. It also warns us of the very different perceptions that non-locals may have of any given situation. More dangerously, it serves as a cautionary tale against the danger of seeking to "other" the subjects of research.

El Boulevar - fear of my research

My introduction to El Boulevar was markedly different from any of the other settings. The community directive was very suspicious of me initially. They demanded a list

of my qualifications and experience as well as a business card (which, luckily, I had just got printed!). I spent a lot of time building a rapport with members of the directive,[17] attended community meetings as an observer and generally spent a lot of time hanging around. In stark contrast to the residents of La Vía, the violence of El Boulevar was almost palpable. I was warned in my first week there:

> *Lo mínimo que pueden hacer es robarle, es lo mínimo que pueden hacer, dejarla sin nada.*
> *MH: ¿Es de tener suerte entonces?*
> *Sí, es tener suerte, porque le digo, aquí es bien, bien, bien amenazante. Es una de las comunidades de alto riesgo, en Soyapango, una de, una de las mas peligrosas de Soyapango, esta comunidad* (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[18]

Residents recommended that I not go there alone nor stay after dark, although in practice, this was not always possible. My reliance on individual residents was not only to assist access but also to guarantee my physical security. When inside the community, research participants usually went to great lengths to make sure that I did not go anywhere on my own. They would walk with me to neighbours' houses or make sure that I was accompanied to the main road when I was leaving. While I was convinced of the usefulness of knowing my surroundings, in some cases I would have preferred ignorance. On one occasion, I was talking to a policeman "off the record" and he hinted that the PNC were fearful of entering the community, yet in the months I was there their presence rose markedly. Such stories served to heighten my sense of fear of my surroundings. How could I be sure that the dangers were not being exaggerated or the violence sensationalised (Lee, 1995)? What levels of vigilance were necessary and to what extent could I practically adhere to residents' advice?

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[17] The local residents committee, elected by the community.

[18] -The least that they can do is rob you, it is the least they can do, leave you with nothing.
MH: It's a question of luck then?
-Yes, it is a question of luck, because I tell you, this place is very, very, very threatening. It is one of the high risk communities in Soyapango; this community is one of the most dangerous in Soyapango.
Interestingly, when I interviewed the police officers responsible for the area, they stated that this community, although dangerous, was far from being the most violent in the area (in terms of criminality and gang activities). They did suggest, however, that El Boulevar had higher levels of these types of violence that La Vía. This is corroborated by a FLACSO survey carried out in both communities (Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff, 2003).

Robben and Nordstrom (1995) seem to state the obvious when they assert that violence is not enjoyable. On some levels, however, I did not view my fear as an "acceptable" emotion for a researcher as it was so rarely talked about in the literature. Instead, I felt that it was some sort of sign of weakness and a reflection of my own inability to cope with the not so nice elements of social reality. Such feelings are likely underpinned by gendered considerations. The reactions of people when told of the subject of my research seemed to reinforce the notion that this was not a likely choice for a young woman, a sentiment I rejected with certain nonchalance. I was, therefore, reluctant to voice my fear and was wary of being labelled a "thrill seeker" (Lee, 1995: 5). Added to this, I did not want to worry my family, friends and supervisors unduly and was conscious that "dangers are never totally manageable" (ibid: 9) and, while I was unable to be accompanied at all times, I adopted a "stance of resolute awareness" (ibid: 5).

At differing moments throughout the research, I experienced very real fear and often grew tired of having to be "aware" at all times. There were moments I did not want to face going to the community and had to force myself to go. Hearn (1998: 52) warns that researching violence "involves constant thoughts about violence" and there were times when I actively sought to disconnect myself from the subject of my research, not an easy task in a country where security concerns are paramount. Green (1995) talks about "night time hysteria" and I often had very brutal nightmares throughout the fieldwork period. These dreams were often located in or around El Boulevar, which was the area where I felt most insecure and, perhaps somewhat ironically, established closest relations with residents. On both a personal and intellectual level I found the process very taxing, although at all times, I was aware that I had choices as to whether I wished to continue or not. Essentially, I had more freedom to leave than my research participants (Edwards, 1993: 192). Added to this, I had a very supportive group of friends and two colleagues in FLACSO were ever ready with an ear. These sessions proved invaluable for my own sanity and perseverance.

Research progress - issues of ownership, participation and testing

Soon after beginning work in El Boulevar, I wanted to arrange a focus group session with some of the men there. I negotiated times with members of the directive, made out invitations and together with two representatives of the directive, handed them

out. This had been an approach that had been used in other communities when I was working for a local NGO and it had usually assured a sizeable attendance. On the appointed day, together with two others, we arrived in the community a half an hour before the workshop was supposed to begin. There was nobody about and the man who had accompanied me when I handed out the invitations calmly informed me that there was a football match on that day, so the men would all be watching that and were unlikely to appear. Perhaps I had become complacent after my glory as a *madrina* in La Vía, I was unprepared for and disillusioned by this total lack of interest in participating in the research. I could not understand why this man had let me go through the charade of organising the focus group while knowing that it clashed with an important event for the men of the community.

Renzetti and Lee (1993) mention that some researchers experience a sense of being "tested" by their gatekeepers and later events lead me to suspect that there was an element of testing my commitment to working in the community in the initial attitude of members of the community directive. FLACSO had had some problems with the previous researcher in the community and had had to suspend their research there. The directive was wary of me and questioned my staying power. Perhaps more seriously, however, it raises questions about notions of participation and ownership of research processes and outcomes. As a feminist, I was eager for my research participants to have as much ownership of the research process as possible (Stanley and Wise, 1983 and 1990; Maynard, Purvis *et al.*, 1994; Chambers, 1995). I had not envisaged how the deep levels of mistrust and fear *among* communities would affect their willingness to take ownership and participate in the research.

Although people were willing to disclose information to me on the violence in the community on an individual basis, they were not ready to do this in a public forum. I had managed to establish rapport and trust with some of the residents. Nevertheless, this did not mean that they had the same rapport or trust with each other. I had used participatory techniques in my previous work in communities and had learned a lot from community members' creativity and interventions. Yet, as much as I embraced the notions of research participants having as much ownership as possible of the research, I share the opinion of Walmsley (2000) that, while participant ownership may be a worthy ideal, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to put into practice.

Eventually, I organised two workshops at the school in El Boulevar and, like Moser and Mc Ilwaine (2000a and b), I found that young people were more open to talking about violence. Fifty six young people participated in the workshops, which were held over a period of two weeks. The school received transcripts of all the activities. After my first experience, I had certain reservations about encouraging the adults to come together and talk about violence. In the end, I consulted several research participants, who assured me of their support and the validity of such an exercise, so, I went ahead with a participatory research group in the community. Ironically the same man accompanied me once again to hand out invitations to men and women. Our relationship had developed over the months and mutual trust had been achieved so I chose to see his assistance as recognition that I had passed the test! I think his approbation was key to my being accepted by the community over a sustained period. Over twenty men and women attended which more than met my expectations. The groups were then divided into three (two women, one men) and facilitated by me, Wim Savenije, a colleague from FLACSO, and José Manuel Ramirez. Both had previous knowledge of the community.

The dynamics of this group were extremely interesting and reinforced some of the notions about silence that I had gleaned throughout the interview process. What also became apparent in this session, however, was the importance of humour as a coping strategy (Shaffir, 1991: 79). One of the women, Niña Doris, when recounting her group's findings, farcically re-enacted the importance of silence for survival. Each time she said the word "gang" or "violence", she would break into a loud whisper, much to the mirth of the other participants. Moments like this, filled with an extremely tragic humour, in the face of such adversity, were what kept me going throughout the fieldwork. Humour was often used as a coping device when I was growing up in Northern Ireland and it was a resource that I readily tapped into in the context of my fieldwork.

Policy-makers and practitioners

Interestingly the space that I found least contradictory in terms of my role as a researcher was in my interviews with policy makers and practitioners. I prepared a general

thematic guide for each interview and took notes openly throughout, something I was not comfortable doing in the life-history interviews, as I felt that it presented a barrier to communication. I felt more honest in my role as a researcher in this situation, which was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the interviews were arguably impersonal. I was not probing into the sensitive realms of their private lives (Rosh White, 2000). Instead, we talked about the generalities of violence in El Salvador and the responses of the State or particular institutions, rather than the individual's own perception of violence in his/her life. Only in one case did an interviewee volunteer personal information, which was relevant to the work he was doing. The "public" substance of the interviews invariably lessened the inner tension I felt as a researcher.

In this setting I found myself more comfortable questioning certain statements of "fact" during the course of interviews. In one case, I had a very lively debate with an academic and in another, I found myself defending certain left wing politicians despite the irrelevance to the discussion at hand. What is key for consideration here are the power dynamics of the interview. I did not feel that I was "exploiting" my informants. I felt that issues of informed consent and my research objectives were clearly understood by participants from the outset. Interviewees knew the nature and purpose of doctoral research, something I could not be sure of in the other locations. Despite my efforts to ensure transparency in the other settings, access to education was severely restricted for many of the interviewees. Only one had been to university and many had not finished primary school. Added to this, my interviews with policy-makers/practitioners were generally scheduled during work hours so, in theory at least, I was not making unreasonable demands on any one individual's time. Gender dynamics did not tend to bother me, although one male informant made some provocative remarks, which I chose to ignore. I think the key difference for me, as a researcher, is that I was asking impersonal questions. I find prying into the most intimate spaces of individual lives an uneasy exercise, although I must admit that I became increasingly used to asking personal questions as the research advanced and even noticed a marked difference in my willingness to probe further on certain issues.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the fieldwork process. I have outlined some of the frustrations and obstacles I encountered when researching violence in El Salvador as a non-local woman. I have argued that "pure truths" will not be found in an exploration of violence (Hearn, 1998). All research is mediated by both the identity of the interviewer and the interviewee, their value-systems, lived experiences and political standpoints. This research project, highly qualitative in nature, does not attempt to generalise on individual and group perceptions of violence, rather it is an in-depth exploration of the meanings and understandings attached to violence by the men and women researched. Researching violence and gender is akin to doing a puzzle that can never be complete, given the diversity of definitions and understandings that exist. The exercise of researching violence, however, invariably provides us with more elements for understanding this complex and destructive social phenomenon. Such understandings will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter Four

Violence and the everyday: the pervasiveness of violence in El Salvador

> *En la comunidad hay maras, violaciones. Cuando hay problemas de maras, de otras que vienen aquí. La venta de drogas; maltrato de maras a los hombres; maltrato de maras que visitan; drogas; vicio; falta de respeto y chismes. Como ustedes se fijan, aquí adentro de la comunidad, hay maras y hay problemas con los de afuera. Hay veces sudan las calenturas ajenas y golpean a los demás. Las violaciones: que violan a los niños y los agarran y se los llevan. Cuando hay problemas de maras con otros que vienen, hay veces vienen otros hombres aquí, de maras, y se agarran aquí. La venta de drogas, que aquí venden droga y hay los mismos hombres de aquí, saben a donde venden la droga: en las casa de aquí. Los maltratos, las drogas que los hombres fuman también, se hacen drogadictos. Los vicios, que aquí mismo venden alcohol, cervezas todo. Falta de respeto, que uno le falta el respeto a la gente mayor. Hay veces la gente mayor lo quiere corregir a uno y uno ve, esta vieja tal por cual, que como le dice a uno así. El chisme, que algunos de la comunidad andan en chambres, que dice ella, que mirá que vos me dijiste. Que a veces a uno le cuentan y uno no lo guarda. Uno a todos se los anda divulgando, que mira aquella lo que me dijo de vos, que vos andás con otro* (Carmen, 14 years old, El Boulevar)[1].

These words, spoken by a female student of El Boulevar, are a description of the different types of violence that a group of eight adolescent girls have identified in their community (Focus Group, School, El Boulevar, 20 May 2002). The narrative not only reflects the high levels of violence in the community, but its many different expressions. The aim of this chapter is to explore the violence that pervades the lives of the individuals and groups under study. Based on empirical evidence, gathered

[1] In the community, there are gangs, rapes. There are gang problems when others come here, drug pushing, gangs who beat up men. The gang mistreats people who visit, drugs, vices, lack of respect and gossip. Think about it, here, inside the community there are gangs and they have problems with outsiders, sometimes their blood gets up and they hit people. Rape, they rape kids and they grab them and take them away. The sale of drugs and the same men from here know where they sell them. In those houses there, the bad treatment, the drugs that the men smoke, they become drug addicts. Vices: right here they sell alcohol, beer, everything. Lack of respect: lack respect for older people when they want to correct you and you know, that old bitch, as they say. Gossip that some in the community spread, what she says, look you said this. Sometimes someone tells you something and you don't keep it a secret, you go around telling everyone look, she told me that you are going with someone else.

throughout the period of fieldwork outlined in Chapter Three, this chapter poses that many types of violence affect men, women and children throughout their lives, in both their public and private roles. The "violences of the everyday" not only shape and form identities, but can become embedded in patterns of social interaction between individuals and groups (Kleinman, 2000). This does not mean that all people are violent at all times, rather, as Koonings and Kruijit (1999) suggest, violence has become a *normal* option for many citizens. According to a recent report from the UNDP:

> *Se normaliza la violencia como medio para mantener el estado de las cosas y se genera un estado permanente de hipervigilancia entre los ciudadanos, que se conduce a la desconfianza interpersonal y al cierre de vías pacíficas de resolución de conflictos y de legitimación de la autoridad* (UNDP, 2003 17-18).[2]

This process of normalisation is mediated by many factors, including the macro situation and country's history, as outlined in Chapter Two. Cultural norms and gendered roles shape not only *who* uses violence and *how* and *when* they might use it. They also inform both individual and wider social reactions. As Chapter One underlined, what is recognised as violence by some groups may not be considered violent by others. Such notions affect how violence is made visible and also influence how it is perceived, legitimised and tolerated in any given social context. This was discussed with reference to discourses on the high visibility of criminality in contrast to the relative invisibility of violence against women and children in Chapter Two. The process of recognising violence will provide the focus for discussion in subsequent chapters.

As the methodological discussion suggested, silences and non-lexical communication are as important to understanding this phenomenon as the words that may be used to describe it. Silences are threaded through the discussion presented in this chapter and subsequent chapters, where they are identified both as a survival strategy and an expression of fear. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of how

[2] Violence becomes a normal medium from which to maintain the status quo. This generates a permanent state of 'hypervigilence' among citizens, which leads to mistrust between individuals and the closure of peaceful channels for resolving conflicts, as well as the legitimisation of authoritarianism.

violence intersects with everyday life. This is followed by a discussion of the brutalising forces of state terror prior to and during the war. Individual men's experience of the armed forces are explored as experiences that facilitate the upsurge of criminality and violence in the post-war era. Histories of conflict in the public sphere will then be examined, in the shape of community problems and the political context. The difficulty of separating different types of violence will be touched upon, as will the use of silences and communities' lack of resources with which to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner. Following this, there is some discussion on the different impacts of violence on social groups. Finally, I conclude with a brief commentary on the highly visible problem of gangs in El Boulevar.

Violence and the everyday

At this juncture of the thesis, it is necessary to reflect on what we understand as *normal* violence. Normal here refers to both the frequency of violence and the fact that certain types of violence are so accepted within society that they can be explained and justified. For example, levels of criminality or gang violence in El Salvador are regarded as being extremely high (IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO, 2002). Living and negotiating a context impregnated with such violence has become part of the everyday routine for most Salvadorans. In the communities under study, people testified to taking precautions in terms of not leaving their houses empty, not going out after dark or changing their route so as to avoid particularly dangerous areas. In cases of violence against women and children, it is seen as normative because it is accepted as a "natural" element of gender relations. This provides the basis for discussion in the next chapter. Jimeno (2002) reminds us that violence discriminates. Not everyone is affected by violence in the same way and individual perceptions are shaped by factors such as gender, class and age. Although, the majority of the interviewees live in the same geographical areas and are from low-income sectors, different types of violence will affect men women and children in distinct ways.

This chapter, therefore, explores the many forms of violence that emerge from the narratives of the men and women who have participated in this research project (see Appendix One). Their life experience, both as individuals and members of the

wider community, has profoundly marked their perceptions of these highly negative social forces. Moreover, perceptions of violence and insecurity will be communicated in a myriad of ways. For many years everyday life was controlled and regulated by political terror. Kleinman (2000: 239) suggests that political violence "must work through local worlds in which social and cultural violence is already a routine part of day-to-day living". However, as discussed in Chapter One, the visibility and public nature of state sponsored brutality effectively overshadowed other expressions of violence.[3] The empirical data presented in this chapter uncover a world impregnated by conflict and tension on many levels. The political turmoil that devastated the country for decades was felt acutely by its citizens and, while individual experiences of the war and preceding years may be varied, few have been unaffected by these wider political and social processes. According to Summerfield (1998: 10):

> A key element of modern political violence is the creation of states of terror to penetrate the entire fabric of economic, sociocultural and political relations as a means of social control. It is often what has been termed 'total' war at the grassroots level... In El Salvador it was said that the military wanted to kill anyone with a thought in his or her head.

For many years, political violence provided a backdrop of everyday life for Salvadorans. This context has marked all those people who participated in the research and shaped their identities. The effects of the war are immense and their many dimensions cannot be adequately explored in this thesis. Instead, this chapter examines the continuities and linkages among types of violence in the everyday lives of the research participants. This invariably touches upon some of the repercussions of living with political violence, such as exposure to torture, criminality within state entities, etc.[4]

Violence has invariably evolved since the signing of the peace accords. People may no longer feel petrified of political forces, but terror continues to dominate the

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[3] Similar patterns have been identified in other contexts of political conflict. In their seminal work on violence against women in Northern Ireland, McWilliams and McKiernan (1993: 124) note, "Public attention emphasising the violence resulting from the 'Troubles' makes it more difficult to attract the necessary resources and public concern for the problems associated with other forms of violence".

[4] For greater analysis of the transition in El Salvador and the Central American region, see Burgerman (2000); Grenier (1999); Popkin (1999); Sieder *et al.* (1996); Dunkerley (1993).

everyday realities of many. Fear and insecurity still characterise the post-war era; indeed, as Cruz (2003a and b) suggests, citizen perceptions of insecurity are now more acute than they were in the war years. This chapter will demonstrate that practices and behaviours learned throughout periods of political violence mirror the manner in which individuals and communities interact and cope with the continued and more recent manifestations of violence. An exploration of the history of violence is, therefore, key to understanding contemporary processes. The backdrop of terror against which the everyday is constituted may be changing, but some continuities are discernible. This chapter, therefore, offers a descriptive account of the violence of the everyday life.

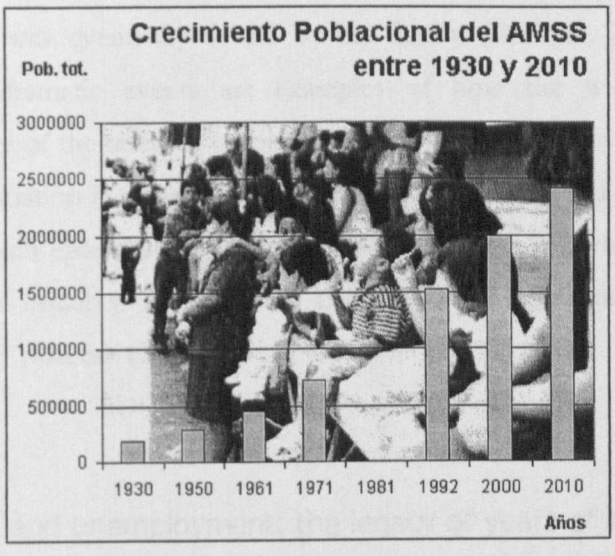
A legacy of political violence in the lives of the communities in this case study

The two case study communities are located in Greater San Salvador, while the men in the prison and the self-help group are from rural provinces in the central eastern part of the country. Although much of the direct fighting during the war took place in rural areas, such as Chalatenango, Guazapa and Morazan, the inhabitants of these communities felt both the direct and indirect effects of the war and the years of oppression that preceded it (see Map 1): "*La guerra que vivió El Salvador es un fenómeno social envolvente y generalizado que aunque no fue vivida con la misma intensidad por todos los salvadoreños, sus efectos se hicieron sentir en toda la población*" (Miranda, 2000: 54).[5] Indeed, many of the interviewees originated from rural areas and came to the city to escape the war. Residents of both communities particularly remembered the 1989 offensive, when members of the FMLN effectively took control of much of San Salvador in the November. Figures from 1992-3 demonstrate that approximately 27 per cent of the total population of Greater San Salvador live in illegal settlements (Zschaebitz, 1999, Table 5, cited in Savenije and Andrade Eekhoff, 2003: 65). Between, 1950 y 1992 the population of Greater San Salvador grew by 420 per cent, with notable acceleration between 1971 and 1992. These processes were shaped by both political events and the

[5]The war that El Salvador lived through is an evolving and generalised social phenomenon that, although it was not lived with the same intensity by all Salvadorans, the entire population felt its effects.

industrialisation of San Salvador (see: Dunkerley, 1982).[6] According to Ramos (2000), the dramatic population increases that resulted from the influx of people to the cities put increased pressure on already inadequate basic services in urban areas. In La Vía, as discussed below, the influx of people to the community created fear and a certain tension with residents.

Figure 4.1:
Population Growth and forecast for Greater San Salvador between 1930 and 2010



Source: www.opamss.org.sv

As the Introduction to this thesis conveys, the war was not the starting point of political violence in El Salvador. For the participants in this research, their lives have been played out against a backdrop of social and political strife since birth. For one inhabitant of El Boulevar, his first experience of political turmoil dates as far back as the 1940s, when his father, a mayoral candidate in his village of origin, was murdered by a political rival who was also their neighbour (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar). Erlinda (33 years old, El Boulevar), who was born in Chalatenango in the

[6] La Vía was founded in the early 1970s due to the industrialisation of greater San Salvador, whereas El Boulevar was a settlement which offered emergency housing to victims of the 1965 earthquake. See Chapter Three and Savenije and Andrade Eekhoff (2003) for a more detailed history of the communities.

1970s, grew up in a context impregnated with political violence. Living in the site of much guerrilla activity, Erlinda's family and community were continually persecuted by government forces and were eventually forced to flee their land. She witnessed directly the scorched earth tactics employed by the army as they burnt all the crops in her village. Their eviction also coincided with the death of her mother, thus changing the direction of her life in a radical way and breaking up the family unit. Erlinda lived in a guerrilla camp for a couple of years before coming to the city. Her husband, Enrique, who has lived in El Boulevar most of his life, spoke of his time as a *comando urbano* (urban guerrilla), when he was tortured by government forces and left for dead in a dump, before he was eventually found by his family (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar). Such dramatic events are examples of how the wider context has punctuated the lives of the research participants. This has occurred in a myriad of ways and the political situation has been a catalyst for immense losses and suffering that are still alive today. Such episodes are a microcosm of El Salvador, where the legacy of decades of political brutality "almost defies analysis ... and still permeate all levels of Salvadoran society" (Murray 1997: 14).

Skills, education and unemployment: the legacy of years of state sponsored violence

Various participants in the self-help group had been active as militants or combatants in both state and guerrilla forces during the war, yet this did not appear to be an issue of contention within the group.[7] The two men in the group with whom I carried out in-depth interviews sympathised with each side of the conflict: one as a soldier in the army and the other a member of a student organisation. The latter was exiled in Guatemala for a period as a teenager because of death threats from paramilitary forces. This section will examine the linkages between the brutalising experience of being a soldier, the skills acquired through this learning of violence and the lack of viable reinsertion programmes and employment opportunities in the post-war period.

[7] I attended the self-help group on a weekly basis for several months. On average, twelve men attended on alternate weeks. See previous chapter for more information.

Many of the men who had been in the army testified to having no ideological affiliation. Most had been forcibly recruited.[8] According to one ex-soldier, he was not aware of why he was fighting, just that he had to kill in order to live:

> *No, este yo, vaya, yo lo creía que era, que se estaba peleando nomás. Yo no sabía porque se peleaba, yo no sabía de donde venía todo eso, ni para que. Lo que sí sabía, era que me tenía que defender para vivir, tenía que matar para vivir. Solamente eso era lo que yo sabía porque a uno no le explican nada aquí tenés que matar para vivir...ju, eso es agotar un perro pues y, como le digo yo, a muchos el conflicto que hubo fue bien tremendo, pues. Entre nosotros mismos, nos estábamos matando, pues, y por algo, pues, de que yo no acabo de creer porque* (Teofilio, 37 years old, self-help group).[9]

In this context, where fear and terror regulate everyday life, ex-soldiers spoke at length about the brutal and brutalising systems of discipline they underwent. The militarisation of their lives has had long-term repercussions on how they interact with their families and wider society. Many continue to have nightmares about their time spent in the army. This man's narrative continues to reflect how he was actively taught to embrace violence:

> *A nosotros nos enseñaron de que donde lo agarráramos teníamos que eliminarlo por completo. Teníamos que matarlo. Y a uno lo hacen criar un genio, digamos así, no hallo como ponerle, más bien tremendo, un temperamento pero de acero, pues, que si yo me le quedaba viendo a usted con la mirada, pues, yo la estaba mandando a saber hasta donde. Pues, no podía quedárseme viendo la vista, porque yo ligerito la domaba. Porque las instrucciones que le dan a uno pues son bien duras, el adiestramiento, terrible pues. Ahí llora, y hombres lloran en el adiestramiento, porque para hacer hombres combatientes, se necesita mano dura vea. De alguien que no tenga lastima porque si voy con aquel corazón blandito, no soy un buen soldado combatiente vea. Todo*

[8] Both the FMLN and the FAS (Salvadoran Armed Forces) practised forced recruitment, although the FMLN offered an education programme and ceased the practice of forcible recruitment in the early 1980s.

[9] What I thought was that they were just fighting. I didn't know why they were fighting. I didn't know where it all came from. What I did know was that I had to defend myself to survive. I had to kill in order to live. That's all I knew, because they don't explain anything. It's a dog's life and, as I say to many people, the war was terrible because we were killing each other and for some reason that I don't even know.

> *eso pues se lo enseñan a uno en los primeros meses. Ya cuando uno sale ve la gente civil, ya lo ven distintos, su rostro, su carácter, todo a cambiado le hacen una transformación completa de lo que era antes el hombre* (Teofilio, 37 years old, self-help group).[10]

Three of the four men interviewed in prison had participated actively in the war, two as soldiers and one as a *patrullero.*[11] A twenty-nine year old internee, who is serving a sentence for murder, recounted how he was forcibly conscripted into the army, where he had to undergo harsh training to be part of the special forces: "*Estuve en el curso de comandos quizás ese curso se requiere mucho coraje porque sacando ese curso, uno sufre bastante.... En ese curso aprendí, agarré mucho coraje*" (Daniel, 29 years old, prison).[12]

Daniel's older brother was in the *guerrilla*, exemplifying how the war tore families apart for reasons not necessarily due to an ideological identification with either side. Like Teofilio, he did not choose a "side" in the conflict for ideological reasons. Instead, he was forced to participate against his will. Nevertheless, he highlights that it equipped him with skills that he could later use for criminal activity, namely, using guns for robberies and kidnappings. It also supplied him with a network of contacts, which would ultimately secure him access to an arsenal of weapons:

> *Ellos me enseñaron un revolver que ellos no conocían los calibres. No conocían los tipos de marca. Me enseñaron un revolver que ellos decían que era un 3.57 y no era un 3.57, sino un 38 especial, un W a la derecha. Ese era el tipo de armas que ellos andaban, y ellos me andaban haciendo la invitación de que fuéramos nosotros asaltar... pues yo no fui ese día con ellos sino que así me quede. A los días yo decidí por salir con ellos. Fui con ellos, y con ese revolver, con esa pistola, hicimos un asalto, yo le había salido a la persona. De ahí, se decidieron por llevarme y me dijeron que me iban a presentar un amigo de ellos, un varón que les prestaba las armas. Y tuve una entrevista, me presentaron a él y, yo me conocí con él. Y pues, pienso*

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[10] They taught us that where we found him [the enemy], we had to eliminate him completely. We had to kill him. They made us develop a temper. I don't know how to say it, terrible, a steely resolve. If I was looking at you I was cursing you. You couldn't keep looking at me in the eye because I would easily dominate you. Those are the instructions that they give you. The training is really hard. You cry there. Men cry during the training because to make men fighters, they need a heavy hand, right, someone that won't feel pity because if you have a soft heart you are not a good soldier. That's what they teach you in the first months. Then when you get out and you meet civilians, they see you differently: your face, your character. Everything has changed. They completely transform you from the man before.

[11] Member of the government organised Civil Defence Patrols.

[12] I was in the course for commandos. Maybe you need to be very brave/angry because you suffer a lot when you do that course... In that course, I learned, I became very angry/brave.

de que el varón, él llegó a confiar en mí porque el día que yo llegue, y comenzamos a fumar drogas, y a platicar y me dijo: que yo sí estaba en algo porque los demás cipotes, habían andado el arma, y nunca se había reportado con él. Y me dijo, vos si que te veo, que te pones en algo. Y de ahí, me dijo, sabes que yo no solamente te puedo prestar el arma, sino que yo te puedo prestar cualquiera de estas la que vos querrás. Pues el había sido sub sargento, y estaba de alta y yo había estado de alta. En esos tiempos entre a un Batallón a estudiar durante la guerra, aún mi hermano había andado entre el bando y yo entre el otro bando y así estábamos .... Me hice amigo de él [sergeant in the army] y pues pienso que le caí bien porque a veces uno congenía con las personas, y me hice bien amigo de él. Y él comenzó a darme la confianza, él me decía que me podía prestar armas para hacer los acto delictivos, que él me podía prestar armas, el arma que yo quisiera. Tenía fusiles, y tenía pistolas, escuadras, revólveres, y aún con él anduvimos nosotros, él ya murió.
MH: Lo mataron?
Sí, lo mataron (Daniel, 29 years old, prison).[13]

According to Miguel Cruz (interview, 24 August 2001), some members of the various military, guerrilla and security forces during the war came together to form criminal organisations after the war. Indeed, in some cases, these groups comprised individuals who had previously been in opposing factions. It would be simplistic to suggest that all of those who are now involved in criminality participated directly in the war or, indeed, that those who did participate in the war are more likely to be involved in criminal activities. However, a recent study on the prison population suggests that three of every ten prisoners played an active role on one side or the other during the

[13] They showed me a revolver of which they didn't know the calibre. They didn't know about the calibre or the make. They showed me a revolver that they said was a 357 and it wasn't a 357 but a 38 special, with a W on the right side. Those were the types of guns that they had and they were asking me to go robbing with them... I didn't go with them that day, is stayed where I was. A few days later I decided to go with them. I went with them and with that revolver, that pistol, we did the robbery. I had attacked the person. Then they decided to take me with them and told me that they would introduce me to a mate of theirs, some guy that lent them guns. I had an interview and they introduced me to the man, but I already knew him. I think that he trusted me because, from the day I arrived, we began to smoke drugs and chat. He asked me if I was involved in something because the other kids had the gun but had never reported to him. And he said, I can see you in something. And then he said that you know I can't just lend you that gun, but I can also lend you any of these ones, whatever you want. You see he had been a sub-sergeant and was on sick leave [from the military]. I had been on sick leave too. In those days I had had gone to study in the army, even though my brother was in the *guerrilla*, that's how it was... I made friends with him [the sergeant] and, well, I think that he liked me because sometimes you just get on with people and he began to trust me. He told me that he could lend me guns to carry out crimes, that he could lend me the guns that I wanted. He had rifles, machine guns, pistols, revolvers and we went about together. He's dead now.
MH: Was he killed?
-Yes, he was killed.

war. The authors reflect that this is relatively high given that the population that participated in the war "did not exceed 6 per cent in conditions of combat" (Cruz, Trigueros and González, 1999: 71). Interestingly the study points out that:

> Prisoners who participated with more frequency in the war are those who are accused of rape, homicide and aggressions against other persons; on the other hand, those who report a lower percentage of participation in the war are those who belong to groups accused of kidnapping, robbery and minor crimes. This data suggests that the prisoners with a history of participation in the war are those who tend to be more involved in crimes of a more violent character with the exception of kidnapping; in other words they tend to commit crimes of more direct and lethal aggression (ibid: 71-2 *sic*).

These figures indicate that there exists a positive correlation between participation in the war and use of extreme violence in the post-war era. As stated above, this does not mean that all those who participated in the war continue to use violence or are involved in criminality. Moreover, many of those who are now identified as participating in criminal activity were not born, or they were children, during the war years. Nevertheless, the conflict did exacerbate certain conditions that have facilitated a pandemic of violence in the transition era. The learning of violence together with the easy access to weaponry and the skills to use guns have contributed to a climate where violence and criminality have become viable options. Furthermore, the war left a huge labour force with few sources of employment, while free market economic policies in the last decade have failed to create adequate sources of employment for the huge numbers of demobilised combatants (Amaya Cóbara and Palmieri, 2000; see also Murray, 1997). An internee in the prison makes a direct link between the state's failure to address economic questions and current levels of criminality:

> *El país tal vez falló, según mi manera de pensar, porque al momento de desmovilizar, pues, no se abrieron fuentes de trabajo que hubiera sido lo más esencial. Primero abrir fuentes de trabajo, para después movilizar a la gente, para luego ver en que se empleaban. Pues, mucha gente se quedaron cesando y al verse sin dinero y todo eso recurrieron a*

la delincuencia eso me imagino yo que pudo haber ocurrido (Julio, 57 years old, prison).[14]

Indeed, during a visit to Mariona with a member of an ex-prisoner's association and a representative of the *Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos* (PDH), I met several internees who had been combatants throughout the war. [15] They cited frustration at the lack of employment opportunities available to them as the major incentive for getting involved in criminal activities. One suggested that criminality was a relatively easy option, as he had the contacts and the skills (Mariona visit, 21 March 2002). The economic situation combined with learned violence and the ability to use weapons all count as factors which facilitate (and possibly aggravate) levels of violence and criminality in the post-war era.

Nevertheless, violence and criminality are not solely a consequence of political violence. I now turn to how political violence not only coexisted with the other types of what is popularly called "social violence", but also intermingled with criminality. The effects of continued exposure to high levels of violence on a daily basis for community organisation, social trust and support networks will be discussed.

Linkages between political violence, corruption and the atomisation of communities

Continued silences and mistrust: a legacy of political violence

Writing in 1983, in one of the bloodiest moments of the conflict, Martín-Baró (1983: 360) said, "*la guerra es la realidad más totalizadora de la vida actual en El Salvador.*"[16] Nobody escaped its effects although they may not have participated directly in the fighting. Residents from both communities speak about finding corpses around the locality during the war years. The repercussions of living and learning to survive in

[14] I think that maybe the country failed because at the time of the demobilisation, there were no opportunities for work made available. The creation of jobs would have been the most essential thing to do to mobilise people and see where they could work. Many people were left [when the war was over] and when they had no money, they resorted to delinquency. That's what I imagine must have happened.
[15] Mariona is the popular name given to El Salvador's largest prison, *Centro Penal La Esperanza*, located in the Mariona district of Greater San Salvador.
[16] The war is the most consuming reality of life in contemporary El Salvador.

such an environment cannot be underestimated. Das and Kleinman (2000) suggest that in situations of extreme violence, individuals lose a sense of the *ordinary*, as they have to learn how to react or, rather, not react, to violent events. Empirical data suggest that, rather than losing a sense of the ordinary, the context shapes and transforms what is considered ordinary, increasing societies threshold for tolerating violence. Non-reaction to terror and violence is a sustaining characteristic of survival in the communities under study. The use of silence as a survival strategy is far from new. State terror was calculated to inculcate silence as a premeditated strategy in times of political turmoil. Silence, therefore, became the only way of coping with the everyday life of political strife for many. In La Vía, which saw an influx of inhabitants during the war years, residents ignored their new neighbours for fear of where their political allegiances lay:

> *Sí bueno, nosotros teníamos mucho temor, porque nos decían que todo esta gente que venía era de la guerrilla. Nos decían de que, y a veces, ellos se daban a conocer de que habían participado en la guerrilla. Entonces nosotros viendo la situación esa, nos abstuvimos a decirles algo por temor, por temor también por que antes en la época de la guerra las amenazas caían bien, bien. Pucha, o sea las amenazas que hacían ellos, lo ponían en que pensar a uno, porque uno no sabía de que, de donde procedían, verdad, de que parte venían, ni que clase de personas eran. Así es que fuimos, nos abstuvimos y nos conformamos con que habitaran allí.* (Carlos, 32 years old, La Vía).[17]

In El Boulevar, neighbours denounced each other and mistrust and fear replaced historic social support networks. Interviewees narrated stories of terrible violence during the war years. Inhabitants were divided in their allegiance, supporting either government or left-wing forces:

> *Porque aquí hubo, hubo gente perteneciente a los escuadrones de la muerte, tuve mi vecino atrás, era un gran 'matarifono' o sea el era, el pertenecía a la PRAL, que dice Patrulla de Rastreo de Largo Alcance*

[17] Yes, well, we were really afraid, because people told us that everyone that came were members of the guerrilla. So they told us and sometimes they let us know themselves that they had been in the guerrilla. So, seeing the situation we didn't say anything as we were afraid. Because before, during the war, god, threats were really, really.. hell. I mean the threats that they issued made you stop and think, because you didn't know where they came from, nor what kind of people they were. So we avoided them, we just let them live there.

> *que era una de las estructuras mas crueles de, de, de la Fuerza Armada, entonces o sea nosotros lo teníamos de vecino allí, sin saber pues que uh, y el, el, el, un pariente de el fue el que investigó al señor al dirigente de la, de la UPT, y que lo 'mataresco' verdad, acá arriba lo mataron* (Enrique, 34 year old, El Boulevar). [18]

Individuals began, therefore, to adopt a code of silence and minding one's own business in order to avoid problems. A common theme that ran through many of the narratives from both communities was non-involvement in community dynamics, both past and present. The threat of violence can be just as powerful and debilitating as actual lived violence and its effects are long lasting. Throughout El Salvador, high levels of brutality and the very visible disposal of victims proved effective teaching tools. They existed as highly visible threats to all citizens. Individuals and communities learned that silence was the only option in a climate where no one could be trusted.

Individuals have testified to feeling afraid of the *orejas* (informers) and the fact that no one could be trusted: "*En aquel tiempo el que soltaba un poquito la lengua, el que andaba oyendo cosas y dando parte, fracasó también. Se hallaban con la oreja cortada, cortada*" (Meche, 76 years old, El Boulevar).[19] One woman from El Boulevar remembered that none of her neighbours would use the communal toilets at the same times as her, since they all suspected her of being in the guerrilla. Breaking the codes of silence risked anything from social ostracism, to physical mutilation and even death. This way of life, according to Amaya Cóbar and Palmieri (2000), has contributed to an increased fragmentation of communities.

Some people even remained reluctant to talk about political issues in relation to the contemporary situation:[20] "*Pero nada se hace con hablar. Con hablar uno mejor se perjudica porque cosas políticas son peligrosas*" (Meche, 76 years old, El Boulevar).[21] Many continue to lower their voices and look around them when mentioning the war. This

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[18] Because, here there were, there were people belonging to the death squads. My neighbour behind was a real butcher. He belonged to the PRAL, a sniper squad, which was one of the most cruel structures of the armed forces. Well, we had that neighbour there and didn't know what was going on, then the, the, a relation of his was the one who investigated the director of the UPT (Organisation of Marginal Communities) and the one that butchered him. They killed him up here.

[19] In those days, anyone who said anything, who heard anything and spoke about it, failed as well. You would find him with his ear cut off, cut off.

[20] This is not true for all interviewees as some were members of the FMLN and talked openly about their militancy.

suggests that survival practices learned during the war are still present today.[22] It is indicative of the indelible mark left by exposure to long-term political violence on social attitudes and behaviour. It appears that many communities have not been able to recover trust of their neighbours and silences learned in the war have become ordinary reactions. While instances of political violence have disappeared dramatically, silence remains an enduring legacy of the war:

> *Les digo a mis hijos, vivir no es sólo vivir, hay que aprender a vivir. Aprender a vivir quiere decir soltar la lengua en algo bueno y que no sea peligroso, cosas peligrosos mejor no hablarlas, porque en primer lugar, uno no sabe con quien está, y otra cosa, que ni puede hacer nada y hablar, eh, sólo, sólo por hablar tal vez, ofende al otro, y cuando vengan represalias contra uno, cómo se defiende? Así es de que hay que saber aprender a vivir* (Meche, 76 years old, El Boulevar).[23]

The destructive potential of gossip had been corroborated all too painfully during the war years and Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff suggest that silence remains a strategy of *convivencia* (conviviality) in violent communities. Continued high levels of violence have not offered citizens a space in which to reconstruct social networks. Trust that has eroded as a result of political violence has been further tested by continued community conflicts and a rise in criminal victimisation. According to one woman, "*siempre he sido de mi trabajo a mi casa. No me gusta estar en la calle sino es necesaria. No me gusta hacer amistad muy grande con la gente porque, no es recomendable, verdad*" (Erlinda, 33 years old, El Boulevar).[24] Trust among neighbours appears very weak and this is exacerbated by the fact that residents continue to live side by side with the very people that are responsible for violence. Certain events, such as corruption and robbery, within the communities are now discussed. The familiarity and proximity of both the violence

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[21] You don't achieve anything by talking. By talking you put yourself at risk because political things are dangerous.

[22] There have been few efforts to (re)build social trust since the signing of the peace accords. The fact that neither of these communities was a returned or specifically ex-combatant community has meant that they have not benefited from direct state and international development/peace building initiatives.

[23] I say to my kids that living is not just about living; you have to learn how to live. Learning how to live means only talking about good things, nothing dangerous. It is better not to talk about dangerous tings because, in the first instance, you don't know who you are talking to and another thing is that you can't do anything. If you just speak for the sake of it, you might offend the other person and when they look for revenge, how do you defend yourself? That's how you have to know how to learn to live.

and its perpetrators has harmful effects on the quality of life for the residents, shaping their lives on a daily basis.

The atomisation of communities: fear and silence

As well as an expression of submissiveness and fear, silence constituted a denial of political voice and community networks. As discussed above, interviewees spoke at length about community conflicts and how they had witnessed several murders within or nearby the community. This was particularly acute in the early 1980s when government sponsored death squads used the area around El Boulevar as a dumping ground for mutilated corpses. Throughout this time, the military ransacked and looted the community on several occasions. Enrique (34 years old, El Boulevar) remembers this period as particularly turbulent:

> *Entonces eran tiempos difíciles porque nosotros no, o sea, cuando se daban los dichosos toques de queda, pues ya nosotros no podíamos salir, y aquí de pie pues, la comunidad pues era invadida por los, por los soldados, y cuando se les plantaba ellos hacían cateos sin, sin una orden judicial y sin nada ellos entraban, registraban hasta el ultimo trapo, y a uno lo ponían a un lado, verdad, y lo que les gustaba se lo llevaban. Entonces eh, así como también pues eh, aprovechaban para el vandalismo. Luego, luego de que siempre en la época oscura de la guerra, eh nosotros acá teníamos tienda, y este, aquí una noche nos asaltaron, y fue gente de la, fue gente de la, de la fuerza aérea, eh, quienes se metieron pues.*[25]

Such activities are indicative of the high levels of corruption within political bodies, contributing to an erosion of public confidence in agents of the state. The repercussions of this are discussed below with regard to community justice. At this juncture, however, it is important to highlight that state sanctioned political violence became intermingled with criminality, resulting in corruption on many levels. This is

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[24] I have always gone straight home from work. I don't like to be in the street if I don't need to be. I don't like making friends with people. It's not a good idea, you see.

[25] Well those were difficult times because we.. I mean, when there were the famous curfews, we couldn't go out. The community was invaded by soldiers and when they felt like it, they carried out raids, without warrants or anything. They came in and examined everything down to the last rag. They made us stand aside and they took what they liked. They also took advantage of the situation to destroy things. Then, still in the darkest part of the war, we had a shop and, they attacked us one night. It was people from, from the air force who burgled it.

indicative of the blurring of boundaries between different types of violence. People felt impotent against such forces and the general context of mistrust was deepened.

In addition, formal community structures in El Boulevar, such as the *junta directiva* (community directive) became monopolised by dominant political interests throughout the war years. In El Boulevar, members of ORDEN chose and changed the members of the directive at will and informed on their neighbours to the authorities: "*Aquí supuestamente le daban vigilancia a la gente, a la comunidad pero más que todo, eran orejas... la gente no tenía ni voz ni voto*" (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[26] This co-opted structure not only failed to represent the community, but also actively worked to instil fear and mistrust among its inhabitants by silencing them. Confidence in the *junta directiva* in this community has been further tested by a series of thefts of community funds by members of the *directiva*. A member of the current directive highlighted that the task of gaining the trust of the community has been severely hampered by the legacy of corruption:[27]

> *aquí todos los directivos son ladrones porque todos roban, andan en la junta directiva porque se reparten el pisto del agua. Cuando salen a cobrar, cuando terminan de cobrar, dicen, ha hijos de "puta", si, si por allá se van a encerrar, ven cuanto ha salido de agua y se lo reparten, ese es el decir de la gente* (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[28]

This enduring fragmentation is indicative of the power of violence in informing popular perceptions of community bodies. On one level, the manipulation of community structures by dominant political interests effectively silenced community demands. On another, members of the directive, elected to represent their community, further eroded the possibility of a collective identity by stealing from their neighbours. This fuelled popular perceptions that continue to equate the *directiva* with corruption.

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[26] Here they were supposedly protecting the people, the community, but more than anything else, they were informers.. people didn't have a voice nor a vote.

[27] Notwithstanding, in the FLACSO survey 30 per cent of the sample population evaluated the directive as very good (1.7 per cent) or "good" (28.3 per cent), with 41.7 per cent assessing its performance as "regular".

[28] Here all the members of the directive are thieves because they all steal. They are in the directive because they share the money from the water. When they finish collecting the money, people say 'sons of whores'; they are going there to see how much the water money is and to divide it up. That's what people say.

In this way, high levels of violence, with its associated fear and mistrust, create a vicious circle for the reproduction of violence. The disintegration of social networks further reinforces existing fragmentation and public spaces for collective action become reduced (Cruz, 2000). Society becomes increasingly atomised and the collective capacity for containing violence is reduced. Residents from both communities repeatedly talked about "gossip" being a form of violence. It is the source of much salacious information about people. Yet gossip also acts as a detonator for many physically and verbally violent reactions. Individuals have been accused of stoning their neighbours' houses, shouting insults, spreading rumours and even casting spells when disagreement occurs. The following extract, from my observations of the dynamics of a community meeting in El Boulevar offers some reflection on how this gossip adversely affected the community's capacity to deal with a major conflict:

> Rumours are rife about the community directive abusing of their role for their own gain, in the form of houses. Partisan interests are also in danger of threatening the process, with both ARENA and the FMLN being associated with either group. Whether this refers to actual party structure or individual loyalties, I am not sure. Added to this, both 'sides' claimed that they had received death threats and the community meetings are held in the *alcaldía* for fear of problems within the community. This one turned into a veritable slanging match and afterwards Petrona [member of community directive] thumped someone from the opposing side in an attempt to get his camera off him. Why had he been taking pictures of them? Jaime [other member of the directive] suggested that it was in some way linked to the death threats. To what extent does this episode indicate how relations are enacted within El Boulevar and indeed, wider society. It makes me think of the water project in San Marcos and the fear and violence that went with it.[29] Indeed, the scenario seems like a microcosm of Salvadoran social relations. Reliable information is privy only to an important few and rumour spreads quickly, exacerbating mistrust and conflict, as well as increasing polarisation. This community seems to possess few resources to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner, which then creates a situation where violence and threat can be employed as an effective tool. Social

[29] This was in reference to a community that I had worked in previously that had experienced problems in getting access to water because one neighbour controlled the tap. Again, she had strong links to a political party (ARENA) and used the threat of violence as a potent tool to impose her will. She charged her neighbours exorbitant rates for the water and they were, effectively, at her mercy.

> capital is not only weakened, but its very weakness creates the problem itself. Democracy, at this level, would appear to be a euphemism for the imposition of the majority rule, by whatever means necessary (fieldwork notes, 4 January 2002).

The dynamics of this community mirror patterns of wider social relations. The erosion of social networks during the war has been perpetuated, even exacerbated, by the continued insecurity of the transition period. According to Torres Rivas (1999: 294) "to live in insecurity, with the sensation of a permanent threat, or close to pain and death, all contribute to the breakdown of basic solidarity". Mistrust and fear have become so embedded in social relations that they constitute the principal components of a vicious cycle that continues to undermine collective well-being. Everyday life in the transition period continues to be marked by fear and, indeed, McIlwaine (1998: 663) suggests that pervasive fear "is now one of the major barriers to the functioning of associational life and social capital".

The debilitating force of fear: a disintegration of collective life

Fear and mistrust linked to political terror are further reinforced by what the inhabitants term "*egoísmo*", an umbrella term covering a range of conflicts among neighbours:[30] "*Mire siempre existe el egoísmo, existe la envidia, existe la insolidaridad*" (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[31] It can be understood as a catalyst for a range of conflict situations: robbery and corruption, jealousy, not participating in community events etc. *Egoísmo* can be regarded as a marker for levels of distrust and atomisation in the communities. Ana María talks about the history of conflicts between neighbours in La Vía:

> *Mire, aquí existía el egoísmo, que si miraba que otro iba a conseguir una cosita, ya era el egoísmo. Es que eran pleitos, es que la gente era bien tremenda o sino entre los mismos vecinos que porque le echaba una basurita a este lado. En fin, empezaban los niños y las mama dándose duro, total.*
> *MH: Cómo se peleaban? A gritos?*

[30] Literally translated as 'selfishness', however, I think that 'individualism' could be more appropriate in this case, given that the atomisation of communities is a topic for discussion.
[31] Look there has always been individualism, envy, and little solidarity.

> *Se gritaban un montón de cosas y a veces se agarraban las mujeres. Se desgreñaban. Bien tremendo antes* (Ana María, 45 years old, La Vía).[32]

Interview data from both communities indicate that many people suspect their neighbours have robbed them and some were aware of the identity of the robber. Fear and silence combine to create a context where individuals feel overwhelming impotence against the high levels of violence in their lives. The silence encountered throughout the research provides an indicator of the deep mistrust and disintegration of collective life. A resident in La Vía speaks of her experience following a robbery:

> *Y a después yo más o menos descubrí pero no actué de ninguna forma, ni preguntas ni a ellos, si no que a mí me decían, pero, y nunca, o sea, dije nada, ni a ellos, ni a nadie más vea. Sólo yo observé y me quedé callada mejor. Pero si daba temor en un tiempo, yo sentía temor por las dos niñas, y más que solas. Nunca me ha gustado dejarlas, hasta ahora las dejo ya, pero con miedo siempre* (Margarita, *32 years old, La Vía).*[33]

As Margarita suggests, people are reluctant to leave their houses empty for fear that someone from the same community will burgle them. Such an insecure situation has direct consequences on their ability to participate in community activities. According to the FLACSO (2001) survey, 51.8 per cent of respondents in La Vía and 69.8 per cent in El Boulevar testify to having to be inside the house early due to problems that occur inside the community (see Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff, 2003). Life is modified according to perceptions of insecurity.[34] In La Vía, many residentschange their route home to avoid gang members who hang around some disused railway carriages and rob passers-by. Silva (2003) highlights that the rule of thumb in La Vía is

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[32] Here everyone was out for himself or herself. If you noticed that someone else had something, you were jealous. It was a problem; people were something else, or even between neighbours because someone threw rubbish on this side. Then the kids started and the mothers fighting.
MH: How did they fight? Shouting?
They used to shout lots of things and sometimes the women fought. They scratched each other. It was awful.

[33] After I kind of found out, but I didn't take any action, nor ask any questions, not even to them. But they [neighbours] told me things, but I never, I mean, I never said anything, not to them [suspects] nor to anyone else. I just observed and kept my moth shut but it was scary at one time, I felt afraid for the two girls and especially as they were on their own. I have never liked leaving them on their own. I leave them now, but am always afraid.

[34] This is discussed further in Chapter Six. See also IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO (2002).

"*ver, oír y callar*" - see, hear and shut up. In El Boulevar similar survival strategies function: "*Mire, aquí la gente lo que hace es este aislarse completamente de todos los acontecimientos delincuenciales que hay, quizás enfrente de usted pueden llevarse las cosa y la gente no lo dice*" (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[35] Silence and isolation from community dynamics have become survival strategy in the face of high levels of violence and criminal activity. As this section has discussed, this has serious and long-lasting ramifications for associational life. The next section will explore how the erosion of confidence in state bodies has created a climate conducive to the perpetuation of arbitrary practice of justice within the community.

Community Justice and the erosion of confidence in the rule of law

Corruption, criminality and state brutality, as discussed above, have had deep repercussions on Salvadoran society. A legacy of such processes has been an erosion of public confidence in the rule of law. This was evident in the past when agents of the state were responsible for widespread torture and corruption within the old security apparatus was rife (see Stanley, 1996). There have been notable cases where communities have taken "justice" into their own hands. One of the most public examples was a series of family massacres in the western part of the country (Moser and Winton, 2002). Although this is an extreme example, violence remains a tool used by individuals and groups in order to resolve conflicts.

In El Boulevar, Esteban (64 years old) narrated a particularly brutal episode, reminiscent of Zola's *Germinale,* where some community residents killed a "thief", hanging his testicles on a pole when they had dismembered him:

> *Pues viene el ladrón y lo mataron, lo mato la misma gente de aquí, que le tenia miedo, le pusieron una mujer de trampa para agarrarlo, y a la, a la mujer, pues, se fueron para un lugar solo y allí no mas llegaron los otros por detrás, lo mataron en la misma forma como mataba, en la misma forma lo mataron, lo dejaron todo, despedazado.*[36]

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[35] Look, here people isolate themselves completely from all the criminal activity. Maybe someone takes something from in front of your nose and people won't say anything.

[36] Well, the thief comes and they killed him. The same people from here killed him. They used a woman as a trap to catch him and well, the woman, they went to a solitary spot and the others arrived straight

Esteban's wife verified this account. The murdered man was said to have terrorised the community for many years and was allegedly responsible for many murders in and around the community. While this example may be extreme, it is indicative of an endpoint to which communities may resort. Both communities demonstrate few alternatives for resolving interpersonal conflict in a non-violent manner, as demonstrated in a previous section where physical and verbal violence were employed in a community meeting. Violence, in many of its expressions, is not only a cause and consequence of disagreement within communities, but is also seen as a tool for the resolution of conflicts. Indeed, several women in La Vía "thank God" that gang members and thieves have been killed or imprisoned. Their absence means that life is more peaceful. According to Ana María (45 years old):

> *Así es que yo siento que ahora estamos más o menos porque todos los que les digo, que eran los ladrones de acá, todos se murieron, y otros están presos. El que estaba, él que vivía allá, por donde Don Chepe, él le decían el Pollo, ya se fue de acá. O sea, que gracias a mi Dios, ellos solitos se están volando, y ahora hay gente ladrona, así no, pero esos otros eran ladrones de andar robando ropa, gallinas.*[37]

The fact that these young men were engaged in "anti-social" behaviour excused their violent deaths. They are acting as agents in their own extermination, which can be understood as beneficial. This reflects a wider social discourse that seeks to "other" the perpetrators of violence, yet these young men are neighbours and relatives of the residents. Incidences of "community justice" have been identified in Guatemala with the practice of *linchamientos* (Moser and Winton, 2002). In Guatemala this not uncommon practice is seen as a symptom of a breakdown of the system of justice. Indeed, the fact that such practices continue to exist in El Salvador, however isolated, reinforce the necessity of guaranteeing the rule of law for all in these contexts. This is especially urgent when we consider that respect for authoritarian measures within

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behind them. They killed him in the same way that he killed. They killed him in the same way, they left him in pieces.

[37] I think that we're okay now because all those, all of them who were thieves here, they're all dead and others are in prison. That guy that lived up beside Done Chepe, the one they called "the chicken", he's left here. I mean, thank God, they are killing themselves and now there are some thieves, not like that though, those other thieves that went about robbing clothes, hens.

Salvadoran society is high. Although public confidence in the PNC may have increased enormously, there remains a worrying tendency to resort to extra-judicial measures to resolve conflicts and perpetuate authoritarian decision-making processes within communities. This process is exacerbated by the perceived ineffectiveness of the state, as reflected in the following statement: "*Cuando se sabe realmente que son ciertos, sí uno puede actuar. Tal vez no a través de la Fiscalía, el sistema judicial que francamente no ayuda a la sociedad, eso no es protección, esa no es protección para los ciudadanos*" (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[38] Chapter Two indicated that confidence in the PNC has improved considerably in comparison to the old security apparatus. Nevertheless, residents in both communities seemed reluctant to turn to the authorities as they sense that they will not be heard.

While I was conducting research in El Boulevar, a known gang member threatened one of the interviewees in the presence of the local government promoter. They reported the incident to the *Fiscalía*, who did not act on it. In a situation where there already exists a respect for authoritarian measures and the capacity to resolve conflict in non-violent manners is weak, access to the rule of law is of paramount importance. The perceived ineffectiveness of agents of justice combines with very real fear to deepen the culture of silence, where citizens do not feel they should recur to the formal channels of justice. Another resident of El Boulevar voices his opinion on the authorities, which he accuses of ignoring the demands of the poor:

> *No denuncia la gente principalmente, porque las denuncias las archivan. Usted lleva la denuncia pues, pero es raro que una denuncia de esas le den cumplimiento. Las denuncias, este, equivalen como que yo me acerque al mar y le tire sal. El mar lo recibe porque ahí esta. Tiro la sal porque ahí esta el agua salada. Se va a la Fiscalía General de la República, hacer una denuncia ahí. Se la reciben, pero al día siguiente esa denuncia no existe. Le ponen pretextos, miles de pretextos y que pasa? Yo creo que son situaciones que trabajan solamente para determinados grupos, pero la clase media y la clase pobre ahí no pega. Que vayan los señores poderosos del gobierno o que tengan poder económico hacer una denuncia, el mismo ratito salen en los medios y todo que los agredieron, que les hicieron esto que aquí y allá. Ese es el*

[38] When you know the facts, you can act [in response to crime in the community]. Perhaps not through the attorney general, the justice system, which quite frankly does not help society, that's not protection, it's not protection for citizens.

problema que nosotros tenemos aquí (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[39]

During the period of research in El Boulevar, Magdalena, a woman I knew, was robbed. She was in her eighties and her two-ringed gas cooker was stolen. Everyone seemed to know who had taken it, yet no one dared reproach him. Magdalena was in a particularly vulnerable position. Her cooker meant more than one of her few material possessions and, as such, was irreplaceable. To take that away from her effectively removed one of the last vestiges of her independence. It was how she made her coffee in the morning, living for the rest of the day from her neighbours' charity. This robbery indicates that violence, in this case robbery, does not affect all people in the same way. The effects of violence are not uniform and are not directly measurable against the action. Not only was the material loss significant, given her extreme poverty, but the robbery attacked her sense of self, increasing her vulnerability and dependence on her neighbours. I asked one man why she did not report the robbery: "*No quiso hacer la denuncia la señora, es que tienen miedo*".[40]

This section has argued that men and women continue to be denied a voice because of fear and exclusion and silence remains a survival strategy in the face of new expressions of terror. In this context, silence and fear not only dominate everyday life, but render experiences of violence invisible. It is to the discrimination inherent in violence that the discussion now turns.

Fear and violence discriminate

To begin the participatory workshops in El Boulevar, we started with an exercise entitled "what I like about my community" and "what I dislike". In both groups in the school, a large majority of respondents indicated that they did not like

[39] People don't report [crimes] mainly because the reports are filed away. You might report something but it is rare that it is followed up. Reporting is like me going to the sea and throwing salt in. The sea accepts it because it is there. I throw the salt because the water is salty. Someone goes to the FGR, reports a crime but the next day that report doesn't exist because they make lots of excuses, thousands of excuses and what happens? I think that it's because they only work for certain sections of the population. The middle class and the poor have no influence there. When the powerful men in government or those who have economic power report a crime, it appears in the press straight away, everything that hurt them, what happened to them etc. That's the problem that we have here.

[40] She didn't want to report it, it's because they are afraid.

the violence. Their answers mostly came under a criticism of gangs, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Thirteen out of nineteen and seventeen out of twenty-seven in the school groups mentioned violence. Interestingly when the same question was put to a group of adults in the same community, only six out of twenty-three mentioned it. This could indicate that the type of violence, i.e. gang violence, adversely affects young people more than adults, for it is young people that make up the membership of gangs and are also targets of rival gangs. It could also indicate that the adults in the community have different worries, such as legalisation of the land. It does, however, resonate with an observation that young people are more likely to talk freely about violence than adults (Moser and Mc Ilwaine, 2000a). Perhaps, they have not yet learned the rules of silence in order to survive, as advocated by the resident in El Boulevar cited previously. Indeed, Chapter Three discussed certain methodological concerns that were raised with the participatory workshops, namely individuals' willingness to speak about violence in a public forum.

The fear of violence has become as potent and debilitating as actual violence. The fear of distinct types of violence affects social groups differently. A group of girls in the school in El Boulevar, for example, indicated that the fear of rape was the type of violence that affected them most (see Figure 4.2).[41]

[41] Interestingly, this was followed by the fear of kidnapping, which is not normally a crime that one would associate with low-income neighbourhoods. This highlights the potency of the culture of fear that is prevalent in Salvadoran society and perhaps reflects a preoccupation in the media with this particular crime. This is discussed in Chapter Two.

Figure 4.2:
What type of violence affects us most? (Girls)

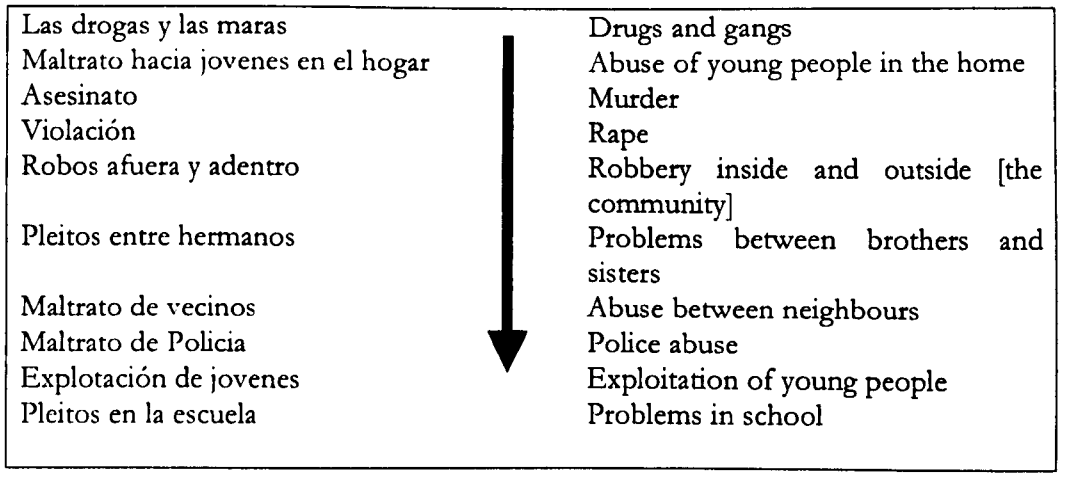
Miedo a que nos puedan violar sexualmente	↓	Fear that we will be sexually assaulted
Miedo a que nos puedan secuestrar		Fear that we will be kidnapped
Temor a que nos acosen psicológicamente		Fear of psychological abuse
Maltrato físico y moral		Physical and moral abuse
Miedo a que nos asalten		Fear that we will be mugged
Temor a amenazas		Fear of threats
Violencia familiar		Intra-family violence
Temor a que nos maten		Fear of being killed
Falta de comunicación con nuestros padres		Lack of communication with our parents

Source: Participatory workshop, group of eight girls, El Boulevar, 20 May 2002[42]

Young girls in this community live in fear of sexual attack from the *mara.* Adolescent girls and young women live in fear of rape, because nobody dares "refuse" a *marero.* The fear of rape expressed by these young girls highlights that different groups are more exposed to certain types of violence within the context of the community. Although a group of boys of the same age group did mention rape, this appeared behind gangs, drugs and physical abuse within the household (see Figure 4.3).

[42]Fear that we will be sexually assaulted; fear that we will be kidnapped; fear of psychological abuse; physical and moral abuse; fear that we will be mugged; fear of threats; intra-family violence; fear of being killed; lack of communication with our parents.

Figure 4.3:
What type of violence affects us most? (Boys)

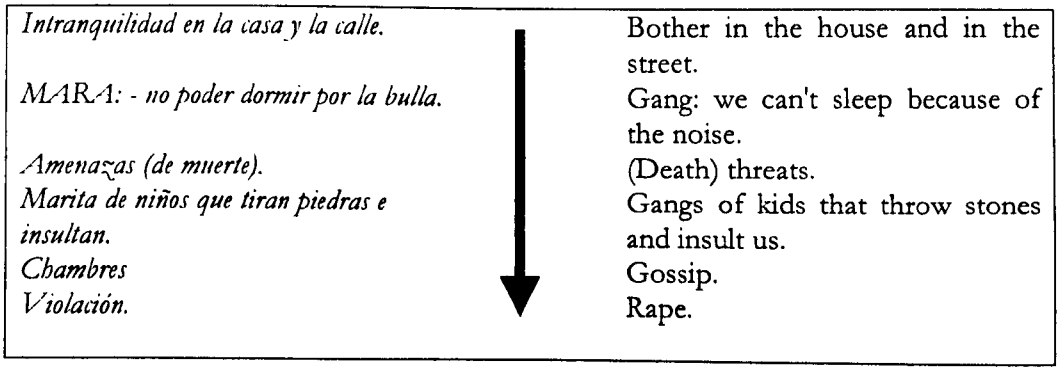


Source: Participatory workshop, group of seven adolescent boys, El Boulevar, 20 May 2002.[43]

The above figures demonstrate that these groups of adolescent boys and girls are more or less affected by different types of violence than others even though they live in the same community. As young men, they are prime targets for gang violence. They are also more likely to join gangs. In El Boulevar, the gang has been closely linked to both drug dealing and use. Fear of violence is not uniform and it affects social groups in many distinct ways.

[43] Drugs and gangs; abuse of young people in the home; murder; rape; robbery inside and outside [the community]; problems between brothers and sisters; abuse between neighbours; police abuse; exploitation of young people; problems in school.

Figure 4.4:
What type of violence affects us most? (Women)

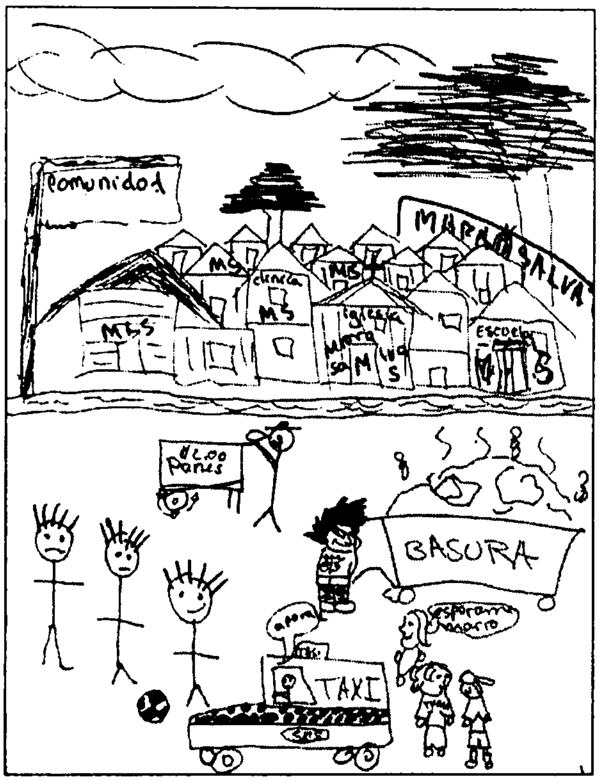


Source: Participatory workshop, group of four women, El Boulevar, 2 June 2002

Women testify to being most affected by *intranquilidad* in the house and in the street, suggesting that they have little access to a space free from violence in their lives. Issues of violence against women in the home will be discussed in the next chapter. Women also signal young people's violence as a problem for them, just as the young people signalled abuse by adults as a problem. This highlight that clear-cut distinctions between victims and perpetrators are problematic. Different social groups use violence to different ends. Age, class and gender are three factors that will affect exposure to different types of violence and inform perceptions of fear. Likewise, different types of violence will affect individuals and groups according to their position within society. The next section looks at one highly visible and violent social group: the gang in El Boulevar.

Gangs: the new "realidad más totalizadora de la vida actual en El Salvador"?

Plate 4.1:
Mi Comunidad (Ruben, 13 year old, School, El Boulevar)



When adults in a focus group in El Boulevar were asked to reconstruct time-lines of the community, all three sub groups marked the beginning of violence firmly in the arrival of the *maras* in the early 1990s (see Figure 4.5). As Chapter Two argued, the presence of gangs in El Salvador has become synonymous with violence and delinquency. Communities live in constant fear of the *muchachos de la mara*, in the same way that in previous decades, individuals and groups feared state repression. When talking about the *mara*, interviewees continually lowered their voices and looked around, as they did when talking of political violence in previous decades:

Bueno, en mil novecientos noventa y dos, surgieron las maras dentro de la comunidad y se los voy a decir suavecito, porque tengo miedo
Público: rien
....si, no peligroso, yo vivo sola y..... (Women, Focus Group, El Boulevar, 02 June 2002).[44]

Plate 4.2:
Mi Comunidad (Juan Carlos, 13 year old, School, El Boulevar)[45]

[44] Well, in 1992, the *mara* appeared in the community and I am going to say it quietly because I am afraid.(Audience laughs) .. yes, no it is dangerous and I live alone

[45] This picture was originally part of an exercise entitled *Cómo quisiera que fuera mi comunidad* (how would I like my community) and the boy said in response, *si seguimos así, así se va a acabar todo* (if we carry on like this, this is what it will end up like.

Figure 4.5:
Community timeline, drawn up by a group of seven men in El Boulevar, 2 June 2003

[+] Positive things in the community		[-] Negative things in the community	
250 families arrive - basic services provided by the army	**1965**		
School built	**1967**		
Clinic built	**1968**		
Community centre	**1973**		
		1975	Some familes at the end of the main street are flooded every winter
		1992	Delinquency - *maras*
		1995	The community is mortgaged by the then mayor of San Salvador, Marío Valiente (ARENA)
The public lighting is restored	**1999**		
The road to the slaughterhouse is paved.	**2000**		
Signs are errected in the community.			
The flyover is built			
The mortgage is pardoned			
Rubbish bins are installed	**2001**		
		2001	Presumed kidnappers seek refuge in the community

Gang violence is highly public. The logic of their existence not only lies in protecting the *barrio*, but, as Chapter Two outlined, is about groups of young people asserting a collective identity. Gangs are highly visible; each *clica*[46] marks its territory with graffiti to delineate territorial boundaries and remembers the dead *homeboys* (see Plate 4.3). This visibility of gang activity is reflected in a series of drawings done by the students in the school in El Boulevar, depicting their community (see Plates 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4).

Plate 4.3:

Photos of gang graffiti, El Boulevar (Hume, December 2001)

[46] There are two main gangs, the 18 and Mara Salvatrucha (MS). The latter is present in El Boulevar and

Residents contest the gang's *raison d'etre*: that they exist to protect the *barrio*. In El Boulevar, the fear of the gang was palpable. Residents not only live in constant fear of reprisals from the rival *mara*, in the form of shoot-outs in the community, but they also fear the gang members themselves. The *pandilleros* have been accused of a whole range of crimes, including: stealing, dealing drugs and rape. According to one resident:

> *Ellos dicen proteger a la comunidad, pero ellos la protegen de otra mara, o sea ellos se protegen de otra mara, de los Dieciocho, ellos protegen a la comunidad que no vengan los Dieciocho, porque los matan aquí. Pero de que a la comunidad la protegen, es mentira, si ellos mismos, la, la, la, la delinquían pues, ellos mismos, la asaltan, aquí a cualquiera lo violan y todo pues.*(Enrique, El Boulevar, 34 years old). [47]

The *mara* in El Boulevar terrorises the community into submission. They are the *todopoderosos* (omnipotent force). Residents spoke about a "war tax" that they have charged, either demanding change from residents or charging small businesses protection money. There was an overwhelming sense that the community felt powerless against them. They also indicated that several families have had to flee because of conflicts with the gang. People complained about the *mareros* and were afraid of them, yet most people had children, nieces, nephews, friends directly involved. This created a contradictory situation, where people lived in fear of the gang as a collective yet, at the same time, defended them as individuals. Ways of understanding the world and making sense of it are turned upside down. Violence undermines and redefines the boundaries of the "ordinary". One woman whose son is a gang member states that he is a part of her. No matter what he does, he is still her son:

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around La Vía. Each gang is organised into community groups, or *clikas*.

[47] They say that they protect the community but they really protect themselves from the other *mara*, the 18. They protect the community from the 18 because they kill them here. But to say they protect the community is a lie, sure they themselves commit crimes here. They themselves steal from it. Here they'll rape anyone, and all that.

> *a la hora de las horas, como dice el dicho, allí saltamos y los defendemos ... ¿y entonces a donde andamos? claro si los dejáramos que se dieran riata, que se mueran a ver quien se va a la calle, a ver sino se va a componer, se compone, pero como allí, allí, nosotros mismos de familiares los apoyamos, ese es el problema* (Paty, El Boulevar, 2 June 2002).[48]

Such dynamics are indicative of the centrality of violence to the everyday lives of the research participants. They are also testament of the complexities that go to the core of understanding this highly negative force. Violence is at the heart of everyday relations. The emotions, messiness, pain and rationalisation that characterise everyday life shape the multiple and often contradictory meanings that are ascribed to violence. Relations in the communities appear to be characterised by both solidarity and conflict. Women and men speak of deep-rooted conflict, yet also of deep mistrust of their neighbours. On one level, the communities have become fragmented and the histories of violence appear to have contributed to a disintegration of collective life. This was confirmed by a group of women in El Boulevar who stated that "*por la maldad la caridad termina*"[49], linking the disintegration of support networks with the increase of criminality in the community and, specifically, the formation of the *mara*. They suggest that neighbours no longer help each other and there are no more celebrations and social events in the community because of the terror that restricts their lives. In El Boulevar, the clinic has had to be closed down due to high levels of insecurity. On the other hand, individuals claimed a deep sense of loyalty to their communities. Residents attest to enjoying strong support networks within their communities, which are vital at the times of crisis, such as family illness or bereavement. Students from the school in El Boulevar spoke about feeling discriminated against because of where they were from yet many interviewees from that community spoke with pride about *mi comunidad*. Such are the contradictions inherent in violence. Realities are shaped and redefined by

[48]When it comes to the crunch, as they say, we jump up and defend them... so what are we doing? Of course if we let them beat each other up, till they killed each other. I wonder who would go out on the street to see if he is going to be ok, he gets better but the, then we the family help him, that's the problem.

[49] Because of the badness [gangs], charity has ended.

the violence present in everyday life. The following chapter will analyse this dynamic further, paying attention to the gendered meanings of violence.

Plate 4.4:

Mi comunidad (Roger, 13 years old, El Boulevar)

Conclusion

Violence has become, as Moro (2000) suggested, the *hilo central*[50] of social relations in El Salvador. Empirical data have uncovered the pervasiveness of violence in both the public and private lives of research participants. To understand violence in this context, therefore, is to attempt to comprehend the everyday realities of its inhabitants. As this thesis argues, the experience of violence is intensely personal and highly subjective, but it is precisely from the repertoire of individual subject positions

[50] Central thread.

that the real world is made. By examining individual histories and the context in which they have been enacted, we can begin to find common threads to enhance and nuance existing epistemologies of violence. To cite Kleinman: "[t]he case rests upon an appreciation of the *violence of everyday life* as *multiple*, as *normative* (and normal), as the outcome of the interaction of changing cultural representations, social experience, and individual subjectivity" (emphasis in original, Kleinman, 2000: 238). Thus, this chapter has explored the multiple forms of violence that pervade the lives of the men and women who participated in the research. It has argued that violence responds to, and is shaped by, changing cultural representations and social processes. Living with and using violence may, in some instances, have become a routine option, but it is only when we listen to individual and collective histories that we can begin to understand how such a process can occur. As such, this chapter serves as a backdrop for subsequent chapters that examine how violence, as a pervasive force, is legitimised and accepted within popular discourse.

This chapter has demonstrated that violence has touched the lives of all the people that were interviewed in its manifold expressions, to contrasting degrees and at different social and political moments. Violence has been used as a tool by the interviewees, yet it has also been used against them, blurring notions of strict boundaries between victims and perpetrators. This moves the discussion "beyond the bifurcation of perpetrators and victims into issues of (men and women's) accountability, complicity and responsibility in relation to the violence of the hierarchies in which they (we) live" (Greig, 2000: 29). Indeed, an underlying theme of this thesis is to examine the relevance of binary oppositions in discussions of violence. The next chapter analyses the private realms of existence and how the use of and exposure to violence is intimately intertwined with dominant gender constructs. Issues of accountability, complicity and legitimisation will provide the focus for discussion in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

Histories of violence: gendered myths and realities

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the dialectic of gender and violence within the life histories of the research participants. A central argument of the thesis is that the use and perception of violence is intimately linked to dominant gender constructions, notably hegemonic masculinity and machismo. This chapter will expand the analysis presented in Chapter Four of violence as a pervasive force in everyday life to include an examination of the violences of the private realms of existence. The discussion reveals that the intimate and familial relations of the interviewees are impregnated with violence on many levels. Furthermore, historic patterns of gendered discourse not only render such violence "private", but also minimise its significance in both public and subjective accounts of violence. By placing value on the subjective content of the interviewee narratives, accepted categories of history are challenged and elements of a common culture are drawn out (Samuel and Thompson, 1990). This chapter will begin with a brief section on the role and nature of memory in the study of violence. It looks at contradictions both within and between narratives and the linkages with wider social processes. This frames the ensuing discussion of how the process of remembering is shaped by dominant cultural myths and a gendered reality. Several key themes that emerge from testimonials are examined: the minimisation of private violence; the functionality of violence against children; the inevitability or naturalness of men's sexual aggression and the normalisation of violence against women in intimate relations. These issues affect not only popular understandings, but also contribute to the reproduction of certain types of violence.

Histories of violence - unpacking the contradictions

Chapter Three offered a discussion of my methodological approach, which is highly qualitative and relies heavily on life histories of the research participants. Passerini (1998) asserts that oral evidence will never be objective, so how then are we to construct valid

analyses of the past and, indeed, the present? It is, however, as mentioned above, the very subjective nature of memory that acts as a vehicle for deepening our understanding of how men and women coexist with such a highly negative force on a daily basis. As Passerini reminds us, "[s]ubjectivity is as much the business of history as are the more visible 'facts'. What informants believe is indeed a historical *fact (that is, the fact that they believe it)*, as much as what really happened" (ibid: 67, emphasis in the original). This section will question memories of violence. By doing this, I am not negating individual perception of his/her own lived past, but merely unpacking the contradictions that these narratives expose and exploring their relationship with wider social discourse of gender roles. This has implications for examining how men and women live with violence in the present as well as remember the violence of the past. As Samuel and Thompson (1990: 9) remind us, these life histories are conducted from the optic of the present: "In telling, they need to make sense of the past". Key questions, therefore, include: How do men and women recognise and name the violence in both their past and present lives? To what extent do they talk about or even recognise contradictions between their use of violence and their condemnation of it? To what extent does dominant discourse feed popular perceptions of the nature of violence? To what degree are narratives of violence based in real experience and to what extent do they merely reflect normative discourses on violence?

It is the construction of what individuals believe to be *fact* that is of interest here. Bourdieu (2001: 1) warns us that, "the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural" and, indeed, Samuel and Thompson (1990) caution that the most powerful cultural myths are those that influence what we think and say. A reflexive account of my need to "grade" violence in my own life and throughout the research process was included in the methodology chapter. This notion of "grading violence" will be further explored below with reference to memory and, specifically, how we ascribe meaning and importance to episodes of violence in our past. The notion that some types of violence are awarded more significance than others was raised in Chapters One and Two, where different types of crime are perceived as more cause for concern than domestic violence. This Chapter argues that violence against women and children is often upheld by a series of myths based upon structures of gendered oppression. These have become so embedded in prescribed social roles and relations that violence has become accepted and even normalised. To understand the lived experience of violence, we must

begin to unpack the reconstruction of the past. A premise of this chapter, therefore, is that, like epistemologies of violence, memory is layered. As Lummis (1998: 272) points out, memory "is refracted through layer upon layer of subsequent experience and through the influence of the dominant and/or local and specific ideology". Thus, each narrative is not only unique, but contains contradictions within. These internal ambiguities, together with the common themes to emerge from the narratives, reflect both the contradictions inherent in everyday life and the commonly held social beliefs that produce popular understandings of social reality.

Memories of a tranquil past?

There is a long history of violence in El Salvador. The previous chapter highlighted that for residents of El Boulevar, where domestic violence, child abuse and conflicts with their neighbours are everyday occurrences, participants in a focus group associate the "arrival" of violence with the formation of the gang within the community (El Boulevar, 2 June 2002). In this case, violence has become inseparable from their voiced fear and perceived insecurity. Yet the *mara* emerged in this community which already had a history of high levels violence since its formation in 1965. This notion of the "arrival" of violence therefore raises questions about memory, the historicity of violence and the meanings that individuals and communities ascribe to different types of violence in their lives. Similar notions were also apparent in La Vía, where one resident informed:

> *Aquí ha evolucionado bastante, bastante. Era bien, todos los terrenos que están de este lado, todos somos, la mayoría somos familias, pero familias grandes. Eh, aquí era bonito. Bien tranquilo, bien tranquilo. Este, yo me acuerdo de que solíamos andar por estos lados acá. Acá, por esta calle, aquí donde hay unos trailers, allí era cañal. Había cultivo de caña al otro lado. Aquí era una finca donde estaba una colonia, ahí al otro lado... Había naranjas, cocos. Hoy no, ya hicieron una colonia. Esta parte de aquí era bien sola, bien tranquila. Yo me acuerdo que íbamos a jugar a la mina con todos los primos aquí y no pasaba nada. A esta fecha es mas peligroso por todas las personas que han venido. En esta zona es bien sana, todos somos bien unidos, pero me acuerdo de que antes, era bien tranquilo.* (Carlos, 32 years old, La Vía).[1]

[1] This place has certainly evolved, quite a lot. It was good. We are all, most of us are family, but big families on all the land that is here on this side. It was lovely here, really peaceful, really peaceful. I remember that we used to wander about there. There, on that road, where those trailers are. That was a sugar cane field. On the other side there was a farm, where that residential area is. There were oranges, coconuts. Not today, they have

It would be naïve to suggest that violence has not evolved in El Salvador. Its current public manifestations and random victimisation differ radically from the largely political expressions that dominated past decades. Chapter Two has questioned the process by which social perceptions of contemporary violence have become synonymous with criminality in El Salvador, thus effectively blurring all other expressions into the background. I suggest that individual memory has gone through a similar process. This idealisation of the past, as expressed in the above narrative, which Slim, Thompson *et al.* (1988) have termed "persistent fake consciousness" creates a scenario where both good and bad can be exaggerated. The censorship of the violence of the past, common to many, but not all, of the interviews, raises important questions on several levels. At this stage, it is not my intention to try to understand the reasons that individuals may have for idealising the past, rather it is to caution on an oversimplified or superficial reading of their narratives and, specifically, to set the scene to discover what is recognised as violence. I propose that the series of "recognition codes" that society adopts in order to understand violence creates a scenario where different manifestations are tolerated to different degrees. It is perhaps best understood to envisage this process as a continuum, where certain expressions are supported, others tolerated or ignored and some condemned. This process of grading violence allows individuals to distance themselves from the "bad" violence or that which can become the mythical "other". It becomes a way of putting some sense of order onto a chaotic world and serves as a survival strategy within it. The "ordinary" is moulded and redefined by violence. Good and evil, as Samuel and Thompson (1990) point out, are a classic way to handle fears. Notions of good and bad, however tenuous, offer certainties about the world and dualisms provide a cornerstone for many of the myths we live by. Munck (2000: 5), however, cautions on the use of binary oppositions, suggesting that: "we should perhaps be more open to ambiguity, multiplicity and fragmentation." An examination of how binarisms continue to be used in popular discourse permits us a more nuanced view of the ambiguities and inequalities present in social reality. This will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter, but here it is fundamental to look at the most intimate realm of social existence to uncover a world where brutal violence has

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built a neighbourhood. This part here was really peaceful. I remember that we used to play in the mine with all my cousins here and nothing happened. Now it is more dangerous because of all the people that have

acquired an acceptance, so profound that it can be accepted and "explained" away: the family (Jimeno, 2002).

Violence against children: encountering the public/private distinction

Most of the interview narratives reveal very brutal episodes of violence in the lives of the research participants. Such anecdotal evidence comes from the same interviewees who assured me that everything had been *tranquilo* in previous years. From my standpoint, I found this idea difficult to comprehend, given the episodes of extreme violence that both men and women recounted. How could these same individuals assure me that all was *tranquilo*, yet at the same time recount episodes of such brutality? I made no conscious distinction between public and private violences.[2] Instead, I reacted to the *act* that was being recounted, without analysing the relational dynamics that underpinned the violence. My reaction seemed to contradict the perceptions of those who were narrating their own lived experience. To a certain degree, interviewees appear to make a distinction between the act of violence and he or she who carries it out. Certain acts will be awarded more or less significance than others, depending upon the relationship between the perpetrator and victim. Other issues, such as the degree of force, will also colour this dynamic. This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter in reference to the legitimation of different types of violence. However, at this stage, it is useful to mention such dynamics, in order to make explicit that my reaction to the narratives, as an observer, will be distinct from those who have lived through the episodes of violence that inform my analysis. While I am committed to listening to the voices of the interviewees, I am also interested in how these voices have been moulded by, and how they might reflect, other social and cultural discourses, namely those that inform and sanction gendered patterns of behaviour. The following excerpt from my observation notes from the men's group is indicative of my reaction.

> Javier's story of how his father had hung him from a tree him by a rope to punish him moved me deeply. I can't even remember what he was punishing him for, not that it matters - although my own search for a reason is perhaps interesting in itself... If he had a

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come here. In this part it's okay, we are all united but I remember that before it was really peaceful.

[2] While this is true, I do remember feeling particularly disturbed at the level of force used within familial relations, given that the family is heralded as a safe haven in an unsafe world.

> reason, would that somehow make the violence more acceptable/understandable? It is like the prison interviews, where subconsciously I looked for reasons to explain the violence that the men had perpetrated. In my mind, if I had reasons, then I would not see the men that I was interviewing as 'bad'. I am aware that this reflects my own prejudices but maybe we need to examine these deeply ingrained ideas in order to understand... Violence seems to need some sort of logic or explanation to make it ok. Even if I do not agree with this on a rational level, I constantly find myself trying to explain the men's use of violence... The stories that came out today literally made me want to cry. I know that I have to listen to stories like these on a regular basis but do not want to fall into the situation where I normalise violence, only reacting when I hear something new or gruesome. Brutal violence may well be part of every day life for too many people, whether as perpetrators or victims, but, as such, my reaction to such stories should never be blasé (13 December 2001).

Women and men alike talked of the *cinchazos*[3] and *leñazos*[4] that were commonly used to *corregir* and *castigar*[5]. I witnessed children being beaten in the communities and listened to the testimonies of men in the self-help group. As I outlined in Chapter Three, I was shocked and nauseated by their stories, yet the interviewees demonstrated a huge threshold for tolerating violence. The level of the violence used against children went way beyond what I, from my own cultural standpoint, judged acceptable. The process of acceptation and legitimation will provide the focus for discussion in the next chapter but, at this juncture, it is important to assess the enormity of the violence that permeates the lives of the men and women who participated in this research.

Degree of force

María Dolores (48 years old, El Boulevar) spoke of how her mother broke her arm in a fit of temper because she had taken a long time to collect water from the well.

> *Llegó la señora María, le dije yo que les pidió el favor que me dejaran llenar, le dije yo. Yo les pedía la guacaladita de agua pero como no me querían dar, le dije yo, no podía llenar, le dije yo. Sí pero ya te voy a penquiar, y yo, como tenía*

[3] A beating with a belt, *cincho* meaning belt.
[4] A beating with a piece of wood, leña meaning wood.
[5] Correct and punish, two terms that cropped up throughout the course of the fieldwork as reasoning for the use of violence against children.

miedo a que me pegara muy duro, puse el cantarito en la mesa y me voy saliendo para allá corriendo. Y ya no me pude correr porque ahí venía ella ya, y ya no me podía correr, como sólo una puerta tenía el ranchito, va. Ya no me pude salir, porque ahí venía ella, y ya no me dejo salir. Mire, y yo me metí debajo de la hornilla, donde hacíamos el fuego, debajo de donde se guarda la leña. Allí me metí, y como el cantarito en medio lo puse, se cayó toda el agua, mire. Fíjese por eso me iba a dar más duro, y yo metida debajo de la hornilla. Y ella, mire, agarra una raja de leña, mire, y dice pon, pon, pon. No mamá, no mamá, no mamá, no mamá. Y yo por todos lados, y ella va de darme y darme por todos lados cuando sintió, mire, ya me había descompuesto esta mano, y me había descompuesto el pie a puros leñazos. Mamá ya no aguanto y mamá ya no aguanto por que este, un hueso de estos se me había montado aquí
MH: O sea que le había quebrado el brazo.
Si sí el hueso de aquí. A pues, hay no, y no dejaba de darme, y ella pensaba que eran mentiras, y siempre me seguía dando. Y mire como pude, me salí a rastras y ya cuando vio que no podía parar, ya dejó de darme.[6]

She acknowledges that this was not an appropriate reaction from her mother because of the degree of force used and she quotes the healer who attended her and admonished her mother:

Debes de aprender a castigar a los hijos. Los hijos no se castigan como animales; hubieras agarrado el cincho y le hubieras pegado dos cinchazos, o tres lo mucho, no hacer tapesco (María Dolores, 48 years old, El Boulevar).[7]

This comment intimates that it is the excessive degree of force that provokes the reaction and not the fact that the mother uses violence against the child. If we are to consider what this man said, then we can understand that, in this context, hitting a child with a belt is

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[6]Señora María arrived, I told her, she asked them to let me fill it, I told her, I asked them for a pitcher of water but they didn't want to give it to me. I couldn't fill it. "But you are going to get it now" and since I was afraid that she would hit me hard, I put the jug on the table and I tried to run out, but I couldn't run and she was coming towards me. I couldn't run because the house only had one door, you see. She wouldn't let me leave. I went under the oven where we made the fire under where the wood is kept and I stayed there. As I had put the jug in the middle, all the water spilled out. You know for that, she hit me even harder and me under the oven. She grabbed a bundle of wood and ban, bang. "no *mamá*, no *mamá*, no *mamá*, no *mamá*" I was all over the place and she was hitting me and hitting me and when she realised she had broken this hand and my foot with her beating, thwack. "*Mamá*, I can't stand it any more, *Mamá*, I can't stand it any more" because one of these bones had slipped out here.
MH: Do you mean that she had broken your arm?
Yes, yes, this bone here and she wouldn't stop hitting me, she thought I was making it up and she kept hitting me. Well, I crawled out as best I could and when she realised that I couldn't stand up she stopped hitting me.
[7]You should learn to punish children. Children aren't punished like animals, you should have got the belt and hit her two or three times, not flatten them.

considered a reasonable way of punishment.[8] When I asked men and women how they punished their children, the reply was usually by hitting them *con el cincho* (belt) or with a rope. In one woman's case, the violence was so excessive from her alcoholic father that the whole family would sleep in the fields to avoid it. The same woman stated that she has continued to use corporal punishment against her own children. This does not suggest that the use of violence is an inevitable product of having grown up in a context where violence was employed with great regularity, rather it indicates that violence has been and continues to be used as a normal and effective tool for discipline. Its value is that it appears to get results, even if this is only in the short term. Strict boundaries between perpetrators and victims are blurred and the use of violence continues across generations and time. Issues of responsibility and the questioning of binary oppositions take on a particular relevance if we are to analyse the how her narrative continues:

MH:¿pero, está bien que ella le haya pegado así?

Yo digo que no porque, yo digo que no porque no se le puede pegar a un hijo así vea, pero con una raja de leña, puchica, puede hasta matarlo a uno. Bueno, yo no le he contado que una vez mi hijo comenzaba a chiviar. La primera vez lo vi chiviando ahí enfrente de esta casa y le dije yo, vámonos para la casa, le dije yo, y le pegue aquí, pero le pegue así.

MH:Con la mano.

Sí, pero otra vez que te vea, le dije, te voy a quemar las manos, para que no lo volvas hacer. Como a los dos años quizás, o al año quizás, lo ví chiviando. Esa vez lo vi naipiando, esa vez, ya la otra vez lo vi con monedas. Hey cámbiame este billete de a diez le dije, porque no tengo para pagar. Damelo a mí, le dije yo, y te me vas ya, ya te vas. Vaya, bien obediente se vino. Te acordás que te dije que te iba a quemar las manos? Le dije, pues te las voy a quemar, para que veas que soy cumplida, le dije, y para que hagas caso y te acordes le dije. Y mire agarré una candelita chiquita, una de las más chiquitas que hay. La prendí, y le dije usted la va a tener aquí le dije, hasta que se le termine esa le dije. Cuando se le termine esa va, a poner la otra aquí le dije. Gracias a Dios que no me guarda rencor fíjese, y lo hizo... Yo lo tenía hincado ahí con la candela prendida a mi hijo, y estaba estudiando tercer año de bachillerato, y se puso un pañuelo en cada mano fíjese, fíjese.

MH: y para qué le sirvió eso?

Pues yo le hice eso, yo en mi mente lo hice como una experiencia para que él no chiviara, porque yo en mi mente yo le decía que yo no lo quería vicioso, yo no quiero un hijo bolo hijo, ni quiero chiviadores. Muchos problemas se dan hijo.

[8]It should be acknowledged that physical punishment of children is a global phenomenon and not something unique to El Salvador.

Mira fíjate que me abuelita me contaba, hijo le decía yo, que a un hermano de ella lo mataron porque había ganado bastante dinero, y que como ya no quiso jugar lo mataron por eso.

MH: Y no había otra manera de corregirlo?

Como no, yo como, yo por cumplir, fíjese, por cumplir lo que yo le había dicho, lo hice, porque yo le dije la próxima vez te voy a quemar las manos, y cuando se las queme le dije, y si te vuelvo a ver jugando, te voy a volar la mitad de un dedo, pero no te quiero chiviador así. Y cuando se fue [a Estados Unidos], ni fumaba. Hoy hasta toma dicen. Como ya no hay quien lo controle vea, solo Dios vea, así es que así vea (María Dolores, 48 years old, El Boulevar).[9]

The notion that the use of violence was a valid, and even admirable, element of good parenting was a theme that ran through many of the men's and women's accounts of violence. For María Dolores, the above episode was also a matter of keeping her word; her pride was at stake as well as disciplining her son. Violence appears to have a functional and even central role in familial relations. One man in El Boulevar talked about how his father castigated him in a very "brutal manner" but that such a punishment worked: it kept him on the straight and narrow.

De mi padre, me hincaba, y una vez me dejó marcado el cincho, por travieso. Sino hubiera sido, porque siempre que iba a la escuela a mí me gustaba llevar

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[9] MH: Do you think it's okay that she hit you like that?
I don't think so because you can't hit your child like that, can you? With a piece of wood, sure you could almost kill him. Well, I haven't told you about one time when my son began to gamble. The first time I saw him gambling there in front of the house and I said to him "come on home" and I hit him here [points to hand] but I hit him like that [makes a slapping gesture].
MH: with your hand?
Yes but I told him "if I see you again, I will burn your hands so that you won't do it again". About two years later maybe, I saw him gambling again, that time playing dice. So that time I saw him with coins "hey, change that ten colon bill for me as I don't have money to pay" I said to him "and you go straight home now, go" and he came obediently. "Do you remember that I told you that I was going to burn your hands?" I said, "well I am going to burn them so that you see that I keep my word, so that you listen and remember". Well, I got a small candle, one of the smallest and I lit it and I said you have to hold it here [under his hand] until it burns out and put the other one here [under other hand]. Thank God he doesn't bear a grudge and he did it.... I had my son on his knees there with the candle burning. He was in the third year of his *bachillerato*, and he put a handkerchief on each finger, imagine, imagine that.
MH: and why did you do it?
I did that to him, in my mind I did it as an experience so that he would not gamble, because in my mind, I said that I did not want him to have vices. I don't want a drunk for a son, nor do I want a gambler. They cause too much heartache. "Look son" I said to him, "my granny told me that a brother of hers was killed because he had won a lot of money and, since he no longer wanted to play, they killed him."
MH: and was there no other way to "correct" him?
Sure, sure but to keep my word for what I had told him I would do to him. I did it because I told him, "the next time, I will burn your hands". When I burnt them I told him that if I saw him playing again, I would cut off half a finger, "but I don't want you becoming a gambler". When he went [to the USA], he didn't even smoke. Now they tell me that he even drinks. There's no one to control him you see, only God.

> *fichas, y entonces yo le sustraía dinero de la gaveta, donde tenía el pisto de la farmacia vea. Los grandes pocos de pisto, y para ir a repartirlo a los bichos allá. Y le venían a decir a mi mamá que Esteban estaba repartiendo a todos los cipotes allá en la escuela. Así es como me descubrieron, y por eso mi papá me castigó. Bien me acuerdo, me hincó y me dio un cinchazo que me acurrucó y ya no volví hacer eso, gracias a Dios. Si me hubiera aplicado un castigo suave, usted cree que no anduviera robando, o ya me hubieran matado o estuviera preso condenado a muerte?* (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[10]

The above episode suggests that there is certain logic to the violence exercised against the son by the father. The son himself perceives that it was for his own good, which is a perception shared by many of the interviewees. A good parent, and especially a good father, is respected for using the *mano dura*.[11] In the prison, all of the men talked at length about fatherhood. Three have children and they linked their responsibility to their offspring to using the *mano dura* with their sons, because gangs and other youths had been leading them astray since they (the fathers) have been in prison. Daniel (29 years old), who has no children, spoke about the lack of a father figure in his life. He had grown up with his mother and sisters. He sees a lack of discipline, which he links to his absent father, as a major reason for his drug abuse, which he blames for his violent behaviour and involvement in criminality. The notion that violence is not only functional, but also a necessary element of men's socialisation resonates throughout many of the narratives and goes to the core of the process of understanding violence. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

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[10] My father, he got me on my knees and once he left me marked with the belt for being naughty. When I went to school, I liked taking coins and so I took the money out of the drawer where he had the money from the pharmacy, bundles of money. And I handed it round the boys in my class. Someone told my mother that I was handing out money to all the kids in the school and that's how they found me out. And that's why my father punished me. I remember it well, he made me bend down and hit me with a belt, so hard that it made me wince and thank God, I never did it again. If he had given me a light punishment, do you think that I wouldn't be robbing, or I would have been killed already or in prison, condemned to death?

[11] Heavy hand.

Men, sexuality and violence

There are other issues that underlie the perceived functionality of violence that beg discussion. These are intimately linked to the construction of gender identities. One key notion of this type of violence is to "control" children's behaviour. The above examples infer that, without the violence used to keep them in check, it was impossible for these young men to resist the temptation of alcohol or gambling. These behaviours conform to what Connell (1987) has termed "hegemonic masculinity." Violence, drinking and womanising have become so bound up with dominant constructs of masculinity that they are seen as natural and, therefore, individual men cannot be held responsible for conforming to socially prescribed roles (Greig, 2000). It is to be expected. This was a theme that ran through many narratives and appears key to understanding both how women perceive men and, indeed, how some men perceive themselves. This model of hegemonic masculinity denies men agency, choice and the possibility to be different.[12] Many men who participated in the research do not voice responsibility for their actions, and, indeed, many women do not appear to expect it of them. Issues of violence and economic irresponsibility are buried under layers of justified and socially accepted discourse.[13] This is particularly relevant to the discussion of violence and sexuality.

Most of the women who participated in the research shared the view that men were unable to control their sexual behaviour. According to Welsh (2001: 20), "young men are taught that their masculinity is measured in great part by their sexual prowess. The concept of women as sexual objects is constantly reinforced by male relatives and friends and by mass media representations of women". This relational dynamic not only affects men's perception of women, but also shapes the ontology of women's sexuality. Indeed, it appears

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[12] Connell (1987) does not suggest that hegemonic masculinity is the only expression of male gender identity. Indeed, it is unlikely that individual men possess all the characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity. See also Chapter One for further discussion.

[13] All the women I interviewed have engaged in productive activities and, even when they have a male partner, their contribution to the household economy is vital. Decades of feminist research have highlighted the importance of women's economic contribution to the household, although this is still masked by popular gendered stereotypes promoting the idea of the male breadwinner (See, for example, Boserup, 1973, Elson et al., 1992 and Craske, 1999). Such evidence unearths important considerations on gendered economic roles within the household and disputes notions that women are forced to stay in difficult partnerships due to economic dependency, such as suggested by Ehlers (1991) in her study of a Guatemalan community. It also questions recent debates about masculinities in crisis and an upsurge in violence, which assume that men have historically been breadwinners and are plunged into crisis when their role is changed (for example, Chant, 2000).

commonplace for women to accept - or, in the very least, tolerate - that their husbands have relationships with other women: *los hombres nunca tienen una sola mujer.*[14]

Two women whose partners were having affairs with neighbours at the time of their interviews claimed that they did not mind the infidelity, for it was to be expected from men, but that they found it humiliating that the affair was taking place so close to home. Interesting here is not so much whether the women minded their partner's infidelity, rather the fact that they had resigned themselves to it. The perceived inevitability of men's infidelity, in the eyes of these women, bears testament to the power imbued in dominant gendered roles. Like many of their neighbours, they have stayed in relationships despite the knowledge that their partners have sexual relations with other women. Many different types of men's behaviour remain unquestioned because of the social value ascribed to gendered roles. In the case of women, however, infidelity is unacceptable and, indeed, merits sanction. As one woman informed me, "*cuando uno se casa dicen que al hombre que nadie tiene derecho de maltratar a una mujer, sólo si es parte de infidelidad dicen,*" binding the accepted use of violence with the policing of women's sexuality.[15] Indeed, a recent survey found in El Salvador that 32.7 per cent of men believe that "*un hombre puede castigar a una mujer si ésta lo ha engañado.*"[16] Half of adult men interviewed accept that women's infidelity is more serious than that of men (Orellana and Arana, 2003: 88). This "sexual double standard" places value on women's chastity on hand and the importance of men's virility on the other (Chant with Craske, 2002: 141). This has huge implications for how society recognises and regulates sexual behaviour.

Women's sexuality: the "sexual double standard"

Popular language concerning women's sexuality is laced with prejudice and moral judgement. There is immense social value ascribed to young women's virginity. Moffet (2001: 4) talks about the "narratives of denial" that operate in South Africa to mask and demonise the "sexually aggressive male". Similar narratives can be identified in El Salvador. When a young woman has sex for the first time, especially if it takes place outside marriage,

[14] Men never have only one woman.
[15] When you get married they say that no man has a right to mistreat a woman, except in cases of infidelity.
[16] A man can punish a woman if she is unfaithful to him.

informants claimed that, "*está arruinda*" or "*ella fracasó*".[17] The stigma is placed clearly with the woman, she is no longer "*como dios la trajo al mundo*", i.e: a virgin. [18] Interestingly men's role in sexual activity is described in much less judgmental terms. Examples from testimonies range from "*la hizo su mujer*" to the victorious "*la conquistó*" and "*yo voy a ser el dueño de ella*".[19] In the last case, the woman becomes - literally - the man's object. He is her owner, stripping her of all agency and rights. Moreover, one woman described an attempted rape while she was still a virgin: "*me quería hacer mujer*", a term that removes all traces of violence from the action.[20] In their study of gendered socialisation in El Salvador, Gaborit and Santori (2002a: 9) suggest that women, whose bodies are less valued than men's, are further devalued when they begin to have sexual relations. "*Un cuerpo nacido con poco valor adquiere una expresión todavía más baja cuando ya no es virgen y, curiosamente, cuando ha sucumbido a los embates masculinos.*"[21] These notions continued to have currency among younger generations, highlighting the prevailing norm of the "sexual double standard".[22] Galtung (1990: 291) mentions language as one element of culture "that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form." Language is intimately linked with other powerful discourses on *appropriate* behaviours for men and women. It gives meaning to a gendered reality, offering a sense of "order, naturalness and timelessness" (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 12). This "illusion of order" invariably shapes popular reaction to violence against women, as will be discussed further below (ibid.). Gaborit and Santori (2002b: 7) suggest that there are three principal mechanisms which construct and regulate female gender identity in El Salvador: shame, submission and victim identity.

> *Estos tres mecanismos importantes actúan de manera conjunta para asegurar la primacía de la masculinidad.... Estos mecanismos sociales operan en forma de regímenes de conducta, esto es, disciplinas cotidianas apoyadas por justificaciones ideológicas a veces expresadas explícitamente y a veces racionalizadas de manera implícita a través de mitos o historias que quedan plasmados en la "sabiduría" y los dichos populares.*[23]

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[17] She is ruined and she has failed.

[18] As God brought her to this world.

[19] He made me his woman, he conquered her and I will be the owner of her.

[20] He wanted to make me a woman.

[21] A body born with little value acquires even less when she is no longer a virgin, and, curiously, when she has succumbed to masculine outbursts.

[22] I first became aware of these terms in an interview with a fourteen-year-old girl in El Boulevar, who was talking about her friend's sexual behaviour. I also heard them in the testimonies of older women.

[23] These three important mechanisms work together to ensure the supremacy of masculinity... These social mechanisms operate as rules of conduct, in other words, as daily disciplinary measures supported by

It is interesting, therefore, to explore how local "wisdom" and popular knowledge of gendered sexuality shape the social expectations of men and women. There is almost a sense of inevitability among women that men will conform to dominant constructions of *machismo*. As mentioned above, mothers speak of using violence as a tool to prevent their sons from taking part in traditional male activities, such as drinking or gambling. Many women resign themselves to men's promiscuity and, in some cases, their violence. Men's behaviour, therefore, cannot be analysed in isolation from its effect on women. This will be discussed further below. More dangerously, however, is the implicit inference that women have the responsibility (and duty) to protect themselves from sexual advances. "*El deseo sexual de los hombres aparece como una fuerza incontrolable que puede derivar en agresión, por lo que las mujeres deben actuar recatadamente para no desatar esa fuente de peligro para ellas*" (Vásquez, Ibañez and Murguialday, 1996: 145).[24] The practice of victim blaming has invariably shaped women's own sexual behaviours and also their reaction to men. According to one man, it is a mother's responsibility to protect her daughters from men:

> *Mire, es lógico, todos los tiempos, todos los tiempos han habido este personas mal intencionadas y en todas las épocas. Hasta la historia lo menciona pues, y a veces hasta los mismos padres que han violado a sus hijas. Entonces y tratando de evitar esta secuencia tan desagradable, entonces quizás las madres, instintivamente, tratan de aislar más a sus hijitas, a sus hembritas. El varón, pues, últimamente es varón. Pues, ese es mi manera de ver las cosas, verdad? Ya sea que los varones sean pícaros o no, pero las madres siempre tienen que cuidar a sus hijas* (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[25]

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ideological justifications, sometimes explicit and sometimes rationalised implicitly through a series of myths or stories that are contained in local 'wisdom' and popular sayings.

[24]Men's sexual desire appears like an uncontrollable force that can stem from aggression; for this reason women must act modestly so as not to open up this source of danger for them.

[25] Look it is logical. There have always, always, been bad people, always. Even history mentions it. And sometimes the very fathers have raped their daughters. So, in order to avoid this horrible chain of events, mothers, perhaps instinctively, try to isolate their daughters more, their little girls. The man ultimately is a man. That's my way of seeing things anyway. Either men are rogues or not, but mothers always try to take care of their daughters.

Many women develop a range of survival strategies to avoid "tempting" men. "*La sexualidad masculina es incontrolable y a ellas les toca ponerle freno, guardando un comportamiento 'decente', no provocando el deseo de los hombres*" (Vásquez, Ibañez and Muguialday, 1996: 145).[26] One example includes covering young girls' genitalia for, while it is common to see young boys naked, girls' nudity is frowned upon (Gaborit and Santori, 2002a). One woman remembered how her mother set a series of traps to stop her biological father sexually assaulting her (including chicken wire and bolting the door). He did not live with the family and the mother was recently widowed from her husband (the girl was born from a relationship with this man prior to the mother's marriage). The sense was that now that her mother was without the protection of a husband, she was available for other men. The man was so persistent that, in the end, the family slept in a neighbour's house. Such notions are also linked to women's sexuality. One seventy-six year old woman from El Boulevar stated: "*amo la vida soltera porque sólo entonces uno domina su cuerpo*",[27] suggesting that many women still do not feel that they have autonomy over their own bodies. Indeed, many interviewees became pregnant in their early teens without having any real knowledge of what was happening to them. Figures from 1998 demonstrate that 24.6 per cent of 15-19 year old women have had at least one pregnancy and sexual education still remains a "taboo" in El Salvador (de Innocenti and Innocenti, 2002: 27). Indeed, access to formal education for the women I interviewed over forty was minimal. One woman's father refused to send her and her sister to school, since they would only learn to write *cartitas al novio.*[28]

Women's lack of autonomy in relation to their sexuality nourishes and is nourished by wider social perceptions of sexual violence. In Chapter Three, I mention a lengthy discussion with a couple in El Boulevar, when the man argued that he did not believe that rape exists, rather that women have the responsibility for preventing it. This minimisation of the violence contained in certain sexual activities was reflected in the opinions expressed by several men and women during the course of the fieldwork. For example, young women who want to join a gang are offered two options: *golpes* or *el trencito.*[29] According to Vladimir, a member of the MS gang in El Boulevar, the women who enter into the gang through

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[26] Men's sexuality is uncontrollable and it is up to [women] to stop it by behaving 'decently', not provoking men.

[27] I love being single because it is only then that you have control over your own body.

[28] Love letters.

[29] Being beaten for thirteen seconds or having sexual relations with thirteen men of the *clika.*

sexual intercourse are not "worth" much as they do not feel pain in comparison to the girls who are beaten:

> *Trece hombres, pero usted quizás ni se imagina, pero hay que darle por detrás por la boca y por delante al mismo tiempo. Para mí, está cabrón eso, o sea uno les da a escoger. Algunas mujeres que dicen no mejor denme berga, y hay otras, que pendejas, que dicen no mejor háganme lo que ustedes quieran, y tal vez las mujeres que se dejan hacer lo que ellas quieran son las que no sirven y las que le han dado duro a morir si son las que se para en la mara.*
> *MH: Porqué?*
> *Porque una mujer, dígame, qué dolor ha sentido una mujer que le han pasado trece hombres a la que le han dado duro?* (Vladimir, 22 years old, El Bouelvar).[30]

There is almost an inference that women enjoy such violent sexual episodes. Indeed, another resident of El Boulevar, Erlinda, ascribes to the dominant notion that it is a woman's responsibility to defend herself against sexual attack. She herself had been the victim of attempted rape on several occasions. The fact that she was able to defend herself has coloured her opinion on sexual violence:

> *siempre tuve alguien que no quería nada de mi, solamente hacerme daño. No, solamente trataron de obtenerme a la fuerza, verdad, pero nunca... Yo, por eso, a veces no creo mucho en las violaciones por que son cosas de que si uno no quiere , no quiere uno de mujer es muy capaz de defenderse* (Erlinda, 33 years old, El Boulevar)[31]

However, despite her doubts, levels of sexual violence, both in the domestic realm and wider society are considered extremely high (interview with Margarita Velado, *Las Dignas*, July 2001). Figures from the FGR indicate that 3339 cases of sexual violence were reported

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[30] Thirteen men, but you can't even imagine, you have to give it to them from behind, in the mouth and in front at the same time, For me, that's fucked, I mean, you give them a choice. Some women say better beat me up and others, stupid bitches, who say better do what you want with me and maybe the women who do what they want are the ones that are of no use and the ones who have been beaten up are the ones who stand up in the gang.
MH: why?
Because, what pain has a woman felt who has been shagged by thirteen men compared to her who has been beaten?

[31] There was always someone who wanted nothing more from me than to do me harm. No, they only tried to force me, you know, but never... Maybe because of this I don't really believe in rape, because there are things that you don't want, if a woman doesn't want it, she us very capable of defending herself.

in 2001, 3396 in 2000 and 3102 in 1999.[32] It must be noted that these figures are likely to be only a tip of the iceberg. In El Boulevar, young women lived in fear of sexual attack by gang members. "*las violaciones, también mas que todo en las muchachas porque los mareros nos agarran, bueno agarran a las muchachas les hacen el daño y después no se quieren hacer cargo*" (Damaris, Focus group, School El Boulevar).[33] Indeed, one woman suggested that her father was a good man, as he never abused them sexually.

> *Fue un hombre tan honesto con nosotras que eso sí yo recuerdo, que una noche él, que a saber como, y que fue a dar por mi dormitorio y cuando sintió mi cuerpo pequeñito verdad, que no era mi mamá, al tiempo de eso sentí yo que él salió a la carrera, respetuoso. ... bueno pero era en ese concepto mi papá era un hombre tan decente* (Meche, 76 years old, El Boulevar).[34]

The suggestion in this narrative was that her father was somehow an exception to the rule and, indeed, she later found out that the father of three of her children sexually abused her eldest daughter. "*De todos los daños que me hizo [llora], y el que sí me dolió más... que se aprovechó de mi hija, se aprovechó de ella.*"[35]. There has been little research done on the prevalence of sexual abuse within families in El Salvador. One study carried out by the *Universidad Tecnológica* (UTEC) on 714 students demonstrates that 38% of respondents had been sexually abused as children. The figures highlight that 40% of men and 36% of women were subject to varying degrees of abuse during childhood, which is a significantly higher percentage than found in other countries where similar studies were carried out (UTEC, 2001:110).[36] Two of the men I interviewed in prison were convicted of abusing their daughters. One woman, María Dolores, had been abused by an elderly relative at the age of ten or eleven. Her mother knew about the abuse, and according to the interviewee, had actually arranged it with the cousin for some financial recompense.

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[32] See http://www.violenciaelsalvador.org.sv/indicadores/indicadoresb2.htm for disaggregated data on sexual violence in El Salvador.

[33] Rape, mostly of girls because the gang members get us, well they grab the girls, cause her harm and then they don't take responsibility.

[34] He was such an honest man with us. That much I remember. One night, who knows how, he came into my room and when he felt my little body, that it wasn't my mother's, he rushed out.... well, in that sense, my father was such a decent man.

[35] Of all the bad things he did to me [she cries], the one that hurt me most...is that he took advantage of my daughter, he took advantage of her.

[36] The authors point out that this higher incidence is not a result of using a wider definition of sexual abuse than other studies. Indeed, they point out that their definition is, in fact, somewhat narrow in that it excludes exhibitionism and only includes experiences of sexual contact.

> *No va creer, mire, ella había hecho todos esos tratos con el viejo porque el viejo me había comprado los cortes y la cadena de oro y los aritos, unos aritones de piedra rosada. Y a todas las cipotas que le gustaban las compraba así fijese ...*
> *MH: Y eso se daba mucho en el campo en ese entonces?*
> *Sí, ese viejo se hizo quebrazón de cipotas* (María Dolores, 48 years old, El Boulevar).[37]

Whilst there has not been any research into this practice, anecdotal evidence provided by women from different parts of the country indicated that, while not common practice, they did know of similar cases. Indeed, an article in *La Prensa Gráfica* ran under the headline: *Niña de 14 años fue violada con permiso de abuela* (29 November, 2002).[38] Also, another woman in El Boulevar narrated an episode where her mother in law tried to prostitute her to some men and she narrowly escaped being raped by running into the fields. The focus groups in the school and individual interviews also pointed to high levels of sexual abuse in the home. One interviewee's niece has been abused by her stepfather for many years. The girl's mother and other relatives knew about the abuse and, whilst they did not condone this man's actions, they feel powerless to intervene. This also suggests the continued power of the symbolism of the private sphere that will be discussed in the next chapter. Indeed, in the three years that I worked with a women's organisation in different parts of El Salvador, we came across many instances of women who had been abused by their fathers and step-fathers. In some cases, the mothers and the rest of the family blamed the girl for the abuse, as it was perceived that she had somehow provoked the attack. In one reported case, a man accused of raping an eleven-year-old girl who became pregnant said, in his defence, that the girl had consented (*La Prensa Gráfica,* 7 March 2003). Constructs of masculinities are intimately linked to the performance of men's sexuality, which also shapes how men use and legitimate the use of violence. The following section will explore linkages between male gender identity and the use and experience of violence.

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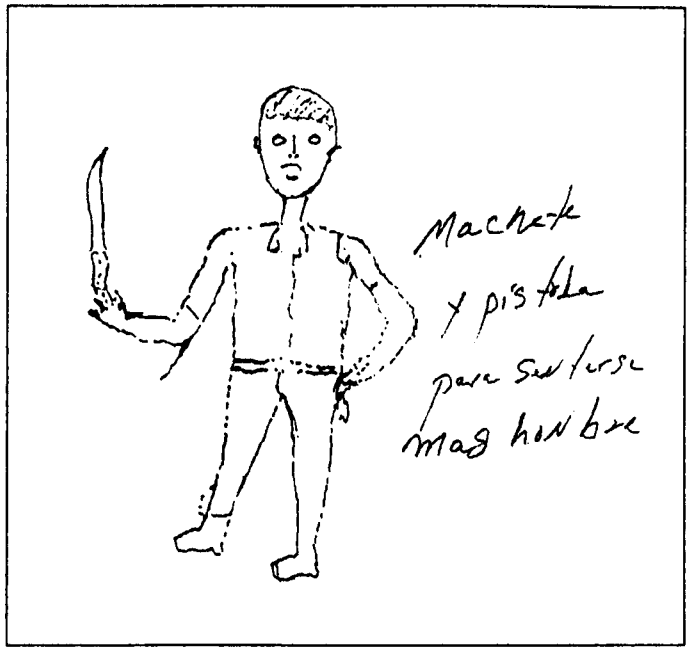
[37] You won't believe it, she had made deals with the old man because he had bought me the material, the gold chain and the earrings with the pink stones. He bought all the girls he wanted like that.
MH: and was that common in the countryside in those days?
Yes, that old man broke-in young girls.
[38] Girl of 14 raped with grandmother's permission.

Linkages between machismo and violence

Plate 5.1:

"Machete y pistola para sentirse más hombre" (Benjamín, self-help group January, 2002)[39]



In an exercise with the self-help group of men convicted of domestic violence, the participants established that being a man is intimately bound up with the use of violence. Respondents testified to feeling more manly by: threatening and beating women, never giving in (*no se deja*), being brave, having sexual relations with many women, leaving women pregnant, having lots of children, feeling more important than other men, being proud. Some men said that carrying weapons made them feel more like a man (see Plates 5.1 and

[39] Pistol and machete to feel more like a man.

5.3).[40] If a woman bosses a man about, he is a *'culero'* (CAPS, 24 January 2002).[41] Furthermore, Vladimir (22 years old, El Boulever) also used this term for those gang members who are not good fighters: "*hay batos que son de la mara pero nunca han matado y ni tan siquiera han puyado una persona y tal vez por eso es que nosotros los llamamos culeros.*"[42] Such notions conform to what Connell (1987) has termed "hegemonic masculinity". Those who deviate from this model are not regarded as "real" men and their sexuality is questioned. Homophobia is widespread and the demonising of homosexuality is learned at an early age. In one focus group in the school in El Boulevar, this was highlighted when students mentioned homosexuality as a type of violence. Such notions inform widespread perceptions on how gender relations are enacted or, specifically, on the use of violence as a legitimate element of this *machista* gendered identity.

Another man linked the violence that he was subjected to by his father to notions of *machismo*, suggesting how both the perpetration of violence and the subjection to it are intimately bound with dominant constructions of what it is to be a man:

> *Recuerdo cuando niño, pues trabajé muy duro. Mi padre, pues, me trató como todo un macho, con aquel machismo pues que lo tratan a uno, pues la mayoría de padres del campo. Este, cuando yo hacía algo malo pues me aplicaba el látigo pues hasta dejarme reventado pues el lomo todo eso pues*
> (Teofilio, 37 years old, self-help group)[43]

To be treated as a *macho*, this man had to undergo intense violence. He learned from a young age that his role as a man was to be castigated in this way. Another seventy-six year old man recounted how his mother burnt his hands under the *comal* because his step-father had taken a *centavo* and she had, mistakenly, thought that her son had stolen it.

> *Agarró el centavo que tenía mi mamá y se fue a quitar la barba, y no le dijo a mi mamá. Por ese centavo me metió las manos a mí debajo del comal y me las llenó de ampollas. Me quemó por un centavo. Me dio como doce rajasos de*

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[40] See Cock (2001) for an interesting analysis of the centrality of guns to male gender identity in South Africa. See also UNDP (2003) for a study of firearms in El Salvador.

[41] Derogatory term for gay.

[42] There are guys who are in the gang but they have never killed and they haven't even stabbed anyone. Maybe that's why we call them sissies.

[43] I remember when I was a child, well I worked really hard. My father, well, he treated me like a man, with that machismo that most fathers in the country treat you. Like, when I did something bad, he whipped me until my back was in shreds.

leña, no me pegaba con el machal, sino con lo que encontraba. Tengo señas, tengo roto la espinilla, leñazos. Tengo aquí en la columna vertebral otros dos leñazos que se me hicieron granos y le decía, porque sos así mamá? Llora, hijo de tantas, me decía. Llora. Si no puedo llorar. Yo no puedo llorar. Ella quería que yo gritara, pero yo no podía llorar. Yo estaba mmm, mmm, mmm. Cada leñazo que me pegaba
MH: porqué usted sentía que no podía expresar...?
No podía llorar porque yo sentía que se me hacía un bojote aquí en la garganta, y de ese bojote que se me hacía aquí, no podía soltar ni el grito, ni llorar con los ojos ... no, no lo podía hacer
MH: no lo podía hacer porque usted aprendió de niño que los hombres no pueden expresarse?
No lo aprendí, sino que me lo enseñaron. Si gritas, te mato, me decía. Entonces yo tenía que llorar para dentro, no llorar para afuera, sino llorar para dentro. Entonces esa es la cosa
MH: y eso como le afectó? Eso de tener que llorar para dentro, cómo sentía, como se sentía usted?
Yo sentía más peor porque me tragaba el sentimiento, me tragaba el dolor, me tragaba los golpes, no desahogaba nada (Beto, 76 years old, El Boulevar).[44]

As a boy, it was unacceptable for him to cry, despite the severity of the violence. Men are taught at an early age, as this interviewee highlights, that they should not express emotion. They should "be firm" (see Plate 5.2). The old adage of "boys don't cry" is central to what Salvadoran society expects from men. Both men and women actively participate in this highly gendered socialisation process (Welsh, 2001). Expressing emotion is regarded as expressing weakness, which "real" men are actively discouraged from doing. A recent survey demonstrates that 61.3 per cent of interviewees agree that, "*la mujer representa el amor y la debilidad mientras el hombre la inteligencia y la fuerza*" (Orellana and Arana, 2003: 89). [45]

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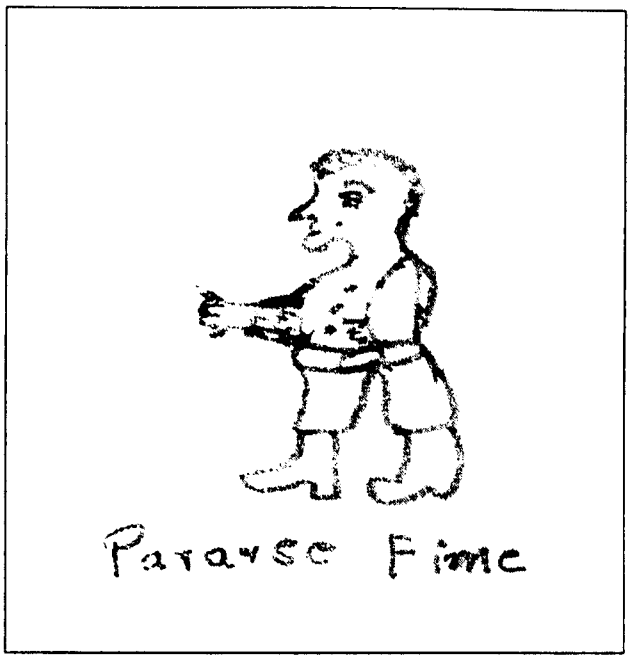
[44] He took the coin that my mum had and he went for a shave. He didn't tell my mother and because of that *centavo*, she put my hands under the *comal* till they were covered in blisters. She burnt me for a *centavo*. She hit me about twelve times with a piece of woood, she didn't hit me with the slleve of the machete, but with whatever she found. I have scars, my shin is broken from beatings with wood, here on my back I have two other scars from wood which became infected. I used to ask her why she was like that and she would say 'cry you son of a bitch, cry'. But I couldn't cry, I couldn't. she wanted me to scream, but I couldn't cry. I was biting my tongue with each slap that she gave me.
MH: And why did you feel that you couldn't express...?
I couldn't cry because I felt a lump here in my throat and that lump made me feel as if I couldn't scream or shed tears.. no, I couldn't do it.
MH: And could you not do it because you learned that boys were not supposed to express emotion?
I didn't learn it, I was taught. If you scream, I will kill you, she used to say. So I had to cry on the inside, not on the outside but on the inside. That's it.
MH: How did that affect you, having to cry on the inside. How did you feel?
I felt worse because I swallowed my feelings, I swallowed the pain and the beatings. I let nothing out
[45]Women represent love and weakness while men, intelligence and strength.

According to Welsh (2001: 18), writing on Nicaragua, "[t]ears, fears and weakness are prohibited and punished with accusations of being a *cochón* — a sissy or poofter". The men that participated in this research were subjected to violence from an early age and most continued to use it to exert their authority as men. Violence, for them, continued to be a normal element of their male gendered identity. This is discussed below.

Plate 5.2:

Un hombre sabe "pararse firme" (Vicente, self-help group January, 2002) [46]



Normal men, routine violence

Alfonso, an 18-year-old man who grew up with his grandmother accepted his experiences of violence, seeing them as "normal". His grandmother beat him regularly and used to insult him and his siblings by likening them to their mother - she was a dog and so were they. On one occasion, she electrocuted him with the light cable. "*Nuestras abuelas siempre lo tratan algo mal a uno, pero no fue ni tan bonita ni tan complicada, fue así normal más o*

[46] A man stands up straight.

menos.... Si era algo cruel la señora pero aún así no puedo dejar de quererla siempre la quiero pero ya le digo era algo tremenda."[47]

Again, violence, in this man's life, is commonplace. He meets with threats and beatings on a daily basis on his bread round. He has been systematically targeted by local gangs, and used to fight on a regular basis with his brothers. Now that he lives with his partner, he spoke about using violence against her. "*Mire, yo le, al principio no me daba por nada de eso de pegarle pero hoy, después, hace un año atrás, si me gusta, no me gusta sino que me gustaba pegarle*"[48]. Interestingly, in the same interview he also spoke about gang members who have come into his house on several occasions, looking for him and have beaten his partner. This made him feel bad because she was not a man, *y la mujer no aguanta.*[49]Yet at the same time, she is the woman who he openly admits to beating. This glaring discrepancy raises huge questions about the accepted use of force, by whom and towards whom. Does the fact that she is a woman and *his* partner give him the right to beat her that others do not have?

This question goes to the core of understanding the continued pervasiveness of violence against women. It highlights how the gendered relational dynamics of violence affect the different meanings ascribed to the act of violence. Violence against women is one of the clearest expressions of gender inequality and its continuance is shaped by discourses that minimise its significance. This was outlined above by the contradictory reaction of Alfonso. The violence used by the gang is awarded a different meaning than the violence he himself uses against his partner. Violence against women has become a routine element of expressing male gendered identity. The interviewee narratives have exposed hierarchies of victimisation patterns on both gendered and generational grounds. The notion that violence is hierarchical is discussed further in the next chapter.

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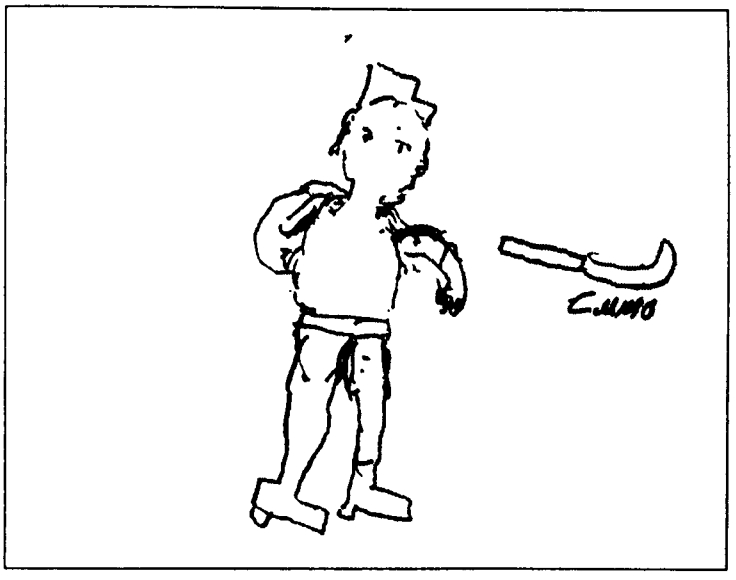
[47] Our grandmothers always treat you badly, but it wasn't either too nice nor too complicated, it was more or less normal... Yes, she was a bit cruel but, even still, I can't not love her. I will always love her but I can tell you, she was something else.

[48] Look, I, at the beginning, I didn't do any of that, hitting her but now, after, since about a year ago, I like, not that I like, but that I liked to hit her.

[49] And women can't handle it [the violence].

Plate 5.3:

Man and machete (Rodolfo, self-help group January, 2002)



Violence against women: minimising the problem

During the interviews few men admitted using physical violence against their partners. A certain taboo in talking (to me?) about violence against women exists. Indeed, one day while talking informally to a group of men, they jokingly informed me that violence against men was more of a problem: *aquí las mujeres son tremendas.*[50] This response serves to trivialise the problem of violence against women, which, as evidence demonstrates, remains a very serious problem. Figures for 2002 demonstrate that 238 women in El Salvador were killed by their partners (CEMUJER, cited in IDHUCA, 2003). In general terms, all men (and women) interviewed agreed that violence against women was widespread in their neighbourhoods. Women's interviews were often more telling of the violence they suffered at the hands of men than men's testimonies. The following extract from my observations of the men's self-help group is somewhat telling of the silences that I encountered when interviewing men about violence against women.

[50] Here, the women are something else.

> It is interesting how the men talk about their violence. There seems to be a whole shroud of language and codes that cover what they are really saying. Or is it just that I haven't learned to listen? Like in the prison, I do not ask what the crime was. Rather, I need to ask "what were the problems that brought you here?" This seems to be as much about cultural codes that continue to keep domestic violence invisible, as it is about my sensitivity and effectiveness as an interviewer (6 December 2002)

One exception where men did speak candidly about violence was in the case where women offended men's dignity: "*Una pareja malcriada, que le toque, le toque lo que a uno mas le duele más, uno puede actuar de una forma violenta talvez uno sin querer*" (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[51] Issues of men's dignity are intimately linked to notions of *machismo*, such as those expressed above. Although gender roles and identities have invariably evolved and women have greater participation in public life, dominant notions of honour and submissiveness prevail in popular discourse and behaviour. One woman, who works full time and is responsible for maintaining her daughters, quotes her husband: "*para eso tengo mujer para que me atienda la comida me dijo*".[52]

Most of the women I spoke to testified to having been subjected to violence at the hands of their partners. This was summed up, rather poignantly, by one elderly woman from La Vía, who informed me, "*Ya no tengo problema de esposo, ya se murió*" (Focus Group, La Vía, 2 February 2002).[53] This sentiment was shared by other women who I interviewed, who also no longer had the "husband problem". The routinisation of violence can become so entrenched in everyday relations it is almost expected as an inevitable and culturally sanctioned element of growing up or being a woman. As one woman emphasised "*es el simple hecho de ser mujer*".[54] Many women are subjected to violence on a daily basis from their fathers, brothers and husbands, not to mention wider society. The degree of violence which women are subjected to, however, is not universal. For some, it was part of systematic physical and psychological abuse at the hands of partners, whereas others mentioned specific episodes of physical violence.

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[51] A bad mannered partner, who gets, who gets you where it hurts most, then you can act in a violent manner, maybe without wanting to.

[52] He said to me, that's why I have a wife, to serve my food.

[53] I no longer have the problem of a husband. He's dead.

Although the men spoke of the physical and psychological violence they had used, this was often minimised by language "*problemas en la casa,*"[55] or they sought to explain their behaviour due to the influence of drugs, alcohol or provocation. It is not uncommon for violence against women to be associated directly with the consumption of alcohol and many men and women in the communities blame alcoholism for violence against women and children (see, for example, Moser and Mc Ilwaine, 2000a). The self-help group addressed the problem of alcohol addiction alongside men's violence, but the facilitator was careful to refute the notion that alcohol caused the violence.

In the men's group, all of the men were convicted under what Salvadoran law terms "intra-family violence". The law against intra-family violence in El Salvador was passed in December 1996. The new Penal Code (1998) sanctions, for the first time in Salvadoran history, intra-family violence as a crime (Article 200).[56] This broad definition includes violence against women, children and irresponsible paternity, i.e: the failure to provide financial contribution for children. The definition has been criticised by feminists and human rights organisations as it hides the fact that women suffer disproportionately because of violence at the hands of men in the domestic realm. Moreover, the authorities responsible for enforcing the law, such as the PNC and family judges, have been criticised for their ineffectiveness and, in some cases for siding with the aggressor (IDHUCA, 2003; see also Hernández Reyes and Solano, 2003).

Interestingly, only two men in the five years that the self-help programme has been in existence have come voluntarily. The rest have to attend as part of their parole. Indeed, one man in the focus group informed us one day that "*es culpa de ella que yo esté acá,*" suggesting that either he claimed no responsibility for the violence, or did not regard it as an offence. [57] Another told the group how his friends had encouraged him to sort out the problems with his wife, whereas yet another was advised to hit her harder (Observations notes, 8 November 2001). This indicates that peer group reaction is not universal and not all men advocate the use of violence. Indeed, on one occasion the local judge came to talk to them and advised them "*antes era normal pegar a su mujer, ahora no porque las leyes han*

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[54] It is the simple fact of being a woman.

[55]Problems at home.

[56]Women's legal status in society has improved with the implementation of new laws and the signing of international agreements, such as the Belem do Pará Convention (1994), which seeks to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

cambiado".[58] Perhaps my reading of what the judge said is overly literal - only the laws have changed, not the normal act of hitting one's wife - but it did strike me as a very telling statement of how gender relations are played out. The law may have changed but domestic violence remains a pervasive force in the lives of the men and women under study. Indeed, IDHUCA (2003) is critical of the role of some judges. They allege that in some cases, judges pay more attention to the violence that children suffer over women. They also highlight that there are deficiencies in the law. For example, there is no follow up on individual cases in order to ensure that sanctions are enforced.

However, older women suggested that younger women had more access to justice than they did. One seventy-six year old woman in El Boulevar had lived with two very violent partners. In the first case, her family were aware of the degree of abuse that she suffered, but refused to intervene "*como yo era la mujer de él,*"[59] despite the fact that he once beat her unconscious with a piece of wood. She believes that younger women are more likely to report episodes of severe violence. Welsh (2001) notes that an apparent rise in figures for sexual violence in Nicaragua may be down to the fact that more women are reporting the crime rather than an increase in the incidence. Indeed, one thirty-three year old woman, also from El Boulevar, testified that she reported her husband to the police. She considers that this has helped to diminish the violence in their relationship.[60]

While, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer explanations as to why individual women remain in violent relations, it is useful to look at how women's gendered identity may shape their reaction to violence. Women who had been subject to violence were also silent initially and one woman intimated that it was a source of shame to her and it was somehow her fault, since nobody else in her family had been victim of domestic violence. Self-blame is often associated with repeated victimisation, but it also telling of the power imbued in violent gender relations. Others suggested that it was a "*mal ejemplo para los hijos*" (Focus group, La Vía, 02 February 2002).[61] Many studies have emphasised the centrality of motherhood to women's gender identity in Latin America (see, for example, Alvarez, 1990 and Craske, 1999). Women themselves appear to have internalised dominant

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[57] It is her fault that I am here [as she had reported him to the police for beating her].

[58] Before it was normal to hit your wife. Not any more because the laws have changed.

[59]Because I was his wife.

[60]I also interviewed her husband on a separate occasion and he did not mention the fact that she had reported him to the police, although did speak about using violence against her in previous years.

gender constructions to such an extent that they do not voice any consideration of the effects that living with high levels of violence may have on them. Silence is a strategy that women use on a daily basis. Not only do they use it to protect themselves against the violence that permeates wider Salvadoran society, but also they adopt resolute silence in the face of violence in the domestic realm. Many women feel they have to conform their behaviour to accepted gendered roles in order to avoid violent reaction. This may involve not participating in community activities, always asking permission to leave the house, having the food ready and serving their husband. Importantly it also includes not being seen talking to other men. Such activities are indicative of some of the many strategies that women are forced to adopt. Just as women are responsible for keeping men's "uncontrollable" sexual urges in check, they are must not provoke men's aggression. Moreover, this reflects the gendered social expectations of women which, although context specific and in constant flux, continue to be policed by men's use of violence.

This section has argued that violence against women remains a very serious problem in El Salvador. As Chapter Two highlighted, the problem of domestic violence is extremely difficult to quantify, due to underreporting, the perception that it is a private problem and also, due to popular myths that serve to explain or even legitimate certain types of violence. "*En el silencio, muy lejos de nuestro conocimiento, quedan todas las mujeres que - presas por las amenazas e inmovilizadas por el terror a las represalias -permanecen aguantando golpes, gritos y torturas psicológicas que constituyen, en realidad, un verdadero infierno en vida*" (IDHUCA, 2003: 2).[62]

Conclusion

Given the extreme violence contained in these narratives, the task is to examine how memory is constructed. Why, in these testimonials, do some types of violence, namely the most public expressions, seem to have been ascribed more significance than others? The answer, like the substantive of violence, is multi-layered and intimately linked with social and cultural processes that not only create, but validate, knowledge. The next chapter will discuss how such processes affect legitimation and justification of certain types of

[61] A bad example for the children.

[62] In silence, far from our knowledge are all the women who - prisoners of threats and paralysed by the fear of revenge - they bear beatings, insults and psychological torture which, in reality, constitutes a living hell.

violence. In this chapter the dialectic relationship between dominant gender constructs, the processes of historicisation and ontologies of the present have been examined. Both Chapters One and Two highlight that all narrative is constructed *post-facto*. Thornton (1995: 1) suggests that "[*v*]*iolence happens*... it is an 'event'; it takes place in time, and is assigned significance or meaning by observers" (emphasis in original). These constructions are based on "culturally constituted and socially transmitted 'master' narratives". From this perspective, it is, therefore, interesting to analyse how such "events" have been assigned meaning in the narratives of the participants in this research and how certain types of violence continue to seen as more normal and, therefore, more acceptable than others in contemporary life. This thesis argues that these "master narratives" are profoundly shaped by dominant gender constructions, which continue to regulate the meanings and significance assigned to violence. How can individuals, men and women alike, argue that all was *tranquilo* when they were subjected to such high levels of violence in the home? This will be discussed further in the next chapter, in relation to the justification and legitimation of certain types of violence and the questioning of historic notions of public and private.

Chapter Six

Gendered hierarchies of violence?

This chapter argues that continued masculinist interpretations of social relations fortify the process of making violence a routine element of everyday life for many in El Salvador. The previous chapter examined ways in which violence can be used and reified as a central element of hierarchical gendered identities. Such patterns serve to normalise certain types of violence. Exposure to, and the exercise of, violence have been central, if highly harmful, forces in the lives of the men and women whose life histories inform this research. Both wider social and more intimate familial relations have been characterised by violence. The macro and the micro contexts combine to create a situation where violence has become embedded in many aspects of social and interpersonal interaction. To qualify this statement, it is important to reiterate that fear and threats of violence are forces that can be equally as debilitating as violence itself (see Galtung, 1969).

The last chapter proposed that the normalisation of violence is profoundly gendered. In other words, certain types of violence are perceived by society as more normal and, therefore, are awarded less significance in both individual and wider social narrative. An exploration of life histories suggested that less significance has been ascribed to violence that overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, occurs within familial relations. This chapter builds upon this analysis to argue that popular perceptions help to both perpetuate and legitimise certain manifestations of violence.

Social reactions to violence are affected not only by individual subjectivity, but also by dominant cultural and social norms that shape normative behaviour. In the case of men, social reaction to violence is modified by the belief that violence is a central element of their gender identity. This process is both ontological and epistemological. It affects how we live in the world, but it also shapes the ways in which we come to understand and ascribe meaning to lived experience. This chapter will therefore explore the dialectic of enduring masculinist assumptions about the world and the lived experience of violence. Until we recognise the value of examining how violence is enacted and judged on a micro-

level, we can not begin to inform strategies for ending violence in all its forms. Galtung (1990) reminds us that the study of violence is essentially about two problems: the use of violence and the legitimation of that use. Therefore, understanding the ways in which society tolerates and rejects violence is a key exercise. Key questions to bear in mind in the analysis are: who *does* the violence? To *whom* is it done? What is the relation between the victim and the perpetrator? In what *context* was the violence done? What degree of force is used? Such questions, although invariably run the risk of being highly specific, form the basis for the deconstruction of popular reactions to violence.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of gender inequalities. Within patriarchal societies, gender inequalities and binary notions of "opposite sexes" are so deeply enmeshed in social relations that they are read as being part of the natural order of things. This affects not only how we live in the world but also, as feminist scholars have highlighted, how we construct knowledge about the world. It is my intention to revisit feminist theoretical perspectives on the public/private distinction in order to highlight how this division continues to mask gender inequalities. The dichotomisation of everyday life into public and private is enduring in mainstream (read masculinist) epistemologies of violence, which continue to ignore the dynamics of the private realm in favour of attention to the public. The privileging of the public sphere is explored in a discussion of social reaction to violence, and, specifically, the social panic surrounding current levels of criminality. This leads us to contemplate how notions of fear and insecurity are constructed. The attention paid to issues of citizen security is contrasted with the deep silences that characterise social reaction to violence in the private sphere, where notions of privacy often prevent intervention to assist victims. I argue that society becomes complicit with the aggressor through non-intervention. Tolerance of violence is learned and reinforced as experience of violence is minimised. Finally I look at the context of violence and, specifically, the role of the state and the wider social processes which contribute to the enduring silences surrounding "private" violence. This debate on the gendered dynamics of violence does not negate the existence of other polarising forces within society that can act as shields for violence, such as class and ethnicity. The discussion presented in no way pretends to be exhaustive, yet it provides a useful framework for moving towards greater understanding of how individuals and groups make sense of the often turbulent world around them.

Gendered myths and realities

According to Bourdieu (2001: 8), the "division between the sexes appears to be 'in the order of things', as people sometimes say to refer to what is normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable". The notion that such an order is inevitable and therefore seen as neutral, leaves it unquestioned by many and is testament to the real power behind constructs of "official" knowledge. Foucault (1980) promotes the need to examine how "official knowledges work as instruments of 'normalisation', continually attempting to manoeuvre populations into 'correct' and 'functional' forms of thinking and acting" (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 16). As such, these structures of knowledge direct how individuals and groups interact within a social context, creating the unspoken rules under which social relations are enacted.

One of the most enduring structures that prescribes appropriate behaviour is premised upon gender difference, which is interpreted to privilege masculinity. Feminists have been vociferous in their criticism of male bias in social enquiry and processes of knowledge construction. Despite the fact that the feminist project has been successful in challenging how we regard the gendered social order, this chapter argues, that popular epistemologies of violence which shape social reactions are still reliant on a masculinist view of the world. This has huge implications for how people fear, survive and understand the world around them. One of the most durable ways of structuring social relations is into the realms of "public" and "private". This distinction is discussed in order to frame the ensuing discussion on the toleration of some types of violence over others. To what extent does the division of social life into public and private spheres shape individual and social tendency to legitimate violence?

Public-private: a relational distinction

Notions of public and private have been used throughout modern history to separate life into what have been largely perceived as distinct spheres, although feminists have emphasised the interrelation between the two (see, for example, Craske, 1999; Cubbitt and Greensalde, 1997; de Barbieri, 1991; Pateman 1987). Though not explicitly spatial categorisations, de Barbieri (1991: 205) highlights that private has come to be regarded as

synonymous with the domestic sphere: "*el ámbito físico de la vivienda y sus alrededores y las relaciones parentales e 'intimas' que tienen lugar en 'él*"[1] Such a division has had implications on many levels of life, such as human rights (see: Jelin, 1997), economic roles (see Tiano, 1984, Harris, 1994), political participation (see Craske, 1999) and the area under scrutiny here, violence. The notion of "private", however, has historically signified more than a physical space or relational dynamic, rather it goes to the very core of understanding the reproduction of gender inequalities. The division has been so taken for granted that the dynamics of private life were long missing from mainstream analyses of social reality. Indeed, feminist critiques of the "bounding" of the public and private spheres are still pertinent to the study of violence.[2]

Cubitt and Greenslade (1997) remind us that this is an analytical distinction, rather than a description of human reality. However, they emphasise that these powerful spatial metaphors embody this particular ideology. The private is seen as pertaining to the family and reproduction. It has, therefore, been regarded as the site for much of women's activity. The private realm has been considered as central to the "natural" order of things, whereas the public is understood as being "socially determined" (Klimpel, 1994, cited in Cubitt and Greenslade, 1997: 52). As such, the dynamics of the private realm are naturalised and viewed as normal. Chapter Five examined the normalisation of certain types of violence in the private realm that were understood as *normal* expressions of a male gendered identity. Pateman (1987: 284) suggests that the private sphere has been the "natural subordinate". Conversely, the public sphere has been associated with being a male domain. It is the site of political struggle and production and, as such, has been awarded great significance in both policy and academic endeavours.[3]

The feminist maxim "the personal is political" was a direct critique of the relegation of women's political voice into the private sphere where, as de Barbieri (1991) pointed out, relations have been naturalised and depoliticised. Pateman (1987: 282) warns that this

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[1] The physical space of the home and its surrounds and the family and intimate relations that take place in 'it'.
[2] See Crawley (2000) whose analysis of gendered dynamics of the process of seeking asylum in the UK offers an interesting reflection on how sustaining divisions of public/private affect the recognition of different types of violence and the implications for women refugees. Crawley's analysis, which echoes early feminist critiques of the distinction, provides a sobering reminder of the validity, indeed, necessity, of a feminist lens in the study of violence. The division of public and private has very serious ramifications for women in terms of policy and the search for justice. This point is also raised in Chapter One.
[3] This was discussed in Chapter Two in relation to violence in contemporary El Salvador.

conceptualisation "obscures and mystifies the social reality it helps constitute". Her key criticism is centred on the alleged equality of the two spheres in liberal thought and the notion that they can be seen in abstraction from each other. She argues that the two spheres are "inextricably interrelated; they are the two sides of the single coin of liberal patriarchalism" (ibid: 284). The dynamics of one sphere should not, therefore, be analysed in isolation from the other. Indeed, feminist scholarship has endeavoured to stress that the division between the public and private realms has historically bolstered inequalities within gender relations, by concealing and even rendering invisible the inequalities and sexual politics of private existence.

Okin (1990) dismisses the validity of this dichotomy altogether, recalling "the personal *is* political, and the public/private dichotomy is a misleading concept which obscures the cyclical problem of inequalities between men and women" (emphasis in original, 1990: 124 as cited in Bryson, 1992: 176). While this assessment is tempting in that the division certainly masks deeply entrenched gender inequalities, Okin's total disqualification of the public/private dichotomy ignores its immense symbolic value in everyday life. As a vehicle for the organisation and representation of social and political life, the public/private dichotomy has become deeply embedded in ways of understanding the world. Behaviours and relationships vary from public to private and our way of seeing the world can be mediated by the distinction made between these two spheres. It is not that the distinction mirrors reality, rather it is that it has shaped how we understand and naturalise the gendered oppression that characterises much of social reality. Kelly (1988) has identified a continuum of violence from the private sphere of the family home to public places. It is the relational dynamics underpinning the violence that dictate its social meaning and not the realm in which it occurs. No strict boundaries mark these two spheres; they are ever changing. Key here is the notion of a ***relational*** continuum: people, issues and spaces can move along the continuum in both directions. This will be discussed below in reference to violence taking place in the public realm, yet still rendered private since it takes place within familial relations, i.e: a man hitting his partner in the street is seen as a "domestic/private" incident. Craske (1999) reminds us that this division has never been a realistic description of peoples' lives. Rather, it serves as an idealised account of social and gender relations that prescribe appropriate behaviour.

To dichotomise the study of violence into strict public and private spheres, as this thesis argues, is to ignore the very important linkages between the different realms of social existence in which violence is enacted: from the international arena and the state level to the level of the community and family relations (see, for example, Jacobs, Jacobson and Marchbak, 2000). Nevertheless, the continued subordination of private realms of existence reinforces the myths that serve to reproduce certain socially accepted behaviour, reinforcing not only persistent inequalities within the social order, but the violence that accompanies it. Stanko (1990) emphasises, much of the violence experienced by women occurs in the "private" realm and is therefore effectively separated from the consideration of "real violence".

> Whilst our attention is continuously attuned to that which happens in public places, there is a stony silence, almost a denial of the extent of violence that happens in private, usually between those who already know each other, however slightly. To the extent that it is acknowledged at all, *we assume that this private violence is normal*... The barriers of shame and embarrassment have silenced thoughts of private violence... the public discussion about women and violence only acknowledges women's fear of attack at the hands of strange men (Stanko, 1990: 9, emphasis added).

Indeed, Hamner and Saunders (1983) point out that specific types of violence cannot be sealed off into private versus public domains but that the same violence can occur in the home, the street or the workplace.[4] One of the exercises in the participatory workshops in El Boulevar was to define which types of violence occurred in the different spaces of participants' everyday lives.[5] The objectives were twofold. Firstly, I was interested in analysing what groups termed as violent and, secondly, whether they made any clear

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[4] Empirical evidence from El Salvador supports Hanmer and Saunders. Participants of community workshops on violence identified same *types* of violence in more than one sphere, e.g: sexual violence in the home and in the community. This will be discussed in Chapter Six.

[5] Due to constraints on time, the methodology was simplified and adapted according to the location. In the school, for example, after identifying different types of violence in their lives, the students divided their analysis into four categories: home, community, school and outside. This was followed by an exercise to determine which type of violence affects them most. The adult group used home, community and outside. For more discussion of the participatory workshops, see Chapters Three, Four and Appendix Three. The term *'afuera'*, meaning outside was meant to refer to beyond the community. The notion of boundaries between the community and can obviously be open to interpretation. My intention here was not to use these categories as strict spatial boundaries, rather to provide a framework in which individuals could identify the different types of violence that they encounter in their daily interactions.

distinctions in terms of where violence occurred. As the data below indicate (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2), there is a certain blurring of boundaries between certain types of violence. For example, in Figure 6.1 drugs appear in all four spaces: the home, the school, the community and beyond. Gossip appears in the home, the school and the community, yet is not mentioned as a problem that affects participants beyond the community. Child abuse, on the other hand, is seen as a problem pertaining to the home.

Figure 6.1: Spaces of violence (girls)

Home	**School**
Violence - child abuse Lack of work Discrimination between brothers and sisters Lack of money Problems with other people Lack of education Vices Drugs Gossip	Lack of water Small and hot classrooms Insults between schoolmates The tuckshop is bad Problems between students Strikes (Teachers) Drugs Lack of respect Gossip
Community	**Outside**
Gangs Rapes When there are problems with other gangs that come here Sale of drugs Gangmembers abusing neighbours Gangmembers abusing visitors Drugs Vices Lack of respect Gossip	Discrimination Robbery Transport Discrimination from other schools Drugs Vices Abuse Lack of respect

Source: Participatory Workshop with four girls in the School, El Boulevar, 13 May 2002

Figure 6.2 illustrates that husbands hit their wives in the home, the street and the bus. Nevertheless, the discussion below argues that this is act of violence is rendered private because it between a couple. Rape is problem that goes beyond the home, yet is rarely talked about and indeed, as Chapter Five pointed out, the violence of rape is often minimised and the victim is blamed. The gang problem affects people in both the community and wider society.

Figure 6.2: Spaces of violence (women)

Home	Community
Abuse from husbands	Here anything/everything can happen
Children that do not respect their parents	Killing
Fathers and mothers who are irresponsible with their children	Throwing bombs
Stepfathers that abuse their step-children	Danger from the gangs: a delicate issue
Poverty in the home that means that you can't give things to your children and they get angry[6]	The friends of residents commit crimes.
Rape	Problems between neighbours
	Insults
	Rape
	Murder

Outside
The authorities do not let street vendors work
Muggings
Drugs: drug addicts rob
Microbuses drive too fast; they do not respect passengers
Students throw stones at each other
Rivalry between gangs
Husband hits his wife in the street and on the bus
Insults

Source: Participatory Workshop with seven women, El Boulevar, 2 June 2002

The data presented in these figures demonstrate that a clear demarcation between the public and private spheres of everyday life is impossible. The previous chapter exposed high levels of deeply gendered violence throughout the histories of men and women under study. Their acceptance of such violence as valid and even admirable cannot be ignored, as it uncovers the intensely destructive relations that can dominate within the "private" realm. This contrasts starkly with prevalent notions of the home as a sanctuary, which has been particularly resonant at times of acute state brutality and in the context of high levels of criminality.[7] This thesis does not seek to discount the validity of a private realm, rather it questions what Stanko (1990: 97) has termed "an arbitrary privileging of the public aspect of social existence". The subordination of the private sphere in both academic endeavours

[6] The discussion in Chapter One highlights that not all definitions of violence take into account expressions of structural violence, such as poverty.

[7] For example, Corradi, Weiss Fagen and Garretón, (1992) discuss the how fear is politically and socially determined in times of state brutality, emphasising the importance of the private realm as a refuge. Cruz (2000) highlights the privatisation of public spaces in El Salvador with the emergence of gated communities and the abandonment of collective spaces. The survey carried out by IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO (2002) locates citizen security solely within the public realm, in the form of crime, effectively ignoring women and children's citizen security in the home.

(see Chapters One and Two) and popular epistemologies, as the previous chapter illustrated, continues to minimise and render invisible much of the violence that individuals endure on a daily basis. It is for this reason that the discussion below will analyse how the distinction works in popular epistemologies of violence as an explanatory tool to normalise and reproduce gender inequalities.

Responding to violence: a learned process?

Understanding how a society responds, or fails to respond, to different types of violence will be a vital component of any policy that aims to reduce violence in an effective manner. In the previous chapter, I mentioned individual and group propensity to grade violence in their lives. Mechanisms to understand the social order, which have been shaped by exposure to decades of state brutality, continue to reflect deep polarisation in the understanding of violence, such as good/bad, public/private. In El Salvador, observers have been critical of heavy-handed government initiatives to combat violence, suggesting that the binary logic where the "other" becomes an enemy of the state has been used to justify historic patterns of coercion (*Proceso*, 12 August 2003).[8] This thesis has sought to uncover some of the discourses that legitimise and reproduce violence. Among these is the continued use of a binary logic in defining and recognising violence. Many feminists have been critical of an "androcentric ideology" which promotes the use of powerful dualisms in the representation of social reality, pointing out the social power of such beliefs in orienting both policy and practice (Yllo, 1988: 39. See also, Harding, 1986). Indeed, Kelly and Radford (1996) argue that traditional or malestream epistemologies of violence have been constructed on the binary logic of exclusion/inclusion. In other words, what is or is not considered abuse and violence is defined largely from a masculinist perspective and, therefore, omits much of women's victimisation, thus rendering invisible the gender dynamics of violence.

It would be an impossible task to dissect the multiple expressions of violences identified by the interviewees, but this chapter builds upon the analysis offered in previous chapters in order to how perceptions of what is normal articulate and inform social reactions.[9] Chapter Four explored the many types of violence that have shaped the lives of the research participants, while the previous chapter exposed a world where physical abuse within familial relations is seen as a normal feature of daily life. One of the central questions of this research concerns how people recognise and define the violence in their lives. A feminist perspective has enhanced the discussion to highlight forms of violence that are often left out of mainstream/malestream analyses. Key to this chapter is an examination of how this process of omission occurs. In the light of the previous chapter's discussion of gender identities, I argue that gendered violence is still seen as normal since, to a large degree, it fits within socially acceptable boundaries of men's gendered behaviour.[10] In addition, it is rendered a "private" affair by virtue of the fact that much of it occurs within familial relations. This affects not only how individuals react, but also how society regards such violence.

Fear and insecurity: a privileging of public forms of violence?

Fear is also shaped by social norms and attitudes. Notions of an ideal-type family stand in stark contrast with the brutality of the home as reflected in many of the interview narratives. Interview data and literature on violence suggest that crime and gangs appear particularly threatening in contemporary El Salvador.[11] Speaking of Chile, Lechner (1992:

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[8] The *Proceso* editorial argues that the current government uses a discourse that dehumanises criminals, specifically gangmembers, in order to justify coercive measures against them. Flores has intimated that the anti-gang law is a matter of state pride and the state must display its strength in the face of gang violence. In one public address, he stated: *Las bandas criminales han descendido a peligrosos niveles de degradaación moral y barbarie. Todos hemos conocido de decapitaciones, mutilaciones, actos satánicos y descuartizamientos cometidos contra menores, ancianos y mujeres indefensas. Es hora de liberarnos ante este flagelio*(El Diario de Hoy, 24 July 2003). Translation: the criminal gangs have descended into dangerous levels of moral degradation and barbarism. We have all known cases of decapitations, mutilations, satanic acts and dismembering committed against minors, old people and defenceless women. It is time we freed ourselves from this plague.

[9] In focus groups held in El Boulevar, participants identified over twenty five different types of violence in each group.

[10]This does not mean that the boundaries of men's "acceptable" behaviour are static, nor does it suggest that women are merely passive victims of men's violence. Women's agency in resisting and surviving men's violence has been ignored in much literature (see, for example, Kelly, 2000). Furthermore, this thesis has highlighted that women, in their gendered role of mothers, use violence against their children.

[11] This is not only true of El Salvador, but the fear of the dangerous stranger is a global phenomenon, based, as this thesis argues, on masculinist assumptions of social reality. See Stanko (1988) for a discussion of the

27) suggests that a fixation on crime allows individuals to trace their fears to a "concrete origin... when the danger is confined to a visible, clearly identifiable cause that has been officially stamped as 'evil', the fear can be brought under control." The fear of crime is, therefore, a manner of expressing other, silenced fears. Silent fears, he argues, are both a product of and a premise for authoritarianism as they reinforce a sense of personal and collective impotency with regard to the dynamics of the public realm. Without collective referents, society fragments and "thence is born the fear of difference and the suspicion and even hatred of the other" (ibid; 29). In popular discourse, dualisms are employed to make sense of the world, to create an "illusion of order" (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 12). Key to this thesis is to question who benefits from this "illusion".

A recent survey from El Salvador demonstrates that 81.6 per cent of citizens feel insecure in the centre of their city or village (IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO, 2002: 18). The social panic concerning the "dangerous stranger" has led to an abandonment of many public spaces. According to one survey in El Boulevar, 44.6 per cent of respondents testified to not attending an activity at night for fear that something will happen to them outside the community and 69.2 per cent felt that they have to be inside the house early due to problems that occur inside the community. Figures for La Vía demonstrate that 46.4 per cent refrain from attending activities outside the community while 51.8 per cent feel they have to be inside the house early (see Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff, 2003). Table 6.1 highlights some of the strategies adopted by individuals due to fear of crime in the municipal jurisdiction of Soyapango, where both communities are located. The figures indicate that the most common reaction is to limit interaction in the public realm. 61.2 per cent opt to live in closed areas (*lugares cerrados*) whereas 28.8 per cent become involved in neighbourhood organisations. Chapters Two and Four explored the atomisation of communities and the increasing sense of vulnerability in the face of arbitrary criminal victimisation. The polarisation of society, therefore, is both a cause and a consequence of the symbolic power imbued in a fear of the "other", of crime. "*La participación, entonces, se restringe a la defensa de lo privado dado que lo público se da ya por pérdido*" (Cruz, 2000: 617).[12] Lechner (1992: 31.) sees the process of "instrumentalization of fears" as a mechanism of social discipline:

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gendered construction of insecurity in the UK and Rotker *et al* (2001) who analyse constructions of fear and insecurity in Latin America.

> It is a strategy of depoliticization that does not require repressive means, except to exemplify the absence of alternatives. It suffices to induce a sense of personal and collective inability to have any effective influence over the public realm. Then the only alternative is to take refuge in the private realms in the hope (albeit in vain) of finding minimal security in intimacy.

Fear of the public realm, therefore, has negative repercussions on associational life. Moreover, given the high levels of violence in the home, one must question the notion of the home as a refuge, especially for women and children.

Table 6.1:

Behaviour of residents due to fear of crime in Soyapango[13]

Reaction to crime	Percentage of respondents
Limit shopping	61.5
Limit recreation	60.9
Close Business	19.0
Live in closed areas	61.2
Acquire guns	29.4
Move neighbourhood	41.5
Organise neighbours	28.8

Source: Adapted from IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO 2002: 22

The social panic surrounding current levels of criminality in El Salvador creates a situation where many condone, if not openly advocate, the use of violence and the restriction of democratic practices. This was discussed in previous chapters in relation to Salvadoran society's treatment of gangs. Cruz (2003a: 62) cites figures from El Salvador that demonstrate that 55 per cent of Salvadorans would support a *coup d'état* in the face of the perceived anarchy of widespread criminality and points to Seligson's (2001) claim that insecurity is an important predictor for supporting an authoritarian regime. Such contradictions are not uncommon in many societies throughout the world. Among their

[12] Participation is restricted, therefore, to the defence of the private given that the public is seem as lost.

suggestions to combat violence, a group of students in El Boulevar mentioned more drastic laws and greater police presence. This is in spite of the fact that they are critical of police harassment of them. Nevertheless, they also mentioned more solidarity and better communication, highlighting that weak community networks are understood to exacerbate the problem of violence.

To date, there has been little articulate and cohesive state responses to violence and criminality. State policies have been largely coercive - more police, longer sentences, less impunity, the stigmatisation of young people and the use of gangs as scapegoats Interview with Marcela Smutt, UNDP, 22 January 2002). Some preventative initiatives have been facilitated by the *Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (CNSP) which works with communities in Greater San Salvador to encourage social organisation, recuperation of abandoned public spaces, promoting sport in communities, as well as cultural and educational activities (interview with César Rivera, Executive Director CNSP, 15 January 2002).[14] Furthermore, the PNC has tried to strengthen relations with communities with their community policing initiative - PIPCOM. However, such projects are isolated and the response to violence in the country is still somewhat fragmented with little co-ordination beyond the state bodies whose specific remit is security, i.e: PNC, CNSP and judiciary. There is very little explicit co-ordination with other bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, ISDEMU or the *Instituto Salvadoreño para la Protección del Menor* (ISPM). Instead, policies tend to be primarily repressive, based on combating existing expressions of crime and violence.

Cruz (2000) speaks of continued respect for authoritarianism in El Salvador. As previously argued, this occurs in both public and private realms. Authoritarian practices have marked social reality for decades, becoming central elements of Salvadoran political culture. Recent military presence to combat gangs has been welcomed by citizens and newspaper reports attest to them feeling more *tranquilos* (*La Prensa Gráfica*, 24 July 2003).

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[13] For figures from other municipalities, see IUDOP/FUNDAUNGO, 2002.

[14] These are, however, largely restricted to Greater San Salvador, with limited work in Sonsonate.

Figure 6.3:

Student responses to the problem of violence

Que haya más gente cuidando (PNC)	That there are more people on the look out (PNC)
Que las personas sean más solidarias	That people show more solidarity
Que las leyes sean más drásticas	More drastic laws
Que realicen buenas investigaciones	Better investigation
Que haya mejor comunicación	Better communication

Source: Focus Group El Boulevar, 13 May 2002

Criminality, gangs and related forms of public violence have become the voiced expressions of fear and insecurity.[15] Nonetheless, this privileging of the public realms of existence, in both academic research and popular discourse, have ignored and invalidated the terror that many people, particularly women and children, live with on a daily basis within the "refuge" of the private sphere.[16] In many respects, this has led to a normalisation of such fear and violence, to such a degree that even those who are subject to it barely recognise it as valid.

In the Legislative Assembly, there is a clear demarcation between public security and issues of intra-family violence. The former comes under the remit of the *Comisión de Seguridad Pública y Combate a la Narcoactividad* (Commission for Public Security and Prevention of Drug-related Crime), while intra-family violence is seen as a problem for the *Comisón de la Mujer y la Niñez* (interview with Manuel Melgar, president of *Comisión de Seguridad Pública y Combate a la Narcoactividad,* 28 January 2002). This relegation of the problem of intra-family violence to the sidelines of the security debate is telling of an enduring privileging of public expressions of violence on the national political agenda. Such attitudes reveal the complexity of popular understandings of violence. On the one hand,

[15] Chapter Four highlights how groups are affected by different types of violence. Chapter Five suggests that there is a privileging of public expressions of violence within the construction of memory.

[16] The previous chapter suggested that there was a privileging of public forms of violence in the narratives of the research participants. Chapter Two pointed to the dearth of analyses of domestic violence in El Salvador in comparison to a growing interest in issues of public security.

much of society condemns criminal violence, yet voices its support for the use of authoritarian measures to combat it. Many minimise violence against women, while simultaneously offering explanations and justifications for men's violent behaviour. There is noise about the perils of kidnapping, yet barely murmurs when hundreds of women are raped. Are reactions to violence, therefore, a marker for the meaning ascribed to the different types? The next section analyses the implications of the public/private divide in relation to gendered violence. Specifically, it explores how popular notions of privacy serve to reproduce silences surrounding domestic violence.

A greater good or lesser evil? The victim/perpetrator relationship

There exists a certain paradox in the fact that people use and condemn violence at the same time. Key to understanding violence is to accept such internal contradictions. To make sense of violence is to expose these inconsistencies. The last chapter discussed the case of María Dolores who condemns her mother's use of violence, yet beats her own children. Violence in either case may not be right but is it functional? She adopts a discourse of "lesser evil" where it is better to hit the son now than have him become a gambler later. The rationale for her violence, in this instance, was based upon this notion of "greater good" or "lesser evil". The assessment of the violence is, therefore, dependent upon the perspective of the narrator and the relationship between the perpetrator/victim. Such notions inform perceptions of the validity of violence and offer socially accepted explanations. This is illustrative of the existence of hierarchies of violence, where those individuals that have more social/gendered power consider that they are legitimate in their use of violence. Indeed, Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003: 145) link this to notions of property: "*La relaciones intimas se confunden mucho con relaciones de propiedad. Las frases 'ella es mi mujer' o 'estos son mis hijos' sufren un cambio esencial de sentido*".[17] Therefore, Violence against children, from a parent's perspective, appears to makes sense. The objective is clear and the relationship between the parent and child is perceived as such that he/she has a right/duty

[17] Intimate relations are often confused with property relations. The meaning of phrases, 'she is my wife' or 'these are my kids' undergo an essential change. This was also discussed in the previous chapter with relation to José's criticism of his partner's subjection to violence at the hands of a gang in contrast with his admission of using violence against her.

to bring him/her up well. Violence is seen as being effective because it gets results quickly. One man says:

> *Con el cinchо los castigaba siempre por cosas. Es que, mire, y eso es mentira de que algunos niños van a hacer caso solamente porque se les apaga la televisión. Que no jodan, eso es mentira. O porque se les dice, mire no te voy a comprar pan. Hay que castigarlos, hay que aplicarles, el golpe que les duele ... es necesario aplicarles el cinchо a los hijos y que me vengan ahí diciendo que los traumas no, y si yo ya soy viejo pues y recibí clases de castigos brutales, pues* (Esteban, 64 years old, El Boulevar).[18]

Such values are central to the reproduction of violence. They have become deeply entrenched in ways of thinking about and understanding the world, so much so that this man actively supports the use of violence against children. He sees it as his duty as a father to discipline his children with violence. He was subject to violence and feels that it did him more good than harm, so continues to apply the same logic to his own parenting. Such values are necessary to make sense of the world, for they provide order to a messy reality. Value systems, however, are not set in stone and, in this case, are based on a mythical value which has been ascribed to the violence. The perceived functionality of violence is passed on through generations till it becomes an element of normative behaviour. While the notion that violence is functional may be resonant in popular discourse, this thesis argues that this is merely an enduring social myth that serves to normalise this negative force in everyday life. The next section examines shifting identities and behaviours.

Public/private identities and behaviours

Another interviewee, Enrique, from El Boulevar highlighted his "double image", referring to an almost schizophrenic division of his behaviour in public and private realms. On the one hand, he perceives himself as a responsible teacher who treats colleagues and students with respect. He values this role and strives to keep up this image by not using bad language or violence and never drinking near the school. Yet, Enrique recognises that this person is left at this front door and at home his "mask" comes off. He clearly demarcates

[18] I always punished them with the belt. Look, it's rubbish that some kids are going to pay attention just because you don't let them watch television. Don't talk shite. It's a lie. Or because you say I am not going to

the boundaries of his own behaviour, highlighting a tension between his public and private faces.

> *Es sube y baja por mi mismo genio, que yo quisiera que todo lo hicieran como yo digo, pero algunas veces yo no me pongo a pensar que son unas criaturas todavía. Regaño, ultrajo. La mayor tiene 13 años la menor tiene 9 y yo vengo y ultrajo y eso me echa en cara ella. Es que vos no podes hablar si no vas ultrajando a la gente. Y que voy a ser si yo soy así? Todavía me dice si es que yo te he visto en el colegio, que barbaridad? O sea que cambio, me dice, o sea vos en tu colegio, dios guarde, si es el intachable Profesor Gómez, el único pues. No hay otro. Da gusto pues verte a vos, dando clase. Como manejas tu léxico tu vocabulario, tu forma de ser, o sea, tráeme a ese Enrique para acá, o sea, no lo dejes en el colegio por que sí, yo manejo una doble cara y de eso si soy consiente manejo una doble imagen.... Es difícil cargarla y la vengo cargando durante años. Darle la mejor imagen y no solo darla si no que sostenerla realmente es bien difícil. Bueno, yo ya saliendo del colegio vengo por la calle echándome mis cigarros, pero solo los días viernes saliendo de allí me vengo a echar mi par de tragos o algo, y, o sea, ahorita el sábado y el domingo es para el otro, es para hoby. Ya mañana entra en acción el profesor Gómez.*(Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[19]

Enrique's narrative makes a very clear distinction between his public and private identities. He even talks about his public "face" in the third person: *el profesor Gómez*, as if this were a different person or a role that he is adopting. In a sense, there is recognition that his behaviour is so removed from his "private" role that he becomes a different person. Identity and, therefore, behaviour are regulated by the spaces in which he moves. More accurately, identity is coloured by the individuals with whom he interacts. It is relational. In his home he considers himself *la máxima autoridad*,[20] as prescribed by a patriarchal social order where the man is the undisputed head of the family. In his workplace, however, he

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buy you bread. You have to punish them, hit them where it hurts.. it is necessary to use the belt on your children and don't talk to me about traumas. Sure I am old and I received those kinds of brutal punishments.

[19] It is up and down because of my temper. I want everything to be just as I want, but sometimes I think about the fact that that they are still children. I scold; I insult them. The oldest one is thirteen years old and the youngest nine, and I come and insult them and she [his wife] throws it in my face. You can't speak if you are not insulting someone. And what am I to do if I am like that? Still, she says to me, I have seen you at school, what a transformation; I mean what a change! She says, you in your school, God help us, it is the untouchable Mr Gómez, the one and only. There is no one else. It's lovely to see you teaching. How you control your language, your vocabulary, the way you are. Bring me that Enrique here. Don't leave him at school. You see I do have two faces and I am conscious of having this double image. It is difficult to keep it up, it is, and I have been keeping it going for years. Showing my best face and not just showing it but sustaining it is really difficult. Well, when I leave school I smoke my cigarettes in the street. I only have a few drinks or something like that on Fridays. Now, Saturday and Sunday are for other things, for my hobbies. Tomorrow Mr Gómez goes into action again.

[20] Maximum authority.

must conform to a system in which he is not the maximum authority and, thus, his behaviour is modified. An idealtype "macho" or hegemonic masculinity is not static and, indeed, is difficult to sustain, as the narrative testifies. Moreover, he voices his complete awareness of the contradictions in his interpersonal relations. This distinction, although highlighting the importance of social structures of oppression in influencing behaviours and identities, cannot be considered an inevitable force. No other interviewee articulated a distinction quite so forcefully. Notions of masculinity and the public and private distinction are not monolithic. The boundaries of the distinction can and do change. To borrow from Gutmann (1996: 245):

> As social actors, men and women are presented with stages and scripts not of their own choosing. What they do creatively within these social and cultural constraints, and how originally they perform their roles, however, is not preordained. There is room to maneuver.

Furthermore, Enrique's narrative indicates that this man has the capacity to reject violence in his workplace. He claims that he does not use violence in the classroom. This demonstrates that he possesses an element of choice in whether to use violence or not. Choice, in this sense, cannot be regarded as an individual and straightforward yes/no process. It is important to emphasise that choices are socially shaped. Indeed, Hearn (1998) warns against a narrow analysis of individual responsibility for that would ignore structures that give meaning to violence. The challenge is to dissect the larger systems of oppression and exploitation that allow violence to be an acceptable and routine element of everyday social and political interaction. These hierarchies of violence explain violence in certain circumstances and within relationships. For example, why does Enrique choose to use violence at home but not in school? Disentangling the triangle of agency, structure and conjuncture is not straightforward, for the three are mutually reinforcing and ever present in everyday life. Many factors combine, as this thesis demonstrates, to create a context for violence. These are both individual and social. Ramos (2000: 9) terms such conditions *factores posibilitadores*.[21] The levels of violence apparent in the communities under study (and, indeed, the levels of reported crime and violence in wider society) suggest a society that

[21] Factors that trigger or facilitate violence.

possesses few non-violent alternatives for resolving conflict. This was also discussed in Chapter Four in relation to community conflicts. Such an approach does not aim to excuse individual men (and women) of responsibility for their actions, rather it seeks to understand why much of society continues to minimise such responsibility.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that many men do not transform so radically in their different social roles. Indeed, many do not to resort to violence as an expression of their gender identity. One man in La Vía said that he had learned from his mother's experience with his father and rejected using violence. [22] As an alternative to the *mara*, he encouraged young men in his community to play football. The fact that such individuals exist bears testament to the fact that there is nothing inevitable about violence. However, for those men who continue to use violence, the public/private distinction can serve as a shield to obscure their behaviour and even perpetuate such actions by the rendering them as "private". Dobash and Dobash (1988: 57) have termed this "patriarchal privacy", which creates a scenario where enduring violence is maintained out of a sense of loyalty to their partner.

Patriarchal privacy: "*it's as if you don't even know because you do nothing about it*"

As the last chapter indicated, there was a degree of reluctance, at least initially, for men and women to talk about certain types of violence. Different forms of silence have been threaded through the analysis presented in this thesis. Here it is important to discuss how notions of privacy inform society's silence with regard to violence within the private sphere. Despite the fact that a focus group in El Boulevar (2 June 2002) indicated that *en los hogares es raro el que no este afectado en ese sentido*, most people still refuse to get involved in cases of violence against women or children.[23] The impunity that characterises violence in the private sphere, is not a problem unique to El Salvador, but a global one. Speaking of political violence, Torres Rivas (1999: 56) suggests that "there is no greater complicity than indifference". The same argument can be applied to violence against women and children. The deference to the privacy of such violence can arguably be understood as an expression

[22] The British NGO CIIR (Catholic Institute of International Relations) is currently facilitating a series of workshops throughout Latin America with men on issues of masculinity and violence. See Welsh (2001) for an account of Nicaraguan men's experience of unlearning machismo.

of social tolerance. Violence against women and children is so widespread within the research group that it was rarely seen as deviating normal gendered behaviour. Individuals in the communities claimed that it is none of their business and therefore they (un)wittingly become complicit with the aggressor.

> MH: *¿Y eso se habla, o se queda detrás de la puerta?*
> *No, eso se queda detrás de la puerta, o sea, a menos que ya sean problemas demasiado grandes que ya, que ya salgan, se meten allí, es que uno se da cuenta, pero de lo contrario, no, todo se da tras la puerta. O que ya sean golpes bien visibles, en la mujer, pues, en la cara, o en los hijos, laceraciones en, en las piernas, en la espalda, entonces, es que uno se da cuenta. Pero, sólo se da cuenta. Es como que no se da cuenta porque uno no hace nada pues, o sea por no tener problemas con el vecino, pues, porque uno dice, a pues sí, penquea a la mujer ha, porque no lo deja pues, es el decir de uno, porque no lo deja* (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[24]

Within this framework for understanding the world, violent behaviour in the home can be explained and even justified because it takes place within the private realm. The responsibility is attributed to the woman since she remains in a violent relationship. People do not respond because they do not want "problems" with their neighbours. It only becomes a public issue if the degree of force used is "excessive". Notions of excessive force vary in different contexts and are dependent on the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. It is also shaped by the presence of a third party or witness. This will be discussed below with reference to my identity as an "outsider" in El Boulevar. In the case of violence against women by intimate partners, there exist a repertoire of social rationalisations that minimise the force used (Ptacek, 1988). The previous chapter offered various accounts of experiences of using and receiving violence, which were understood under the legitimising discourse of traditional patriarchal values, such as chastisement and discipline. The continued division of life into public and private realms upholds such a discourse by promoting the complicity of individuals and their communities. The popular belief that a man hitting his wife is a private matter still enjoys wide currency today. Men

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[23] It is rare the home that is not affected by it [violence].

[24] MH: and do you talk about it or does it stay behind closed doors?
No, it stays behind closed doors. Well, unless the problems are too serious, that they come out, [to the street]. That's how you find out but otherwise everything stays behind closed doors. Or sometimes the women's wounds are visible, on her face, or the kids, lacerations on the legs, on the back. Then you know what's going on. But you just know about it. It's as if you don't even know because you do nothing. I mean, you don't want

and women alike testified to witnessing actual cases of women and children being beaten but they did not intervene in this "private" matter.[25] In the conditions that the two communities lived, strict notions of privacy are unfeasible. People live in cramped conditions and yet the symbolic power of the private realm is huge.

The power of spatial metaphors: the role of the third party and the fear of "private" violence becoming "public"

The discussion thus far has examined how violence within the context of the family is met with silence by the victims and residents of the case study communities.[26] This was also discussed in Chapter Four in relation to learning silence in the face of political violence. Non-involvement can be regarded as ambivalence or acceptance of a particular act of violence. The neighbourhood is aware of the violence, yet does not intervene. According to Savenije and Andrade Eekhoff (2003: 23) witnesses have an important role in influencing others' perceptions of violence. The presence of a third party to witness violence not only leaves it open to interpretation, but raises questions on the boundaries of the private realm.

One day during the period of fieldwork, I was sitting in the doorway of a house in El Boulevar talking to a resident. Her neighbour's son was playing in front of the house and his mother called him inside. When the child did not go into the house, she came out with a belt. The woman I was talking to was visible from the street but I was not. The neighbour lifted the belt to the son as if she was going to hit him. She then saw me, greeted me and immediately began to caress the son with the belt instead of hitting him. Both went next door to their house and I then heard the woman beating her son. This incident raises many questions about the boundaries of violence (as well as my status as an outsider). The woman was willing to hit her child in front of her neighbour but not in front of me,

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to have problems with your neighbour. Everyone says, if he hits his wife, why doesn't she leave him? That's what we say, why doesn't she leave him?

[25] I wish to emphasise that I am not making a moral judgement about non-intervention, rather emphasising the prevalence of "turning a blind eye". I also witnessed cases of violence as part of my fieldwork in El Salvador and have lived beside a family where the man physically and verbally abuses his wife for much of the writing up stage in Liverpool. I did not intervene in either context.

[26] There have been examples from other Latin American countries where individuals and social organisations have become involved in issues of "intra-family"" violence. One former colleague from *Movimento de Mujeres Mélida Anaya Montes* told me of a project in Cuba where women banged pots and when they realised that a man was beating his wife. In El Boulevar, support between women was offered quietly for fear that husbands would find out, yet strong solidarity networks did exist.

suggesting that notions of privacy move beyond the home and into the community.[27] The fact that she felt it was not acceptable to hit the child in front of the "foreigner" suggests that she recognised that it was not a "good" thing to use violence against the child. Did she believe that going into her house would make it invisible, render it private?

The fact that there was an outsider present gave the act of violence a different meaning. If it were entirely acceptable, my presence should not have mattered. This was a tension that I also felt when talking to interviewees about violence against women. Many, at least initially, felt embarrassed talking about personal experiences. Bringing such matters under public scrutiny was risky and many felt that talking about their subjection to violence was to strip them of a sense of dignity. There was a deep contradiction in the narratives. On the one hand, violence was accepted as an element of normal men's behaviour and as an effective tool for disciplining children. On the other, however, people's discomfort (including my own) at talking about violence suggested a recognition that one should not use violence. In the very least, one should not talk about or publicise the violence that one uses. Violence is ingrained with moral tension. It is recognised as harmful but also understood, as empirical data demonstrates, as functional. When violence becomes public, it is open to scrutiny and interpretation. As such it is ascribed a whole new range of meanings. Individual and socially approved rationalisations are also open to scrutiny with the presence of the third party, the witness. The persistence of symbolic divisions that maintain silence about violence can remove it from judgement. Such divisions may be merely symbolic, yet possess tremendous power to shape normative behaviour. In this case, I still heard her beating her son even though I could not see her. Like the residents, I did not intervene. This episode is suggestive of the continued power of perceived spatial boundaries in perpetuating violent behaviour.

[27]Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003) whose study is based on five communities in greater San Salvador, including the two case-study communities, argue that the physical conditions of the communities mean that there is little private space. Indeed, spaces for public interaction are also limited due to overcrowding and the uneven distribution of houses.

What is private?

Notions of privacy and silences are connected to deep fears that permeate social existence. The powerful symbolism of the private world is reinforced by high levels of violence in other realms. Notions of non-intervention shape behaviour in a multiplicity of spaces and are regulated by persistent fear. This was discussed in reference to political violence in Chapter Four. Given the simmering violence of the two communities under study, residents expressed their reluctance to get involved in "private" matters, despite the fact that people are clearly aware of the violence that exists. Strict notions of "privacy" are not possible in the context of these communities. The walls are thin and houses are very close together. In a middle class area where houses are further apart, it is possible to keep problems of domestic violence more hidden from public view. In these case-study communities the symbolic power of the physical space of the private realm remains huge. One group of women from La Vía highlighted that they would not intervene for fear of what might happen to them.[28] "*Llamar a la PNC da miedo porque pueden vigiar a uno y tronar a uno*" (woman in focus group, La Vía, 02 April 2002).[29] Indeed, one woman in El Boulevar did try to defend her sister and was punched by her own partner. He said she deserved it for being *metida*.[30]

> *Todos los dias venia bolo, le picaba hasta las tortillas envueltas en manta. A mi hermana, agarraba la ropa de m hermana y se la triraba adentro de la pila; a ella la sacaba afuera a puros cinchazos a mi hermana. Viera como le ha sufrido mi hermana, y sigue con él. Sí. Ah pues, entonces vino ese día, venía el viejo con el martillo y fue entrando y le pegó con el martillo a mi hermana aqui, y fue dándole duro con el martillo y se le puso así el gran chindono, ve. Esos martillos son pesados, de puro hierro, y entonces venía él allá mire, y yo le dije al viejo, y le dije la gran palabra, no le pegue así a mi hermana, porque usted no es su tata ni su nana le dije yo, no ni su nana que la parió ni el tata que la engendró para que le pegue así, dije yo al viejo. Y entonces me ultrajo y me dijo él [her hsband], y eso con quien es? me dijo. A saber, le dije, como el viejo estaba bolo. Con ella es, porque es bien metida le dijo el viejo, yo tengo problemas aquí con la mujer y ella se está metiendo le dijo, y entonces vino él y le fue a pegar dos trompones a don Mateo, y él va de regañarme a mí porque yo, yo me metía en problema... deje de andarse metiendo en esos problemas que no te incumben. A pues, me importan porque*

[28] Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003) suggest that notions of non-intervention are reciprocal. Neighbours do not become involved in others' affairs and, in return, no one gets intervenes in their "private" matters.
[29] We are afraid to call the police because they might see you and thump you.
[30] Nosy.

> *es mi hermana y usted no tiene que decirme nada porque no es mi tata.. Yo no salía ni al servicio, no teníamos servicios aquí porque eran cuartitos pequeñitos. Yo tenía que hacer en cumbo y lo tenía que ir a botar en la noche ya para que la gente no me viera todo morado* (María Dolores, 48 years old, El Boulevar).[31]

Women's experiences are often invalidated by wider society and they are chastised for violating this "patriarchal privacy". In this case, this woman was "punished" by her own husband for trying to defend her sister. Notions of privacy here refer clearly to the power relations between men and women as the incident took place on the street, which is considered a "public" place. The previous chapter offered the example of the woman, also from El Boulevar, whose family refused to intervene to defend her, despite the brutality of her husband. Her reasoning centred on the fact that, as his wife, he had the right to beat her: "*como yo era la mujer de él.*"[32] This is a telling statement of women's status within patriarchal relations.

Learning tolerance: identity of victim/perpetrator

From an early age, women have been subject to the authority of their fathers and mothers. The socialisation process of many interviewees - both men and women - was often marked by violence. For many women, violence is still a routine component of their most intimate relations. As the previous chapter argued, some women expect violence as part of their intimate relations. Many have not known any other reality. People do not only learn to use violence, they also learn to accept and tolerate it. The silence that obscures

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[31] Every day he came home drunk. Everything annoyed him even the tortillas wrapped up in a cloth. My sister, he used to grab my sister's clothes and throw them into the sink. He used to chase her out of the house with a belt. God, how my sister has suffered and she is still with him. Well, one day he came along with a hammer and when he went in he hit my sister with the hammer here [on the head] and he kept hitting her hard with the hammer and she had a big bump here. Those hammers are heavy, pure iron, and then he came here and I said to him. I said the bad word, don't you hit my sister like that because you are not her father or her mother. I said, you're not her mother who gave birth to her nor her father who engendered her so you have no right to hit her like that. So he [her brother in law] insulted me and he [her partner] asked what it was all about. I don't know[partner], I told him, as he [brother in law] was drunk. It's with her because she is nosy, the old man said. I have problems here with my wife and she is sticking her nose in. So he [partner] came along and hit Don Mateo twice and then gave me a hard time because I got involved... stop sticking your nose in where it doesn't belong. They do concern me because she is my sister and who are you to be saying anything to me, you're not my father.. I didn't go out, not even to the toilet, we didn't have a toilet here because the rooms were too small. I had to go in a bucket and then dispose of it at night so that people wouldn't see me all bruised.

[32] Because I was his wife.

much of the violence within the private realm is intertwined with dominant discourses awarding importance to the patriarchal family to create a situation where women's experiences are minimised and invalidated by society. Violence, in this case, has become naturalised and, to a certain extent, rationalised. There exists a tacit acceptance of men's aggression, especially within the structure of the family. Such a scenario effectively denies women and children the right to have rights and assures continued impunity for many of the crimes of the private realm. Women's position in society is structurally weaker than that of men and their opportunities for agency more limited. This has particular impact on their capacity to defend themselves effectively against violence. Kelly (2000) reminds us that women are active agents in resisting and surviving high levels of violence, but that an emphasis on the "agency" of the perpetrator effectively ignores such activity. This example reinforces the notion that there is a masculinist bias to the study of violence, with an emphasis on the agency of the perpetrator who is likely to be male.

Clutterbuck (1987: 101) points out, "the violence or force may be the same in any number of circumstances, but the legality of its use may differ... the 'right' to use force does not make it right". Without getting into a debate on morality or moral judgement, it is important to highlight that the interviewees' narratives did reveal a sense that some types of violence were more "right" than others. This was discussed in the previous chapter in relation to individual propensity to grade violence. For example, narratives suggest that men have more "right" to use violence than women, as their gender identity prescribes the use of force. Women, on the other hand, as mothers may discipline their children with violence since it is "for their own good". Such notions of "right" were not only based on the legality of such acts, for violence against women and children is now illegal, but also were supported by social and cultural norms that make it acceptable for individuals to use violence against others in certain contexts. This was discussed previously in relation to the "punishment" of children. According to Eteban (64 years old, El Boulevar), who makes a distinction between *maltrato* (abuse) and a *golpe* (thump):

> *Sí eso se puede dar cuando tal vez la pareja no se conoce bien, cuando inicia uno talvez y hay una talvez actitud de celos, o sea de parte de la pareja. En veces la incomodidad da un golpe.*
> *MH: Se justifica eso entonces?*

Se justifica entonces, porque solo es un golpe a consecuencia de eso, del problema, pero no seguir.[33]

He justifies hitting a woman due to provocation and makes a distinction between repeated abuse. Interestingly, his partner of over twenty years, María Dolores, spoke of several episodes of violence throughout their relationship. The fact that the instances of physical violence were isolated events lessened their severity in her eyes. The violence in the relationship was minimal in comparison to her relationship with a previous partner. In contrast, Esteban was seen as a good man and she loved him. Her threshold for tolerating violence is high, given that she has been subject to repeated violence from an early age. Her case stands in contrast with Carlos (32 years old) from La Vía who recalls a very painful event where his father beat him so badly that he had to be hospitalised.

Mi papá me castigó, pero, como venia ebrio verdad y quiso agredir a mi mamá y yo me metí en medio a desapartarlo, y más que todo, haciendo un poco de lado a mi mamá, porque ella tenía la razón. Y vino él y se saco el cincho y se lo enrolló en la mano, va. Y como yo andaba con un pantalón, bien me acuerdo que andaba con un 'pans' Se enrolló el cincho y me pegó. Me pegó en un testículo. Entonces yo pase varios días mal y me llevaron al hospital y todo, pero ese día, ese mismo rato que me pegó, el que me pegó el cinchazo en un testículo, si hubo una discusión que llegaron al grado de agarrarse porque mi mamá no estaba de acuerdo como me había castigado. Y yo lloraba más de resentimiento que el me había pegado, más que del dolor, porque como yo siempre me llevaba bien con él, y nunca me había castigado a palos. Y me castigó así. Así es que por eso fue que se agarraron agredirse y desde ese día al siguiente día se fue.[34]

[33] This can happen when, maybe the couple don't know each other very well, at the begining of a relationship perhaps and maybe the partner is jealous or something. Sometimes discomfort results in a slap.
MH: and is that justified?
Yes, that's justified because it is just a slap because of the problem, it is not continuous.

[34] My father punished me, but because he was drunk, you know, and he wanted to hurt my mum. I went in to separate them, really to move my mum to one side because she was in the right. He came and he took off his belt, rolled it up in his hand, you know. And as I was wearing a pair of trousers; I remember it so well, I was wearing tracksuit bottoms. He rolled up the belt and he hit me. He hit me on my testicle. Then, I was sick for several days and they took me to the hospital and all. But that day, that very minute he hit me, that he hit me with a belt on the testicle, there was an argument and they even had a physical fight because my mum didn't agree with how he punished me. And I cried, more out of hurt that he had hit me than the pain because I had always got on well with him and he had never punished me with sticks. And he punished me like that. So that is why they had a fight and then the next day, he left.

Carlos remembers this as a significant event because he had enjoyed a good relationship with his father until then and had not been subject to violence. He also remembers that his parents had a physical fight on this occasion, as his mother was angry that the father had used such extreme violence. In an interview with his mother, she did not mention this episode but did emphasise that she did not agree with corporal punishment. These cases suggest that individuals learn to tolerate and reproduce violence from an early age. The exposure to repeated violence can feed the notion that violence is a normal part of human interaction. A normalisation of violence, in the case of María Dolores, has led to an increase in her threshold for accepting physical abuse. Cultural myths that give value to violence - for example, the use of violence as an expression of a male gendered identity or authoritarian practices to maintain a sense of order in the face of high levels of criminality - aggravate this situation. Violence is formative and society reacts accordingly (Feldman, 1991). María Dolores, for example, accepts violence against herself and modifies her behaviour in order to avoid provocation. She has learned not to "answer back", to "behave" and silence has become a survival strategy for her: "*entonces yo mejor me quedo callada, y ya no dejo que me humille así*" (María Dolores, 48 years old, El Boulevar).[35]

The context of violence: Collusion of the state or the inability to police the home?

In the case of domestic violence, the situation for a woman is further complicated, as Saraga (2002) reminds us, by the fact that the aggressor is the man she loves and possibly the father of her children. In addition, physical violence is often accompanied with psychological abuse, where a woman's self-esteem is weak and she blames herself. Women's reluctance to report their partners is exacerbated by the difficulty in policing the home. One police officer described the difficulties:

> *La mujer cuando está en el problema está desesperada porque lo quiere denunciar para que le ayude alguien. Policía, venga, ayúdeme! Ahorita están violentándome. Cuando la policía llega y quiere aprender ya al sujeto, pero como es parte de su vida, o sea, es el ser con él que comparte día a día, todo, o sea a diario. Cuando ya llega la policía, ella ya no quiere decir nada. Dice, déjelo, déjelo. Entonces, le da miedo. Entonces que pasa? El problema sigue latente. Digamos, se va la policía verdad? El problema sigue latente porque?,*

[35] So it's better if I shut up and then I don't let him humiliate me like that.

> *Porque de una o de otra manera este día, pasado mañana u otro día, él la va a volver a atacar ... ese círculo vicioso siempre se encuentra la mujer. Siempre tiene ese temor, pues, de que el hombre, que no lo quiere dejar, y el mismo temor también, pero si me agarran ahorita, yo algún día voy a salir y te voy hacer daño, verdad. Ese es el problema que tenemos. O sea, estadísticamente no podemos demostrar todas esas cosas que pasan, porque tampoco podemos instalar una cámara en cada casa para saber que es lo que pasa* (interview with sub-inspector of PNC, Ilopango, April 2002).[36]

Furthermore, as the police officer suggests, women who have been subject to violence at the hands of their partners are also victims of fear. Many women report to being threatened with worse violence if they report their partners. As Meche from El Boulevar asked: "*en manos de un hombre, qué es una mujer*?",[37] highlighting both the deep fear that she feels and her sense of impotence against a man. Jelin (1997) argues that male domination over women is institutionally established, creating structural limitations on women's opportunities within the social order. The privacy of family life appears as a justification to limit the intervention of the state in this sphere. She suggests that this continued "dichotomization of life into public and private leads to a mutilation of women's citizenship" (ibid: 71).

A policy emphasis on citizen security continues to ignore many gendered forms of violence and, specifically, those pertaining to the private sphere. The state has been particularly lax in its treatment of violence within the realm of the family, seeing it as a women's issue. As stated above, the parliamentary group on public security does not consider "intra-family" violence in its policy discussion despite recognition of the problem. In the past, women had few formal rights compared with their husbands. Meche, who is now 76 years old, eventually left her husband after a severe beating (he broke two of her ribs). However, the police tried to force her to go back to her home as the husband had reported her for *abandono de hogar*.[38] At the time (circa 1953), there were no laws in place to

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[36] When the woman is getting hit, she is desperate because she wants to denounce him so that someone will help her. Police come and help me, he is hitting me now. When the police arrive and they want to take the suspect away, then he is part of her life, I mean he is the person that she lives with every day. When the police arrive, she doesn't want to say anything. She tells us to leave him. She is afraid and what happens is that the problem remains latent, because the police leave. And why does the problem remain latent? Because somehow, tomorrow, or the day after he will attack her again... This vicious circle is always there. The women is always afraid that the man, that she doesn't want to leave him and the threat that if they get me now, some day I will be out and I will harm you. That's the problem that we have. Statistically we can't show all the things that go one because we can't install a camera in every house to find out what's going on.

[37] What is a women in the hands of a man?

[38] Abandoning the home, which is no longer considered a crime in El Salvador.

defend women who were victims of domestic violence.[39] She told the police, "*yo me siento más segura en la cárcel que en la casa con él*".[40] She had realised that her life was in danger: "*si hoy no me mató, otra vez sí*".[41] The degree of violence had reached such an extreme that she eventually left him, which is a worrying testament of women's threshold for tolerating violence against them. Although the laws have changed, there remains a host of cultural norms and myths which create a scenario where both society and the state are complicit in increasing or at least maintaining this gradation of violence through the codes of silence that surround much of violence in the home. Furthermore, this repertoire of culturally constructed myths serve to legitimise men's behaviour at worst, and at best, look for reasons to make it more acceptable. Women's freedom from violence in the home should be a citizen's right.

The context of violence: silence or silencing?

According to one male interviewee, some men use the threat of violence from wider society against their partners. He suggested that men in his community have threatened their wives with the gang if they report them to the police. This not only indicates the fear of the gang in this community, but is also suggestive of certain collusion between men and gang members in order to assure continued "patriarchal privacy".[42]

> *MH: ¿Y' la policía nunca llega?*
> *algunas veces, pero, tardan mas en llevárselo, que la misma mujer lo vuelva a sacar*
> *MH: ¿Lo saca?*
> *Sí, porque, no le diga, o me sacas o le digo a los de la mara, ya sabes, que ese es el caballito de batalla, prefiere sacarlo. Entonces si hay mucha violencia,*

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[39] See Jubb and Pasinato Izumino (2002) for an overview of the role of the police in addressing violence against women in Latin America.

[40] I feel safer in prison than at home with him.

[41] If he didn't kill me today, he will the next time.

[42] Although I did not come across any reported cases of the gang harassing women for reporting their partners to the police, people did talk about a very deep fear of the gang. Some women also mentioned the gang's sexual violence against young women in the community. Again, residents felt impotent against the *mara* and silence prevailed. Parents and older family members responded by "policing" the young women, never leaving them alone. Indeed, some have reportedly been forced to leave the community for fear of the young women's safety. In addition, the status of women in gangs is very much less than men. One of the initiation rites for women, outlined in the previous chapter, involves the girl having sex with all the male members of her *clika*.

mucha, mucha, violencia intrafamiliar acá (Enrique, 34 years old, El Boulevar).[43]

This example highlights that individual men can take use the threat of wider social violence to ensure their patriarchal privilege. Women are expected to maintain a strict silence with regard to men's use of violence. Few men in the self-help group recognised their use of violence as their reason for having to attend the weekly sessions. As the previous chapter indicated, many blamed their partners for reporting them to the authorities: *es culpa de ella que yo este aqui.*[44] One man in the self-help group offered an explanation for murdering his wife, alleging that he had found her with another man. The psychologist challenged him on this as she knew that it was not true and, more pertinently, this is not a justification for murder. Yet his explanation can be seen as an attempt to achieve some kind of empathy with the other men, as if they would "understand" his actions in light of his wife's alleged infidelity. So-called "crimes of passion" have been romanticised throughout history, obscuring the very real violence of the act (see Jimeno, 2002a). In the face of intimidation and threats, women's recourse to justice is highly restricted, yet, as suggested above, men can openly call on other social groups to silence women who are effectively defending their rights.

It is also indicative of a complicit silence regarding the dynamics of gender relations. Society knows that such violence exists, yet the repertoire of explanations mentioned in the previous chapter serve to justify non-intervention. "*En este caso* [violence against women in the home] *uno no puede hacer nada, quisiera meterme pero no se puede*" (Patricia, focus group, La Vía. 2 April 2002).[45] Non-intervention is also evident in wider community dynamics where silence in the face of high levels of violence is employed as a survival strategy, which was discussed in Chapter Four. Silence has become a survival strategy on many levels, yet previous chapters have emphasised the importance of visibility in raising awareness about a particular type of violence. In the context of the communities under study, the notion of visibility is more about ignoring a problem than not seeing it. All of the men and women

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[43] MH: And do the police never arrive?
Sometimes but they take longer to take him away than the woman does to get him out again.
MH: She gets him out?
Yes, because he says to her, you get me out or I will tell the gangs, you know, that's the threat. She prefers to get him out. So yes, there is lots of violence, lots and lots of intra-family violence here

[44] It is her fault that I am here.

[45] In that case [intra-family violence], I would like to get involved but you can't.

interviewed as part of this thesis agreed that the problem of violence against women and children was endemic in their communities, yet they expressed their reluctance to intervene.

Conclusion

A premise of this thesis is that violence harms yet society does not understand all violence as harmful. Indeed, it even justifies certain types. A key question of this research concerns what individuals and groups recognise as violence in their lives. The social meaning that is ascribed to violence leads to a variety of reactions which affect how people assess violence. The process of recognition is not only dependent on the harm of an act of violence, but it is directed by hegemonic myths within society that inform our reactions. This chapter has argued that we need to analyse the gendered relational dynamic of violence. I have argued that there exist layers of socially approved gendered discourse that minimise and even rationalise violence. Social reaction to violence is not uniform. Nonetheless, there are discernible patterns, many of which are shaped by fear, mistrust and gender inequalities that allow hierarchies of violence to emerge. The myths and "powerful fictions" that underpin popular epistemologies of violence are fundamental to understanding the power relations that produce and justify violent behaviours. Many of these myths are based upon the legitimacy of certain types of violence over others. The key framework of analysis has been the division of life into public and private spheres. More specifically, I have examined the ways in which a privileging of public realms of existence in both popular and public debate minimises and invalidates violence in the private sphere.

The public/private dichotomy still remains, as mentioned above, a central prism through which men and women make sense of the world. As such, it is essential to be alert to how this distinction can naturalise and even legitimise certain types of violent behaviour. As a conceptual tool, public/private is both useful and dangerous. It is useful in that it permits a more nuanced view of how people see their everyday reality, but dangerous in that this construction is based on and reinforces a masculinist illusion of a social order. This has meant that the inequalities of the private realm continue to be ignored, despite important feminist observations. As the previous chapters highlight, interviewee narratives uncover a very clear gradation of various types of violence. These can be broadly categorised as violence that occurs in the public realm on one hand and that of the private

on the other. The latter, in the form of violence against women and children, has not only been left out of legal frameworks until recent years, but also continues to be invalidated by individual and social discourse. This chapter has demonstrated that notions of public and private are relational and multi-dimensional. The boundaries between them are constantly shifting, depending on both individual and wider social factors. Nevertheless, popular discourse retains many of the myths that serve to legitimise and reproduce violence.

Conclusions

This thesis has explored a history of high levels of violence in El Salvador. Within this context, men, women and children have learned to survive and give meaning to the world around them. There is constant negotiation between structures that frame how individuals understand the everyday, the events that shape it and popular reactions that give meaning to it. Decades of political oppression, the continued brutality of gendered relations and an explosion of social and criminal violence have left deep scars on Salvadoran society. Perhaps most dangerously, continued violence has created a society with a huge threshold for tolerating violence. The last decade has revealed the embeddedness of violence in social and political relations, so much so that many expressions are not readily identified as violence. The apparent normality of this invisible violence has meant that, to date, it has not been an area of interest to researchers. Indeed, I argue that one of the most damaging consequences of this is that it is left unquestioned. By using qualitative feminist research methodology, many harmful forces that have adverse effects on everyday life have been identified. These forces have been a constant in the lives of the interviewees despite the changing political situation.

These everyday manifestations present a huge problem for peaceful coexistence, keeping individuals and communities under siege. The narratives, although shaped by their social and political environment, identify themes that are common to other contexts where high levels of violence regulate everyday life. To understand this phenomenon fully, this thesis has argued that it is necessary to identify the many types of violence that permeate peoples' lives. Not to do so would be to ignore fundamentally important elements of how social groups interact. These different types of violence cannot exist in a vacuum, rather they uncover how social relations are enacted on a micro-level. One of the key findings of this research is that violence is nourished by hierarchical structures within society. Three central and

overlapping themes underlying the hierarchical nature of violence have been considered: the process of constructing gender identities, patterns of gendered and generational victimisation and the continued resonance of masculinist epistemologies that privilege the public realm.

The construction of gender identities: the continuity of violence

Brutality, exclusion and inequality have characterised social relations since independence. The centrality of violence to social and political life was explored in the Introduction and Chapter Two. The effects of these macro processes on individuals and communities have emerged in the examination of empirical data. One of the most enduring, yet overlooked, effects of this embedded violence is reflected in the gendered socialisation process. From an early age, men and women are socialised into ways of seeing and believing the world. Cultural norms and gendered roles shape who uses violence and how and when they might use it. They also affect individual and wider social reactions. The prevailing social order prescribes identities and relations that accept and even prioritise the use of physical violence. In particular, the exercise of masculinity and enduring male privileges are reinforced by violence, to such an extent that this violence is regarded as normal and barely questioned. Certain types of violence appear to be awarded less significance in both individual and wider social narrative. This process of recognising violence reflects deeper notions concerning normative behaviour. This research has underlined the importance of questioning the ordinary, the taken for granted, as natural and enduring. An exploration of life histories suggested that less significance has been ascribed to violence that overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, occurs within familial relations.

Although democratic spaces have opened up in El Salvador, empirical data suggest that many conflicts on a micro scale are still resolved in a violent manner, raising questions about the nature of peace in the country. It also flags up important issues for consideration in other post-conflict situations. In South Africa, for example, a major issue for preoccupation has been the extremely high levels of sexual violence in recent years (see Moffett, 2001). Domestic violence in Northern Ireland, sidelined from public debate during the Troubles has emerged recently as a source of concern

for policy-makers, with some of the highest incidences in the United Kingdom being recorded in the province (see McWilliams and Mc Kiernan, 1993). The extreme brutality of many family relations examined in Chapter Five highlight that violence continues to be a recourse for many individuals and is seen not only as a normal option in many cases, but an effective one. The interest in post- conflict societies as areas of political settlement means that gendered relations have been ignored. Chapter Six emphasised the tendency to depoliticise the private realm, leading to a miminisation of experiences of gendered violence. By not restricting this study to the formal political resolution of conflicts, we have observed the continuity of violence in the domestic realm and the many other forms of insidious violence that affect the everyday life of citizens (Chapter Four). The incidence and severity of this *normal* violence is an important issue for further research.

Militarised Masculinities?

Although not raised as a specific issue for discussion in the thesis, periods of conflict can transform and reinforce gendered roles. In El Salvador, many women moved beyond the domestic realm to participate actively in the political process (Vásquez, Ibañez, and Murguialday, 1996). Conversely, the practice of hegemonic masculinity was reinforced during the period of conflict. Those men interviewed who participated in the war as soldiers spoke at length about the brutalising experience of the military. Cruz *et al.* (1999) highlight that prison inmates who participated in the war are those who tend to be accused of violent crimes such as rape and homicide. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the reproduction of aggressive maleness is not confined to the military, nor is it merely a strategy employed during war. Hegemonic forms of masculinities, associated with military structures, are common to social relations in times of both war and peace. They have been revealed as central to many realms of social interaction, raising further questions about the relational boundaries between war and peace.

The process by which men (and women) are socialised inculcates a series of values that award value to traditional notions of manliness. For the participants of the self-help group, this included exaggerated sexual prowess and violence against women.

Above all, for most of the male interviewees, it prescribed an identity based on the domination of women, children and other men. Such gendered discourses have been accepted as normal within Salvadoran society. This does not mean that all citizens accept and reproduce hegemonic masculinity, but that it is seen as an extreme endpoint of the accepted boundaries of male behaviour. These boundaries are not static and different social groups accept/excuse/minimise varying degrees of men's aggression within particular contexts. For example, sexual violence still remains a weapon of war in many contexts and is pervasive in the case study communities. Testimonies minimised much of men's violence and indicated that it is women's responsibility to protect themselves against the excesses of men's behaviour. It is to women's participation in this process that I now turn.

Women, violence and power

Women's use of violence against their children has been explored both from the perspective of women as mothers and women who have been subject to violence throughout their lives since childhood. In a focus group held in La Vía (2 April 2002), participants suggested that one of the indirect effects of violence against women is that they then take it out on their children. "*Se desquita con el hijo. Quien paga son ellos y no pueden defenderse... Cuando hay problemas con el esposo, uno se desquita con los hijos*". Women's use of violence remains a relatively understudied area. Kelly (1996) speaks of the tensions felt by feminists in exposing it, since there is a risk that it will overshadow the enormity and extent of women's repeated subjection to violence at the hands of men. I share these preoccupations, although also recognise the need to identify and recognise women's participation. This does not mean that women's use of violence should be examined as a separate category. Rather, as this study has done, it is necessary to move beyond a narrow analysis of individual responsibility to analyse the structures that give meaning to violence. The challenge is to dissect the larger systems of oppression and exploitation that allow violence to be an acceptable and routine element of everyday social and political interaction. Throughout the course of the research, men constantly referred to women's violence and its role in reproducing *machismo*. The process of interpreting violence is closely bound up with a need to

apportion blame. Men, in defence of their own actions, often pointed to their mothers as the figure that "taught" them how to be men. For example, Beto (76 years old, El Boulevar) spoke of how his mother brutally taught him not to express emotion and another man in the focus group blamed his wife's infidelity for his killing her.

It is not uncommon for men to blame women for the pervasiveness of *machismo* and violence in social relations. Indeed, the many examples of men's victimisation at the hands of their mothers points to the centrality of women in reproducing patriarchal power relations. This notion is telling of the tension between agency and structure. On one hand individuals are accountable for their behaviour, especially in the perpetration of violence, yet, on the other, patriarchal structures in society justify and normalise such acts. Women are caught up in a contradictory web of gendered myths, where they, in effect, become active agents in their own subordination. Kandiyoti (1998) has explored women's relationship with patriarchy. In her study of mothers-in-law in Northern India, she explores how women resist and collude with patriarchal relations within the household. The notion of the "patriarchal bargain" offers some insight into why women reproduce gender inequalities and in the search for more inclusive frameworks to understand violence, it is necessary to confront how women are active in reproducing these structures of domination. This is an area that begs more research.

Gendered and generational hierarchies of victimisation

The exploration of gendered and generational patterns of victimisation has been through three central relational dynamics. These are translated somewhat crudely into men victimising other men; men subjecting women to violence in intimate relationships and women and men victimising their children. These relationships are based on one individual/group exerting power over another individual/group. In their most extreme, violence is constructed upon a gendered discourse that gives individuals the right to beat others. This points to the highly gendered nature of much violence, or, conversely, the violent nature of gendered relations. Key to this hierarchical use of violence is that it is shrouded in a legitimising discourse, which effectively separates the "violence" from the action. One particularly stark example

was the case of Alfonso who criticised the gang's beating of his wife: *la mujer no aguanta* (women cannot bear it), yet at the same time, he admitted to being physically violent towards her.

It also raises the importance of analysing the generational dynamics of violence. As argued, empirical data have highlighted the centrality of violence to gendered socialisation processes, where violence is seen as functional and even necessary. Social norms regarding parenting prescribe the use of the *mano dura*, where violence is seen as a necessary evil. María Dolores preferred to burn her son's hands rather than have him turn out a gambler. Esteban pointed to his own experience of violence as a child, stating that it did him no harm and that other forms of punishment do not work, emphasising the perceived value of violence. Chapter Five studied the linkages between masculinities and violence. It highlighted that men learn to be men through exposure to violence. Their masculinity is then reinforced through the exercise of violence. A growing issue of interest for policy-makers is the victimisation of older people. Although I referred to two examples from El Boulevar of violence against older people in Chapter Four, the thesis has not explored this phenomenon to any great degree and this issue would benefit from further research.

Epistemologies of violence: a privileging of the masculine

This thesis has argued that the subject of violence is slippery given that there is little definitional consensus. The tension between narrow definitions and broad frameworks for understanding violence was explored in Chapter One. There is a tendency, in both literature and popular discourse, to approach violence from a reductionist perspective, limiting it to its physical manifestation, its legal/illegal status or, in historic malestream approaches, that which occurs in the public realm. This tendency was explored in literature from a wide range of disciplines and in a variety of empirical contexts. Feminism has enriched the scholarship in many key areas and its lessons can and should provide critical reflection across disciplines. Narrow definitions of violence and a concentration on the public sphere have served to minimise the recognition of violence in the domestic realm or between family members, leading to an erroneous perception that high levels of violence are a recent

phenomenon. Through an exploration of life histories, this thesis has exposed the wide range of violence to affect men and women at different political and social moments. Each individual history does not only add to the tapestries that formulate the history of El Salvador, but offer us insight into the many experiences of violence that have been ignored in mainstream analyses in other contexts.

Historic mainstream/malestream epistemologies have privileged the public realms of existence and have ignored the many types of violence that affect women and children. The non-recognition of much of women's subjection to violence is a telling statement about male privilege. A key finding of this research is that the public/private dichotomy remains an important prism through which individuals make sense of the everyday. An exploration of the public/private distinction in this thesis grew out of the minimisation of "private" violence in the interviewee narratives in Chapters Four and Five. An analysis of testimonies has uncovered a very clear gradation of violence. I have argued that the series of "recognition codes" that society adopts in order to understand violence creates a scenario where different manifestations are tolerated to different degrees. In a very broad sense, these have been categorised as violence occurring in the public realm, on one hand, and in the private, on the other. The latter, in the form of violence against women and children, has not only been left out of legal frameworks in many countries until recent years, but also continues to be invalidated by individual and social discourse. For example, Chapter Two highlighted the privileging of the "public" in the literature on violence to emerge from and concerning Latin America. Such an approach misses the many insidious forms that pervade the everyday life of many citizens in the region. Addressing this gap in the literature, Chapter Six highlighted how a conceptualisation of violence from the perspective of citizen security has undermined the citizens' rights of women and children within the home.

The importance of being alert to subjective understandings of violence and its many "socially approved rationalisations" has been emphasised throughout (Ptacek, 1988: 151). Recognising and dismantling the way in which violence is legitimised is key to moving beyond violent social relations. A feminist lens has allowed a multiplicity of voices to emerge, exposing both the lived experience of violence and the meanings ascribed to it. A key area for consideration has been the process of silencing. Silence

works on many levels and can be understood both as a form of protection and, more dangerously, can be interpreted as approbation. For women, in particular, silence has been presented as a double edged-sword. On the one, hand women employ it as a survival strategy in the face of constant threat. On the other, the continued subordination of the private sphere has served to perpetuate and indeed tolerate women's violation by daubing it a private matter.

Following Nordstrom (1997), writing on Mozambique, a conclusion of the research is that epistemologies of violence cannot be separated from lived experience. This defining characteristic has provided both a challenge to the research and a key to moving towards an understanding of the phenomenon. The data presented has uncovered a world where men and women have different understandings of violence in their everyday lives. Both within and between individual narratives, we have seen a web of contradictions and confusion emerge. These experiences, from the act of violence to the act of narration, are refracted through a prism of socially constructed discourse that offers some sense of order and meaning to a difficult world. This is where ontological and epistemological processes interact. They shape how individuals and groups coexist, the questions they ask and their ways of interpreting the social order. The notion of hierarchy is linked to the way social relations and identities are constructed and the reproduction of powerful discourse. Although wary of static conceptualisations, the exploration of how men and women ascribe meaning to the violence of their everyday life has provided an important contribution to the scholarship of violence. This approach is valid for the many types of violence that affect everyday life, moving beyond restrictive frameworks and narrow definitions. It provides a space for the voices of individuals to give meaning to their own lives, but it also questions how these voices have been informed by wider discourses within society.

Beyond violence?

This research has uncovered few examples of initiatives that bring communities together to seek for alternatives to violence. Examples that do exist include the state-run *Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (CNSP) works with

communities in Greater San Salvador to encourage organisation and promote alternatives to violence. Women's organisations, such as *Movimiento de Mujeres Mélida Anaya Montes* (MAM), facilitate processes of community organisation and advocacy. The organisation also offers institutional support to women who have lived with violence. *Nueva Generacón* XX1 is a unique youth movement that brings youth together from different sectors of society to offer an alternative space to violence through music, art and culture. It brings together youth from both left and right wing political standpoints, different religious and spiritual beliefs, social/economic/educational levels. Given the very deep polarisation of Salvadoran society, these groups rarely have a common space to interact. As such the organization constitutes an important effort to break down ingrained prejudices and fears of the "Other". Many church groups work with gangs, including the Universidad Don Bosco and *El Limon* parish in Soyapango. The latter facilitated a painting project for gang members under the direction of local artist, Gilberto Arriaza (see Plate 7.1). Another initiative is Homies Unidos that works with young people in risk to prevent gang violence, based in both El Salvador and Los Angeles. They coordinate and form strategic alliances with a multitude of national and international organizations and have carried out interesting research with gang members by gang members (see IUDOP/Homies Unidos, 1998).

Plate 7.1:

Gang member in art class (Arriaza, 2001)

These initiatives, however, are isolated and La Vía and El Boulevar have not participated in such activities. In El Boulevar, in particular, relations within the community are fractured and conflict is frequent. The very task of getting residents of El Boulevar to talk about violence was a difficult one, given the high levels of fear and mistrust within the community (see Chapter Three). One of the most depressing conclusions of the research is that neither case study community demonstrated indigenous strategies for resolving conflict, apart from isolation and silence. It is perhaps in this area that cross-fertilisation would be most beneficial, from both a national and international perspective.

From my cultural and political standpoint, the pervasiveness of violent masculinities in the research sample is shocking. More pointedly, the fact that few women have sought a way out of this social order raises many questions about women's agency in challenging this gendered order. Issues such as a sense of loyalty,

low self-esteem and self-blame have been *identified as reasons for women's continued* silence. Another important factor is access to information. Many of the women that I interviewed had very scant knowledge of the legal frameworks for "intra-family violence". Indeed, many viewed the violence as an inevitable, if unfortunate, element of their gendered identity. The men in the self-help group indicated that it was women's fault that they were forced to attend the therapy sessions, ignoring the fact that they had perpetrated the violence. On their own, institutional frameworks for legislating violence do not suffice to put an end to this pervasive phenomenon. Nevertheless, institutional support is important for victims of violence and a key tool for raising awareness of the problem. Individuals have to be aware of alternatives in order to consider using them. This is why the exercise of making violence visible in order to encourage debate and policy responses is all the more pertinent.

My previous experience working with women in El Salvador had been as part of the women's movement. The women had undergone processes of politicisation and awareness-raising. They were, in the very least, aware of their rights, although violence was still a problem for many. Interestingly, the only woman who did report her husband to the authorities in my case study had lived in a guerrilla camp in Chalatenango during the war. While I cannot draw any conclusions from this one example, an interesting area for research would be to compare the responses of women who have undergone processes of politicisation. It would also be useful to talk to those women who do report their husbands, which was not possible in the context of the self-help group. Meche (El Boulevar) only left her husband when he thought that he would kill her; she ran away from her second partner when she found out that he was abusing her daughter. She did not report the men in either case. María Dolores' sister still lives with her partner despite the fact that he has repeatedly subjected her to violence and is sexually abusing her daughter. Indeed, María Dolores considers Esteban to be a good man as he has only beaten her on occasion and has not subjected her to repeated abuse. Women's tolerance for violence is high. Nevertheless, studies from different social and geographical contexts have indicated the many difficulties facing women to break away from violent relations, even in situations where women have access to service provision and an awareness of their

rights.[1] This is telling of the power of male domination in society, which continues to regulate women's lives in subtle ways.

Questions need to be asked as to who benefits from men's violence. This is particularly pertinent to the documented cases where women have been punished by their partners for getting involved in cases of violence. María Dolores spoke of how Esteban beat her when she intervened to protect her sister. Furthermore, one interviewee suggested that men in El Boulevar threaten their partners with the gang if they report violence. This is indicative of a certain collusion among men to protect their patriarchal privilege. As Chapter Six explored, such privilege is reinforced by threat and silence on many levels. Gender inequalities are reproduced across generations and political contexts so much so that, like violence, they are normalised and unquestioned.

Conclusion

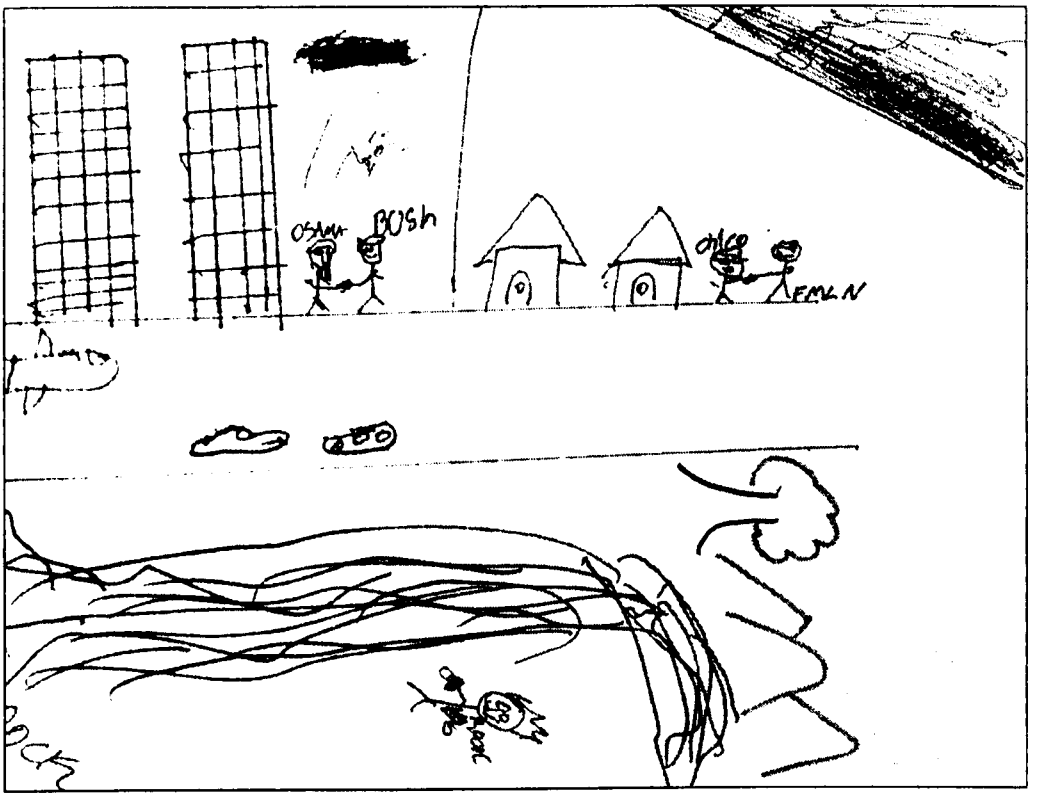
One of the major criticisms of research on violence to date has been the compartmentalisation of knowledge within various disciplinary perspectives (for example, Moser and Winton, 2002). Many theorists advocate the importance of holistic frameworks, but few actively enrich their analyses from a cross-disciplinary perspective, to explore the many meanings, myths and realities of violence. In particular, the absence of a gendered analysis of violence generates myopic understandings of the phenomenon. More dangerously, it creates a situation where different types of violence exist on a hierarchy. This thesis has addressed an important gap in the literature by analysing how violence interacts with and shapes everyday life. In the conclusion to Chapter Three, I likened the study of violence is to doing a puzzle that will never be complete. This thesis adds another piece to the puzzle, suggesting that the overall picture should not be confined to existing epistemological frameworks that are overly reliant on masculinist assumptions of the world. To understand the ontological reality of violence, this project has sought to break down

[1] See, for example, Elhers (2000) on Guatemala; Vetten, (1996) on the racial aspects of reporting domestic violence in South Africa; Mc Williams and McKiernan (1993) on Northern Ireland; Yllo and Bograd *et al.* (1988) on Britain.

the many myths, meanings and realities that inform how individuals and groups interact on a daily basis.

Plate 7.2:

Hopes for the future



Source: Manuel, 14 Years Old, Focus Group, School, El Boulevar, 20 May 2001.

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Internet Resources

Organisation	URL
Crisis States Programme London School of Economics	www.crisisstates.com
El Diario de Hoy, El Salvador	www.elsalvador.com
IDHUCA Human Rights Institute - Central American University	www.uca.edu.sv/idhuca
Inter American Development Bank	www.iadb.org
INSTRAW United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women	www.instraw.org
IUDOP The Central American University Polling Institute	www.uca.edu.sv/iudop
La Prensa Gráfica, El Salvador	www.laprensa.com.sv
Pan American Health Organization	www.paho.org
PNC El Salvador National Civil Police	www.pncelsalvador.gob.sv
UNDP (El Salvador) Violence in a Country in Transition Programme	www.violenciaelsalvador.org.sv
University of Bradford Seminar Series on Masculinities	www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dpcc/mandmweb
World Bank	www.worlddbank.org

Appendix One:

Brief community histories and biographical details of interviewees

Locations of Research

The methodology chapter offered an introduction to the various locations of the research and the different challenges and social dynamics that each setting presented. Violence was the thread that connected my research interest in these different locations. The particular micro-contexts under study emphasise the mutli-layered and many expressions of violence. The following section will offer a brief outline of the two communities where the bulk of my research was carried out.

Communities: El Boulevar and La Vía

Both communities, El Boulevar and La Vía, are illegal marginal communities in the municipal jurisdiction of Soyapango, one of the major suburbs of Greater San Salvador. Soyapango is considered the second-most violent city in the country (FUNDAUNGO/IUDOP, 2002) after San Salvador. The population of Soyapango was 358 100 in 2002. Urbanisation in this city has been sporadic and unplanned, which is exemplified by the many marginal communities that make up its population. Their inhabitants live in precarious conditions, with different access to basic resources, such as water and sanitation and levels of crowding. Both La Vía and El Boulevar are illegal, marginal communities.

According to Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003: 67), there are 157 houses in La Vía, which is one of the many communities located on the train tracks and, because of this, its inhabitants have little hope of legalising their plots. Contradictory reports of violence on one hand and benevolence, on the other, on the part of the Railway Company (FENDESAL) serve to heighten inhabitants' levels of confusion and insecurity. The community grew initially as a result of migration from the interior of the country in the 1970s and saw an influx of population during the war years. This trend has continued during the 1990s with arrival of economic migrants from other parts of the country and the capital itself in search of shelter. Although the land cannot be sold,

many recent immigrants have bought the few sheets of corrugated iron or *bahereque* [1] structures from previous inhabitants. Few have permanent dwellings made from brick or *adobe*.

El Boulevar is situated on one side of the main artery linking San Salvador to the eastern side of the country. There are 357 families in El Boulevar (Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff, 2003: 69). The community was set up by the military as temporary shelter for people affected by the earthquake in 1965. During the period of fieldwork (over thirty five years later), the community was in the process of being legalised. This process, however, is not without its difficulties. Over ninety families will be evicted to make way for a project to widen the main road that runs alongside the community. This community process proved the backdrop for the research as emotion were running high and people were, understandably worried about their futures. It highlighted the continued insecurity that the inhabitants of marginal communities live with on a daily basis, in terms of meeting even the most basic of needs: shelter. It also provided interesting insight as to how the community deals with major conflict. Rumours were rife about the community directive abusing of their role for their own gain, in the form of houses. Partisan interests were also in danger of threatening the process. Added to this, both 'sides' claimed that they had received death threats and community meetings, held in the *alcaldía* for fear of problems within the community, turned into shouting matches.

Biographical details of research participants

	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
1	**Beto** Male, 76 years old	Born in San Salvador of a Guatemalan mother and Honduran father. His father "kidnapped" his mother and later abandoned her to return to Honduras. They returned to Guatemala, where he lived until he was 10/11. His mother used a lot of violence against him when he was a child. At the age of 10/11, he was seen playing with a girl and both he and the girl were beaten and thrown out of their homes. They both headed to San Salvador, seeking work in the coffee plantations on the way. He tells many stories about revolutionary activities, where he features as the hero. He moved about a lot, from El Salvador to Guatemala to Honduras. He has over thirty children and there is little mention of his relationship with them. He received a death threat from a gang member when I was in the community, which the *Fiscalía* have refused to take seriously. He never leaves his house alone.

[1] Bahereque is a mixture of wood, mud and stones, used in popular constructions. Many of the buildings that fell in the 2001 earthquakes were made of bahereque, indicating that it is not secure.

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	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
2	**Ana** Female, 63	She initially came to the community as her cousin lives here and met Beto, who she has been with for the last few years. She was born in the eastern part of the country and many of her family members live in Honduras. She worked as a servant in a *cafetín* (bar with prostitutes) in the centre of San Salvador for years. The father of her children threw her out and has not been allowed to see them since. She seemed somewhat confused and says that she does not remember the war. When I asked her, she thought I had been talking about the war with Honduras in 1969.
3	**Esteban** Male, 65 years old	Esteban grew up in the province of La Paz (south central El Salvador) His father was murdered by a political rival in his village when he was nine years old. He was the eldest of seven children and remembers the event as marking a severe decline in their standard of living. Initially he says that he does not recall much about his father but later expands on how his father used brutal punishments against him. He believes that this was for his one good and has continued this practice with his own children. He is a good font of information on community history and current dynamics, having lived there fore over thirty years.
4	**María Dolores** Female, 48 years old She asked to be interviewed	As a child, María Dolores suffered severe brutality at hands of mother and elder brother. She met her biological father when the man she had believed to be her father (her mother's husband) died. She grew up in the eastern part of the country and moved to the capital when she was "sold" by her mother at the age of 10-11 to an elderly relative. He kept her imprisoned in a room in Santa Tecla but she managed to escape and worked as a domestic servant. At the age of 18, she had a son, closely followed by her daughter. Their father left her to go to the US. She then met a man who used to systematically abuse her. At the time she had a room in her mother's house in El Boulevar and suffered violence at hands of her brother, mother and partner. She met Esteban while still with this man and they both had a physical fight in order to 'win her affections'. She chose Esteban to escape the violence. She had one child with him who died of leukemia at the age of ten. Since then she is no longer of 'use' to him, nor does he see her as having any legal claim to *his* property. She has worked since they have been together and has brought up both her children and his. He has had a series of other relationships and currently having an affair with the next door neighbour. She has been insulted verbally by the neighbour on many occasions. He has also hit her various times. She has beaten her own children and her stepchildren when Esteban has not been present. Her stepchildren have physically and verbally assaulted her. She also spoke about a series of conflicts with other neighbours.

	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
5	**Enrique*** Male, 34 years old	Enrique has lived in the community since he was three years old. Abandoned by his father, he grew up materially spoiled but largely on his own as his mother was working. He speaks about his public-private persona in the third person. He is a respectable teacher, on one hand, and a violent father on the other. He says that he was in the guerrilla and was tortured by the army. Others, however, have told me that this is untrue. He talks candidly about how he sees women primarily as toys. He says that he is very much in love with his wife, yet is systematically unfaithful and refuses to tell her as he believes that this will give her power over him and increase his vulnerability.
6	**Erlinda** Female, 33 years old	Erlinda grew up in Chalatenango, but was forced to leave when the army ransacked her *canton.* Her mother died around the same time that they left her place of origin. She lived in a guerrilla camp for to years before moving to San Salvador, where she got a job as a domestic servant. She has been married to Enrique for about fourteen years and they have three daughters. She is evangelical and says that the violence has diminished in her relationship with Enrique since she reported him to the police.
7	**Xiomara** Female, 14 years old	Xiomara lives with Meche, her grandmother. She says that it is because her mother is a *marimacha* (lesbian) and is, therefore, not viewed as a fit mother. She is in seventh grade at the local school and works in a shop in the community. Her father is also from the community, a fact that she recently discovered when some friends teased her about it. She says that she is determined to study so that she never has to rely on a man.
8	**Meche** Female, 76 years old	Meche was born in Chalatenango and lived with her mother and violent father. Her mother sent her and her sister to school, without telling the father as he believed that the only result of educating girls was for them to write *cartitas a los novios.* Her father was a very violent alcoholic although she says that he was a "good man" as he never sexually abused her or her sisters. Following her mother's death, she took care of her siblings and moved to her grandmother's house as the father's drinking and violence had become unbearable. She got married at the age of nineteen; however, her partner was unfaithful and extremely violent so she left soon after her first son was born. Shortly after leaving, she contracted TB, which she believes to be a result of a particularly severe beating from her husband. She was in hospital for four years without seeing her child. To this day, it is a source of shame to her that she was in hospital and had not even told her children. After coming out of hospital, she met the father of her other three children (a boy and two girls). He, too, was violent and a drinker. She has always run a little shop and worked as a dressmaker and he

	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
		used to steal her earnings. She tried to leave him on several occasions, moving to different corners of San Salvador, however, he always found her even though years might have gone by. She left him finally in 1972 when she moved to El Boulevar in 1972, after she found out that he had sexually abused her eldest daughter. She has suffered very severe physical abuse from her eldest son and has had to report him to the police. She is now bringing up her two granddaughters (aged 14 and 17) as she does not believe their mother to be capable.
9	**Vladimir** Male, 23 years old	Valdimir is a member of the MS gang in El Boulevar. His father killed in front of his mother when they were both members of the guerrilla. He grew up with his aunt during the war, while his mother was in the FMLN and moved to her house when he was an adolescent. The mother had a nervous breakdown after the death of his partner and he was left very much alone. He does not get on with his older half-sister and half-brother and joined the gang when he was fifteen to escape bullying from older boys in the community. He lived for several years with his homeboys in the centre of San Salvador, moving back to the community when they had been killed. He has a three year old daughter who lives with him and his mother since he spilt up from his girlfriend (she went off with someone else). He is resigned to his own death and believes that it is only a matter of time before someone kills him. He considers that he has no way out of the gang. He has no happy memories from his childhood
10	**Chepe** Male, 55 years old	Chape begins the interview by saying that he lives in La Vía because of need, not desire. he was in aan accident at work about six years previously and, since then, money has been tight. He then states that the community is relatively safe despite the fact that he has been targeted on several occasions by local gang members. He has lived in Soyapango for most of his life, having grown up in a *finca* on the outskirts of the city. He is very active in community politics, although there were some rumours about money going missing while I was there. I never found out whether there was any veracity to them or not.
11	**Ana María** Female, 45 years old	Ana María was born near Suchitoto but had to flee her *canton* because her husband worked for the government and they received threats from the guerrilla. They ended up in the western part of the country, where the fighting was less intense. She then moved to a *meson* in San Salvador for a few months before buying her uncles house in La Vía. She has been active in the organisation of her community for years.
12	**Margarita** Female, 32 years old	Margarita was born in Chalatenango and moved to the capital with her husband at the beginning of the 1990s. She has lived in corrugate iron shelter ever since. She has three daughters and works as a domestic servant during the day, leaving her daughters at home. They no longer go to school as she cannot afford it and is reluctant to ask her husband for money. She is also afraid of leaving the girls alone in the house as she was robbed a few years ago, but is even more afraid of letting them go to school alone as she is

	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
		working and cannot take them herself. Her husband was having an affair with the women who lives opposite (on the other side of the train tracks), which has caused her a lot of problems in the community. Her neighbours insult her and her husband beats her. She has been thinking about leaving him for a while, but had not done so in the time that I was there.
13	**Alfonso** Male, 18 years old	Alfonso spent is first years with his grandmother who physically and psychologically abused him and his brothers. Their mother was living with another man and had more children with him. His eldest brother joined a *mara* and the gang began to spend a lot of time in their house. The brother then left the gang and he has been the target of gang violence ever since. His grandmother disappeared about six years ago and they have not seen her since. They believe that it has something to do with the gang. He has lived with his partner for two years and admits that he hits her. He criticises the gang for hitting her, however, as he considers that women are not strong enough. He works as a breadman, selling bread to communities along the railway track and has to be vigilent of the *maras*. He was mugged at gunpoint a few years ago and now claims that he fears nothing. He has no happy memories from his childhood.
14	**Lorena** Female, 60 years old	Lorena has lived in La Vía from birth, as her family owned some of the land around the community. She lives in a tin shelter with her son, daughter and grandchildren and sells fruit and vegetables in the community. She has chronic arthritis, which restricts hr mobility. She got pregnant for the first time at around 13-14 and had no idea what was happening to her. She had received no sexual education and the father of the child abandoned her. As punishment, her father used to make her carry big loads of tomatoes and courgettes from the fields. A few years later, she met another man and married him. He is the father of her other four children. She separated from him due to the fact that he was an alcoholic and had another woman. Her second son is also an alcoholic and she is very worried that something will happen to him, given the levels of insecurity in and around the community. she was robbed a few years ago by two neighbours. One man was going to stab her but the other stuck up for her

	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
15	**Carlos** Male, 32 years old	Carlos is Lorena's eldest son. He lives next door to his mother with his wife and stepson. He has no children of his own as his wife has been sterilised, though he says that he would like to be a father, as he loves kids. He is a keen football player and manages the local community team. He advocates non-violent punishment of his stepson as he has learned from his own experience. Before his father left the family, he hit Carlos with a belt, causing severe swelling in one testicle Carlos had to go to the hospital and says that this event was particularly traumatic for him as, until then, he had enjoyed a good relationship with his father.
16	**Teofilio** Male, 37 years old	Teofilio was born in a rural area in the central eastern part of El Salvador. As a boy he was severely physically and psychologically abused by both his parents. His grandfather told him that this was because his skin was darker than that of his siblings. He was recruited forcibly by the military during the war and hated his time in the army. He did not get along with his commanding officer and left, narrowly missing the massacre of his battalion. He is an alcoholic and has been attending the self-help group for about a year since the court referred him. His wife reported him for not paying maintenance and he says that he has never used physical violence against her.
17	**Jaime** Male, 45 years old	Jaime grew up in the countryside and enjoyed school. He was an active member of the student's union and had to go into exile for two years around the age of 16. Jaime has been attending the self-help group for the last year. Prior to this he had been in prison serving a sentence for murdering his father. The details of the father's death are somewhat sketchy as he was drunk and says that he remembers very little. He threw a stone at him and the next thing he remembers was that he was in prison and his father was dead. He served fifteen years of a thirty year sentence and when he got out of jail, his family wanted nothing to do with him. He has been addicted to drugs and alcohol and must attend the self-help group as a condition of his parole.
18	**Elmer** Male, 58 years old	Elmer has been in prison for the last ten years. He was sentenced to twelve years for sexually abusing his daughter. Like Pedro, he protests his innocence, claiming that his wife had a lover and this was her way to get rid of him. According to the prison psychologist, his son has just been sentenced for the same crime. He lived in a town in the central part of the country before he was imprisoned and did not get involved in wither side of the war.
19	**Julio** Male, 57 years old	Julio is serving a thirty year sentence for murder. He believes that someone cast a spell on him, causing him to murder his neighbour. Prior to this he had never been in trouble and lived in a coastal community. During the war, he was the commander of the civil defence patrol in his *canton*.

	Name/age/sex	Brief biographical details
20	**Daniel** Male, 29 years old	Daniel grew up with his mother and sisters in a town in the centre/east of the country, after they had been forced to flee their rural canton because of the war. He began drinking and smoking marijuana at a young age, as he hung out with the men who drank on the street near his house. Soon he was involved in petty crime to fund his habit and he used to go to San Salvador to rob car radios. One day, on the way back from San Salvador, he was pulled off the bus and was forced to join the army. While in the army, he was selected for the special forces but hated it and left. He was imprisoned for two years for robbery and continued to use drugs throughout this time. When he got out, his elder brother who had been in the guerrilla, asked him to live with him but he only lasted a week in the rural community where his brother lived. He theen moved back to his mother's house and soon became involved with an organised crime gang. One of his colleagues in the gang was an ex-sergeant of the army who had access to a whole arsenal of weaponry and the gang used to mug and rob people. He has been in jail for the last four years and is serving a thirty year sentence for murder. He protests innocence and has become evangelical since being in jail. He blames his previous criminal activities on the demons that lived inside him.
21	**Pedro** Male, 56 years old	Pedro is in jail serving a sentence for sexually abusing his daughter. He protests his innocence, claiming that it was a story made up by his wife in order to get rid of him. He had spent fifteen years in jail previously for murdering his neighbour at a local *fiesta* in the early 1970s.

Appendix Two:

Interviews with policy makers/NGOs/academics

1. César Rivera, director, National Council for Public Security (CNSP).
2. Sub-commissioner Ramirez, then -head of National Civil Police (PNC) in Soyapango.
3. Sub inspector Guerrero, PNC Soyapango, (responsible for both communities in the study).
4. Roberto Murray Meza, prominent businessman, ex-president of ARENA.
5. Manuel Melgar, FMLN MP who is president of Parliamentary Commission for Public Security.
6. Marta Mejía, FMLN councillor for Soyapango and teacher in school at El Boulevar.
7. Raul Marroquín, Community promoter for local government Soyapango responsible for El Boulevar.
8. Miguel Cruz, Director IUDOP (Central American University's Institute for Public Opinion) and key researcher on violence in El Salvador.
9. Jaime Martinez, Director of Research, FESPAD (Foundation for the application of law).
10. David Escobar Galindo (University rector and government delegate for peace negotiations) has written on subject of violence.
11. Gilma Henriquez, Director CAPS-San Vicente (Centre for psycho-social attention).
12. Guillermo García President AEIPES (Association for Ex Prisoners).
13. Margarita Velado (Las Dignas feminist organisation) author of recent study on sexual violence.
14. Mirna Perla, Subdirector, San Vicente Prison.
15. Marcela Smutt UNDP's Violence in a Society in Transition programme.
16. Horacio Trujiillo Policy advisor, Ministry of Education.
17. Luis Galvez Trejo, CSJ and Foro Permamente sobre Masculinidad.

In addition, I was informed by many informal conversations with friends who work in local and international NGOs, especially:

- Carmen Medina, Rebeca Huezo and the members of the Masculinities forum (CIIR).
- America Romualdo (Comité 25 de noviembre).
- Sally O'Neill and Conor Fox (Trocaire).
- Isabel Fabián and Silvia Matus (MAM).
- Rhina Clará Salinas (formerly MAM and Pro-Vida).
- Helene Van Acker (formerly in charge of UNDP programme on gender).
- Mercedes Cañas (Centro de Estudios Feministas).