EXHUMING GUATEMALA’S GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: JUSTICE, TRUTH-TELLING, AND REBUILDING IN A POST-CONFLICT SOCIETY

by

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary thesis is grounded in forensic anthropology, feminist geography, and the violent history of the past century in Guatemala. I seek to determine a link between past and present gender-based violence in Guatemala. Historically, Guatemala has been gripped in periods of political, economic and social transitions. I argue that gender-based violence becomes most pervasive during these periods of transition, and suggest that the 36-year armed conflict that began in 1960 exacerbated the pre-existing forms of gender-based violence that began before the Spanish Conquest. I describe the characteristics of gender-based violence as they differ between men and women; despite the fact that more men were and are murdered in Guatemala than women, the method by which women have been and are killed is personal, with greater physical contact than in the cases of men. This form of violence is labeled femicide, that is, the killing of women because they are women, a crime associated with the impunity that perpetrators are granted by the state.

The research for my thesis was in collaboration with the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (Guatemala Forensic Anthropology Foundation) (FAFG), the Fundación Sobrevivientes (Survivor Foundation) (FS), and the Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (Guatemalan Group of Women) (GGM). Based on this fieldwork conducted in Guatemala in May 2008, I share the interviews of family members of victims as they voice their testimonios of violence. I examine the history of violence that occurred in the preceding 100 years, since the dictatorship of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920) who introduced the ideology of the Caudillo to the emerging nation state. Post-peace gender-based violence, the period of violence since the signing of the Peace Accord in 1996, is explored, and I provide evidence that there is an increase in gender-based violence, despite the declaration of peace. The challenges to
reconciliation are described using a framework of forensic investigation to analyze the state of women's bodies as they are found in contemporary cases, compared to female remains from historical cases of recently exhumed clandestine sites related to the early twentieth century as well as the armed conflict. I investigate methods that can be used in the prevention of gender-based violence and recommendations to consider when approaching the justice system to effect change and put an end to impunity.
Acknowledgments

To begin, the research for my thesis, my journeys to Guatemala, and travel to conferences to speak on the atrocities that continue to occur in Guatemala would not have been possible without the funding support of the Graduate Research Assistanceship Awards from the Research and Graduate Program of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) (January 2008-May 2008; September 2008- April 2009), as well as the Graduate Student Conference Travel Award from UNBC (2008). I would like to particularly impart my utmost gratitude to Ian D. Hartley, Dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and his staff.

I would like to thank a number of people who, with their support and assistance, helped me through my years of university, and showed me how important it is to believe in your dreams. This project or dream is to give voice to the victims and families who were affected by the tragedy of losing a loved one. It is to tell them that we will never forget and would not allow the perpetrators to forget their victims. Jarrett Hallcox (2006: 263), director of the National Forensic Science Institute (NFSI), wrote “I came across an old proverb that says the only way to leave a lasting legacy is to do three things: plant a tree, have a child, and write a book”. Well, I am working on it: not in the same order, the children came first. Now, the writing of this thesis will be my legacy that will not allow us to forget. To plant a tree: it is something that through this thesis will grow inside of each of one of us to help end this impunity. It took a lot of help and encouragement for this; words can not express my gratitude.

First of all, to my supervisor Dr. Catherine Nolin, from the Geography Program at UNBC, for her amazing, never-ending support, encouragement and dedication that inspires the belief that we can make a difference. To Dr. Richard Lazenby, from the Anthropology Program at UNBC, for your support, I will be always grateful, and for coming with me to Guatemala in
2005, for your first time. That trip to Guatemala changed something in both of us, and created this friendship. To Dr. Jacqueline Holler, from the History Program at UNBC, who showed me how to see the real history of Guatemala.

To the members of the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation) (FAFG), starting with Fredy Peccerelli, Executive Director, who not only made it possible for me to participate in the work that the FAFG conducts daily, but also made me feel welcomed and comfortable in such a chaotic environment; I am eternally grateful to you, Tristan and Ashley for your friendship, and many thanks to Jessika Osorio as well. Omar Bertoni Girón (Tony), Bëanka Peccerelli and beautiful Antonella, who welcomed me into their home more than once, and for your friendship. To Claudia Rivera, who shared her experience in Guatemala and Kosovo; Juan Carlos Gatica who offered me a friendship that will continue for a long time with good memories; Byron García, thank you for your friendship; Heidy Quezada, Alma Vásquez, Shirley Chacón who shared their experience in the field, as well as in the lab. To Oscar Xpata and “Memo” who with their sense of humor made it more bearable. To Fredy Cumes who never failed me with the access to the internet to keep in touch with my family, and to all of the rest of the members of the FAFG my most grateful thank you to you all, hope to see you all in El Portalito for one more Mojito!

Several other people helped me in Guatemala to reach other organizations during my research: I would like to say thank you to Alan Robinson and Emma Sunderland for opening their house to me, and the most important aspect, their friendship. Fernando Alonzo, Rocio and Mercedes who gave me their friendship and who are always in my thoughts. Rocio particularly helped me get in touch with Fundación Sobrevivientes (Survivor Foundation) (FS), where I met Director Norma Cruz, and her daughter the sub-director Claudia Maria Hernández Cruz. They
opened their hearts with great interest to my research, and shared their experience in the field of human rights work and gender-based violence. To Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (Guatemalan Group of Women) (GGM), especially to the Executive Coordinator Giovana Lemus who welcomed me into GGM and allowed me to interview victims of gender-based violence throughout Baja Verapaz, with the collaboration of Wendy Carina Véliz Hernandez from GGM; Lucrecia Jeronimo and Yesenia Chen from the Centro de Apoyo Integral para Mujeres Sobrevivientes de Violencia (Centre for Integral Support for Women Survivors of Violence) (CAIMU) in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz. It was inspirational and a privilege to be part of their work and to be authorized to represent them in the international sphere is an honor.

Most of all, I feel compelled to continue saying thank you to the victims and their families. To Rosa Franco who lost her daughter to gender-based violence on December 16, 2001, and continued in the fight to end the impunity that has humiliated the memory of María Isabel, her daughter. To Don Vicente Rodríguez Rodríguez who lost his daughter Gregoria Rodríguez Rodríguez and took in seven grandchildren, the youngest only 14 months old at the time of my research; Don German Margarito Xitumul Franco who lost his wife Natalia Pérez Chen; Salomón Ortiz Sis who lost his niece Delfina Reyes Ortiz, all of whom were murdered between January to May 2008. I am eternally grateful to you for sharing your memories with me, and your bravery at denouncing such crimes. Without your testimonios, this thesis would have not been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Kathy, and my amazing children; Killian, Zackarias and Elora. To Kathy, who has supported and encouraged me by always being so patient and loving, even when I deserved something different, you know! Killian, Zackarias and
Elora, I will always love you for your support and the sacrifices you have made over the past few years, and again just remember that dad will always be grateful for your love.
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<tr>
<td>AAAS</td>
<td>American Association for the Advancement of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMVA</td>
<td>Asociación Mujer Vamos Adelante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Association for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFCA</td>
<td>Centro de Análisis Forense y Ciencias Aplicadas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center of Forensic Analysis and Applied Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIMU</td>
<td>Centro de Apoyo Integral para Mujeres Sobrevivientes de Violencia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centre for Integral Support for Women Survivors of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALACS</td>
<td>Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALDH</td>
<td>Centro de Acción Legal para los Derechos Humanos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centre for Human Rights Legal Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEH</td>
<td>Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission for Historical Clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEJIL</td>
<td>Centre for Justice and International Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CICIG</td>
<td>Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDH</td>
<td>Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONADEP</td>
<td>Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Commission on the Disappeared People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONAPREVI</td>
<td>Coordinadora Nacional de Prevención contra la Violencia a la Mujer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Coordinator for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONAVIGUA</td>
<td>Coordinación Nacional de Viudas Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Coordination of Guatemala Widows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUC</td>
<td>Comité de Unidad Campesina/Campesino Unity Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>Deoxyribonucleic Acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAAF</td>
<td>Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense/Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAFG</td>
<td>Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala/Guatemala Forensic Anthropology Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECAP</td>
<td>Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial/Community Studies and Psychosocial Action Work Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGP</td>
<td>Ejército Guerrilero de los Pobres/Guerrilla Army of the Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Fundación Sobrevivientes/Survivors Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFG</td>
<td>Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala/Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes/Rebel Armed Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLACSO</td>
<td>Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales/The Latin American School of Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo/Mutual Support Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGM</td>
<td>Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres/Guatemalan Group of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>GHRC/USA</td>
<td>Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IACHR</td>
<td>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IECCPG</td>
<td>Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Políticas de Guatemala/Guatemalan Institute of Comparative Studies in Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| MP      | Ministerio Público  
Public Ministry |
| MS      | Mujeres en Solidaridad  
Women in Solidarity |
| NFSI    | National Forensic Science Institute |
| NGO     | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OJ      | Organismo Judicial  
Judicial System |
| ORPA    | Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas  
Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms |
| PAC     | Patrulla de Autodefensa Civil  
Civil Self-Defense Patrols |
| PAR     | Participatory Action Research |
| PDH     | Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos  
Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office |
| PGT     | Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores  
Guatemalan Labor Party |
| PHR     | Physicians for Human Rights |
| PNC     | Policía Nacional Civil  
Civil National Police |
| REMHI   | Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica  
Recovery of Historical Memory |
| UNBC    | University of Northern British Columbia |
| URNG    | Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca  
Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity |
| UNIFEM  | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| USAC    | Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala  
University of San Carlos of Guatemala |
| WOLA    | Washington Office on Latin America |
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Achi</strong></td>
<td>One of the Maya Indigenous Language and ethnic groups in Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Albañil</strong></td>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ante-mortem</strong></td>
<td>Before death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bodegero</strong></td>
<td>Shopkeeper or warehouseman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bomberos</strong></td>
<td>Firemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calambre</strong></td>
<td>Cramps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campesinos</strong></td>
<td>Peasants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Castigo ejemplar</strong></td>
<td>Exemplary punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caudillo</strong></td>
<td>Strong man, leader, title used to refer to people like Simon Bolivar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cervical vertebrae</strong></td>
<td>Neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chelas</strong></td>
<td>Beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chiches</strong></td>
<td>Breast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conquistadores</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the Spaniards at the time of the Conquest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corte</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Maya woven skirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cuates</strong></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultura de silencio</strong></td>
<td>Culture of silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don</strong></td>
<td>A title of respect for a man; placed in front of the first name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doña</strong></td>
<td>A title of respect for a woman; placed in front of the first name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>El Norte</strong></td>
<td>Refer to North America; United States in particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exfoliation</strong></td>
<td>Pitting or erosion of the bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Femur</strong></td>
<td>Thigh bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Filasiar</strong></td>
<td>To cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fincas</strong></td>
<td>Farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frijoles</strong></td>
<td>Beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guardia rural</strong></td>
<td>Rural guards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Güípil</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Maya woven blouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hacienda</strong></td>
<td>Country State, farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jornalero</strong></td>
<td>Day laborer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kaqchikel</strong></td>
<td>One of the Maya Indigenous Language and ethnic groups in Guatemala; also spelled Cakchiquel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ladinos/as</strong></td>
<td>Offspring of miscegenation, usually between a Mayan mother and Spanish father</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>La Violencia</strong></td>
<td>The Violence – Refers to the peak period of the war between 1978-1985, when the most people were murdered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Machismo</strong></td>
<td>Display of masculinity, usually through physical strength, courage and aggressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maquila</strong></td>
<td>A manufacturing facility usually under foreign ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maras</strong></td>
<td>Gangs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metatarsals</strong></td>
<td>Feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milpa</strong></td>
<td>Corn field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moledora</strong></td>
<td>Maize grinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moronga</strong></td>
<td>Blood Sausage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patellae</strong></td>
<td>Knee cap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patojitos</strong></td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patria potestad</strong></td>
<td>Power of the father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peri-mortem</strong></td>
<td>Around the time of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pisto</strong></td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan Terrorista</strong></td>
<td>Terrorist plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-mortem</strong></td>
<td>After the time of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximal phalanges</strong></td>
<td>Toes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quetzales</strong></td>
<td>Guatemalan currency, currently valued at Q8.15 to the U.S. dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Señora</strong></td>
<td>A title of respect for a woman; placed in front of the first or last name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sicarios</strong></td>
<td>Hired assassins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sompopos</strong></td>
<td>Large ants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Testimonio</strong></td>
<td>Personal testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terraceria</strong></td>
<td>Dirt road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tibia</strong></td>
<td>leg; below knee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tienda</strong></td>
<td>Store; usually a corner store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tortillas</strong></td>
<td>A type of thin, unleavened flat bread, made from ground maize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vergueada</strong></td>
<td>To punch, to beat</td>
</tr>
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</table>
INTRODUCTION

I am a student at the University of Northern British Columbia situated in the central interior of northern British Columbia. I examine issues surrounding gender-based violence in rural and urban settings. Although these issues are pervasive in marginalized and Indigenous communities around the world, including the community where I live – Prince George – I focus on the people of Guatemala. The overarching discussion throughout this thesis is one that examines gender-based violence (GBV) in Guatemala, the effects impunity has on a population in transition and the increased violence against women as a result of this impunity. Past expressions of violence toward women were manifest in the depths of their bones and can be seen today in their uncovered remains. I examine one case study specifically that connects the past to the present. Through this case study I seek to answer the question, “how does the marked violence on the body of one woman’s remains reflect and connect to the increased violence seen in contemporary cases of GBV?” The focus then is on the current violence directed toward women in Guatemala and toward establishing a link within the manifested aggression between the methods of violence documented over the past 100 years, specifically during the period of the 36-year armed conflict; and the methods of violence seen in contemporary Guatemala. Such connections are explored in a later chapter through an examination of survivors’ testimonios from the conflict, as well as through interviews I conducted during my fieldwork in the spring of 2008 in rural and urban departments throughout Guatemala. I further argue that the protracted impunity prevalent in Guatemala stands as a barrier in the search for social justice and social rebuilding.

Guatemala is a country that has gone through a number of political, economic and social transitions over the last 60 years, and is prominently marked by violence and repression towards its citizens (Garcia Garcia 2006: 1; Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 4). Guatemala’s failure to secure
a progressive government that brought "land reform and laws that protected labor" began in 1954, with a military coup d' état (Nelson 1999: 9). This event was backed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and saw the elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz, overthrown (Garrard-Burnett 2001: 68; Nelson 1999: 9). "The coup against Arbenz marked the beginning of Guatemalan involvement in the crusade against Communism during the Cold War" (Esparza 2005: 381). Five years later, the memory of the coup still fresh, a surge of the triumphant Cuban Revolution splashed its waves on the Guatemalan shoreline creating a revolutionary tide as various guerrilla groups emerged (Kay 2001: 762). Unrest rose once again in Guatemala in November of 1960, and what followed was a 36-year armed conflict between armed forces and the guerrilla movement: a movement that was formed not by "Marxist intellectuals, class-conscious workers or peasants," but by the division of the Guatemalan armed forces that saw a faction of patriot military officers not wanting to see their country under the "subordination" of the United States stand in opposition to the Guatemala government's armed forces (Afflitto 2004: 239; Stoll 1999: 47).

This initial uprising failed, but from this failure in 1962, a group of Ladinos,1 the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces) (FAR), was born (Falla 1992: vii). The FAR operated mainly in the capital and the Western region of Guatemala where the Ladino population was more predominant (Falla 1992: vii). Indigenous workers from the highlands of Guatemala who were working for large land owners making extremely low wages formed the Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas (Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms) (ORPA) (Stoll 1999: 49). In January 19, 1972, the "Edgar Ibarra" guerrilla group entered Guatemalan territory to initiate hostilities toward the army in the mountains of Quiché and

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1 Ladinas/Ladinos are the "offspring of miscegenation, usually between a Mayan mother and Spanish father." (Green 1999: 27).
Huehuetenango; this was the beginning of the *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* (Guerrilla Army of the Poor) (EGP) (Payeras 2006: 15). The *Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores* (Guatemalan Labor Party) (PGT) was founded in 1949, and during this time they were organizing the masses and promoting agrarian reforms (Figueroa Ibarra 1991: 99). By the early 1980s there were four revolutionary movements, the FAR, ORPA, EGP, and the PGT. “By the end of 1981, the situation was sufficiently desperate to bring the four groups together” (Stoll 1999: 196) and in 1982 they formed the umbrella group *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity) (URNG) (REMHI 1998: xii). This armed conflict was characterized by counterinsurgency which left approximately 200,000 dead, more than 45,000 disappeared, 70,000 widows and over 1,500,000 displaced (REMHI 1998; CEH 1999).

On December 29, 1996 the Peace Accord was signed and officially ended the long period of violence. Unfortunately, the early 1990s saw Guatemala enter a new era of violence, making the country one of the most violent in Central America (Garcia Garcia 2006: 1; Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 12). According to the United Nations Development Program’s International Human Development Indicators (UNDP 2010), the rate of homicide in Guatemala sees 45.2 out of 100,000 people killed annually in a population of less than 14.5 million. To understand the urgency and put this number into perspective, in Canada the rate of homicide sees 1.7 people killed out of 100,000 annually out of a population of nearly 34 million (UNDP 2010). This means, according to the most recent data collected (UNDP 2010) Guatemala, a country with 43% of the population of Canada sees roughly 6554 people killed every year whereas in Canada roughly 578 people are killed annually.
During the conflict, men dominated the total number of murdered individuals (Nolin Hanlon and Shankar 2000: 275), a fact that is common with the current trend of violence in Guatemala. Another trend that connects the past to the present is the means in which men and women were killed. For example, during the conflict, men were generally killed right away, whereas women were often held for days, raped and mutilated (Trejo 2006: 3). In recent years, naked bodies of women with signs of sexual violations or mutilation have been found in different parts of Guatemala City (Godoy-Paiz 2008: 30; Torres 2007: 13; Diez 2007: 42). Despite the fact that the majority of victims are men, the statistics show a significant increase in the number of murdered women (Carey Jr. 2007: 1). The Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala² (Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation) (FAFG) (2008) analysis of the total number of homicides in relation to the number of women killed between 2001 and 2006 echoes this increasing trend (see Table 1.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Homicides</th>
<th>Assassinations of Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2927</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>10.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3314</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>9.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3854</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>9.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4010</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>12.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5195</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5885</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25,185</td>
<td>2667</td>
<td>10.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Comparison of Total Number of Homicides in Guatemala to Female Assassinations Between 2001 to 2006 (FAFG 2008: 4).

² The FAFG is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that reconnects families and assists in the reconciliation process. As the FAFG has been essential to my research, I will provide a more thorough discussion of the work they conduct in later sections of my thesis.
The age of violence between 2000 and 2006 saw more than 3,000 women murdered in the early stages of the new millennium (Carey Jr. 2007: 1; Constantino 2006: 108). One of the key issues reflected in the numbers of women murdered through acts of femicide, is the lack of standardized criteria used by various reporting institutions (see Table 1.2) (Musalo et al. 2010: 177).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Women Killed (GHRC)</th>
<th>Number of Women Killed (PNC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>303 (307)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>509 (527) (531)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>552 (665)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>687 (722)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,159</td>
<td>4,157 to 4,327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: Comparison of Number of Women Killed in Guatemala from 2000 to 2008. The column on the left based on numbers collected from the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (GHRC/ USA 2009: 6). The column on the right is based on numbers reported by the Policía Nacional Civil (PNC) (Musalo et al. 2010: 179).

Because of such inconsistencies, collected data do not capture the depth of the “gender-based phenomenon” (Musalo et al. 2010: 176). The disturbing trend in violence seemed destined to persist due to the Guatemalan legislature’s continued refusal to “recognize crimes against women” (Ruhl 2006: 23). However, in response to this trend, several developments in the legal framework that address violence against women must be noted. The most recent development
occurred April 8, 2008 when the Guatemalan Congress passed the *Ley Contra Femicidio y Otras Formas de Violencia Contra la Mujer* (Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women), which called for longer penalties (up to fifty years) for perpetrators found guilty of violent crimes against women, and instilled institutional measures that addressed the problem (Godoy-Paiz 2008: 27). Godoy-Paiz (2008: 28) argues, 

> that the emergence of [such] laws represents a significant victory for Guatemalan women, that should be situated within the converging processes of Peace negotiations and a growing women’s movement on the one hand, and escalating generalized violence, insecurity, and crime, where violent murders of women have been on the rise, on the other.

This era of violence pervails despite signing the Peace Accord. With this perceived transition to peace comes a discussion of gender-based violence, femicide and feminicide that pervades Guatemalan society within a context of generalized violence. GBV is defined by the *Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence* (Duvvury 2009: 1) as “any act or threat of harm inflicted on a person because of their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality; therefore women are primarily affected,” and while GBV is a global problem, it is most pervasive in less developed countries, becoming more exacerbated during time of conflict. I would argue that GBV becomes more pervasive during a time of uncertainty when the lines defining identities become blurred; for example, the period of transition from war to peace that Guatemala has been experiencing since 1996. The blurring of lines could potentially lead to a reaffirmation of identity expression, something that is manifested through forms of power relations and by extension structural oppression, that is; systematic constraints whose “causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules” (Gotfredsen 2008: 8).

GBV has been used as a means to “maintain and (re)produce ethnic relations, as well as national and state formation in Guatemala since the Spanish Conquest” (Godoy-Paiz 2008: 30).
Therefore, as political scientist Anne Gotfredsen (2008: 8) suggests "it is not possible to eliminate structural oppression by getting rid of the rulers or making some new laws, because oppressions are systematically reproduced in economical, political and cultural institutions."

Anthropologist Paula Godoy-Paiz (2008: 30) echoes this point as she posits that life experiences of both men and women leave them subject to acts of violence that are "influenced by their various social locations," such as ethnicity, class, age and geographical location.

As a means of (re)producing 'gender relations', violence against women is, as previously mentioned, increasing. Sociologist Diana Russell (2001a: 13-14) defines this form of gendered oppression or more specifically, femicide, as "the killing of females by males because they are females." This definition, according to Russell (2001a: 13-14), applies to all forms of "sexist killing," not only the hatred of women; it implies that "sexist killings" are motivated by a feeling of superiority over females and by the "assumption of ownership of women." Anthropologist Gabriela Torres (2007: 2) defines femicide as "the most extreme form of anti-female terror," meaning that society allows this practice to continue by tolerating the murder of young girls and women. Because impunity is entrenched into Guatemalan social life, the perpetrators of femicide continue to do so without fear of consequence (Torres 2008: 3). Feminicide is a political term defined by anthropologist Victoria Sanford (2008: 62) as one that covers more than femicide, it finds not only the male perpetrators responsible, but the State and judicial structures that normalize misogyny, and maintain a structure of impunity and silence of the victims responsible as well.

How can social science explain this type of gender-based violence and contribute to a solution that could possibly ensure that these actions do not continue? I took the journey that led me through the context of these arguments and was fortunate to meet people who questioned my
interest in gender-based violence. Rocio García\(^3\), my key contact person in Guatemala, introduced me to various individuals and organizations in the country. “Why are you looking at the cases of GBV and femicide, when you are a man?” I was asked this question many times during my fieldwork in Guatemala. On one occasion, the first time I met Elizabeth Cancino and Glenda Garcia from Centro de Acción Legal para los Derechos Humanos (Centre for Human Rights Legal Action) (CALDH), I was invited to Glenda’s home after work because they felt my answer to this question required greater detail and had not yet been answered to their liking. That afternoon Elizabeth picked me up, and Rocio came with us. I was so glad to have Rocio with me, because for the first time I was really intimidated to be questioned by two defenders of women’s rights.

On the way to Glenda’s home Elizabeth stopped at a tienda, and told me we needed to get some cigarettes and beer. As good anthropologists we needed to have our conversation with a glass of beer; as you know the best ideas come when you are sitting down, surrounded by your peers engrossed in conversation, just like the one we were about to have. I had the chance to meet Glenda’s family that night, and soon enough we were sitting at the dinner table. I found myself sitting down at the head of the table. I do believe this seating arrangement was made intentionally by the host. Suddenly, we said cheers, and the questions came with a flurry. “Why do you want to look at gender-based violence?” I told them that I had been reading the papers, could see what was occurring in the country and that I was really concerned with the lack of investigation and that I have not seen any intention from the government to solve these problems.

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\(^3\) Rocio García is affiliated with Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de Latino America (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences). I have known Rocio since 2004 through her husband who works at the FAFG. I have been fortunate to be welcomed into their home as a guest every year since then. Her wealth of knowledge and contacts has been essential for my research.
Elizabeth responded, “those are really good reasons, but my question is why do you want to look at gender-based violence?” Elizabeth, at that moment, said “I am going to tell you why I look at gender-based violence. When I was a teenager I was raped and I was forced to marry my aggressor; I suffered for years under my victimizer. One day, I said, “no more!” and I left with nothing, just my daughter. Now I am advocating for women’s rights. One more time, why are you looking at gender-based violence?”

I found myself reflecting on my childhood and adulthood, recalling my grandmother’s life under my grandfather, how abusive he was toward her, not only physically but mentally; she was between thirteen to fifteen years old when she married. Then, my own mother was in a similarly abusive marriage until she too said, “No more,” and left with my sisters and me. I grew up in a patriarchal system and therefore analyzing what Elizabeth was asking of me took some time to understand. Growing up, I never saw anything wrong with relations between men and women and how power between genders was unevenly and unfairly distributed. I was blind to the whole situation. I grew up in an environment similar to that of Guatemala, one that allowed, and often encouraged through silence the potential for GBV, and I wonder now how many of my family members suffered this way, how many of my friends and neighbors saw this happening and did not see anything wrong with it. I need to know why. I need to know if I am the next grandfather or father or if here, with me, the pattern stops. I told this to Elizabeth, Rocio and Glenda, and Elizabeth replied, “Now that we know why you are looking at gender-based violence, how can we help you?”

Over the past four years, I have developed relationships that are both personal and professional within the FAFG and have come to identify with efforts being made to bring an end to impunity. These relationships, while beneficial to my research also have the potential to be
problematic. For example, geographer Audrey Kobayashi (1994: 73, 80), describes one of the challenges of being an insider researcher as the researcher must redefine himself/herself within their own culture in order to maintain (or gain) legitimacy while doing research.

Because my research focus is on femicide and gender-based violence, one limitation involves the fact that I am a man within a culture of *machismo*. Through the lens of feminist standpoint theory (Lenz 2004: 98-99), I challenge this social structure from the perspective or location of the perceived oppressor, as an outsider within. Standpoint theory itself suggests that because a “marginalized group of people has less interest in preserving the status quo, [they] occupy a unique position from which to view the culture from which they are marginalized” (Lenz 2004: 98-99). Standpoint theorists thus “anchor their methodology in ‘outsider within’ positions” (Lenz 2004: 98), for example; the position in which I find myself: one that is “included in the dominant cultural practices but nevertheless, and for various reasons unable to, [or simply refuse] to fully participate” (Lenz 2004: 98). Sandra Harding (1991: 138) describes standpoint theory as “socially situated knowledge,” determined by the knower’s social position, particularly by the power relationships that structure the individual’s life. Feminist standpoint theorists like Harding (1991: 150); Glen McClish and Jacqueline Bacon (2002: 28), suggest that “research should be grounded in women’s experiences, as an indicator of a reality, which is based on the perspective of women’s lives, against which hypotheses are tested.” This perspective can

[Expose the ways in which women are oppressed and exploited, how they resist and often consent to both, and how they sometimes oppress and exploit one another; it can explain the contradictions in the distribution of resources and the ways prevailing knowledges shore up the structures of exploitation that bind women and men into suburb and ghetto, metropole and periphery (Hennessy 1993: 16).]
Feminist standpoint theory also suggests that a result of these experiences “women are more conscious of gender inequality because they occupy a [culturally] devalued gendered status, and as a result have more negative experiences” (Martin et al 2002: 665). Throughout my research, understanding this last point in the gender positioning, and situated knowledge of the individuals I interviewed was key to peeling back the layers of a very entrenched cultural (mis)understanding, for both them and for myself.

In redefining myself, it was also necessary to be critically reflective throughout my research because of the fact that I am indeed both an insider and outsider to my research sample (Dowling 2005: 26-27). This point was particularly important because it could have affected the way I was perceived by the individuals I interviewed, and reflected in seen and unseen power struggles (Kobayashi 1994: 74). The other side to this situation is that before I began my academic career, I had one world view. Since then my views have changed drastically, so even though I am an insider in one scenario, I also consider myself an outsider. As such, I was in a constant “space of betweenness” (Katz quoted in Nast 1994: 57). In a discussion of this dilemma, geographer Heidi J. Nast (1994: 57) explains how as researchers we will work with ‘others’ who are “separate and different from ourselves; difference is an essential aspect of all social interactions that requires that we are always everywhere in-between or negotiating the worlds of me and not me.”

I had to prove that my interest in the subject matter was genuine. Building relations in advance of my actual research fieldwork was integral to breaking through this particular limitation. A number of the individuals I met prior to conducting fieldwork are connected to the FAFG through various other human rights and women’s support organizations. Anthropologist H. Russell Bernard (2002: 187-188) describes these relations as key informants who understand
the information you need, and will help get it for you. The connections that I made were and are reciprocal in the exchange of ideas and resources; in fact, many of the primary sources I received are due in part to these connections.

For my thesis research, I returned to a project that I started during my three-month long Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded internship with the FAFG in the summer of 2006. The goals of this internship were to build strong relationships by developing training workshops, such as the course in the Applications of Cortical Bone Histology in Forensic Anthropology imparted by Dr. Richard Lazenby of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) on August 21st to 25th, 2006 in Guatemala in implementing an accreditation model for forensic anthropology (Silva 2007). As a result of my ongoing relationship with the FAFG, a large portion of the data for my study had previously been collected. When I returned to Guatemala in May 2008, I had access to the exhumation case number FAFG 661-I-1. The number “661” is the number of exhumations conducted until July 5, 2006, the Roman numeral “I” identified the number of graves, and number “1,” the number of remains found within the site (FAFG 2007). This case is the exhumation of a woman murdered on August 1982, in Chuibala, San José Poaquil, Chimaltenango along a terraceria (dirt road) (FAFG 2007: 4). Through the testimonies of survivors collected by the social anthropologists of the FAFG, it was determined that the victim was buried by a family member and the mayor of the town (FAFG 2007: 5).

Through the FAFG’s use of a multi-method analysis of the data, including analysis of forensic material, ethnographic documents, and archival records; the forensic team is able to give skeletal remains a name: in the case I was working on for my field work, the name was Margarita Telón Cún (FAFG 2007: 16). The forensic analysis suggests that she gave birth to many children; based on the wear pattern on her knee-caps, it was determined that she spent a lot
of time on her knees, weaving, possibly as an occupation; and her cervical vertebrae suggested that the perpetrator approached her from the back cutting her throat at least five times (FAFG 2007). In the last of three interviews conducted at the site, the survivors told the social anthropologist that Margarita gave birth to eight children, and her occupation was indeed weaving, as well as helping in the milpa (FAFG 2007).

Indiscriminate and selective violence are examined throughout my research; however, I focus more specifically on contemporary selective violence against women in Guatemala. In a discussion of current selective violence, Torres (2007: 11) states:

Women, as the culturally ideal vessels of the Guatemalan family, were not killed as often as men. In the instances where women were killed, however, their cadavers show evidence of over-kill and rape that would imply that divergence from the expected behavioral norms was punished more for women than for men precisely because the moral costs of “defilement” were higher.

I focus on female murder victims living in urban and rural areas of Guatemala. The goal of my research is to establish a link between the method of violence seen in the past one 100 years and the method of violence seen in contemporary Guatemala. As an example of GBV that occurred previous to the armed conflict (1960-1996), historian David Carey Jr. (2007: 1) states that “the ‘Macheteador de Mujeres’ (Macheteador of Women) struck in 1931; he left his 19 year-old domestic partner Cristina Chijoc in much the same condition that victims are found today.” I explore these connections through the examination of testimonios of survivors of the internal armed conflict found in Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Recovery of Historical Memory) (REMHI) (1998) and the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (Commission for Historical Clarification) (CEH) (1999)\(^4\), as well as through interviews of individuals affected

by current acts of violence. In establishing this connection, I argue that impunity stands as a barrier to the search for social justice and social rebuilding.

Anthropologist James Clifford (1986: 6) suggests that ethnographic writing can be determined in six ways: contextually, by creating meaningful social milieu; rhetorically, using expressive conventions of and within literature; institutionally, writing within and against specific traditions; generically, though distinguishable from a novel or other literary script; politically; and historically, considering the previous five principles are constantly changing. Clifford (1986: 6) continues with a discussion of “partial truths” of ethnographic work as something that is made or fashioned by the author and the individuals who are interviewed. It is possible for informants to tell you what they perceive to be true of the given research project, or even to exclude information consciously or subconsciously based on what they remember (Clifford 1986: 7). Clifford (1986: 17) determines that when conducting research, there are external and self-imposed limits, suggesting that “whole truths” are determined by forces outside of the author or the subject, by issues such as language, rhetoric, power and history (Clifford 1986: 7). I was careful when conducting research about the issues of being an insider researcher as well as receiving “partial truths” from my informants, regardless of my relationship to them; recognizing these issues as they occurred, I was able to contextualize, or situate them within the broader research. Even so, and despite the thoroughness with which I conducted my research, there is a depth of truth that an ethnographer or researcher can not reach unless one has the lived experience of what one is researching.

Clarification (CEH) 1999, Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio, sought to uncover why one sector of the population used violence to gain political power, why violence, especially as it came from the state and effected the civilian population, particularly the Maya population, where women were considered “botin de Guerra” (‘booty’ or ‘spoils’ of war) and endured the rigor of the organized violence (1999: 11).
In my search to understand the connections among past and present GBV in the different regions of Guatemala, I examined current manifestations of injustice that victims and survivors are faced with as a result of the perpetrators’ ability to remain unpunished in a state where impunity is the norm (Lira 2001: 15; Zur 1994: 13). According to Sanford (2003: 396) “Impunity is a law of exception that permits and foments actions of the state against the citizenry.” The case study I examined, the remains of Margarita Telón Cún and the focus of this thesis, is an example of the depth of violence seen in the past. I also examine contemporary case studies of selective violence directed specifically toward women as the basis of my research. According to Bernard (2002: 91), “[t]he first thing to do after you get an idea for a piece of research is to find out what has already been done on it.” Thereafter, I supported these case studies through an in-depth literature review and field work. My fieldwork took place over a four week period in Guatemala during May 2008. I used qualitative ethnographic methods, utilizing both formal and informal means of interviewing, and participant observation.

When conducting research I utilized a multi-method approach (Hay 2005) that includes aspects of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the brief time frame did not allow for a full PAR project. According to geographer Sara Kindon (2005: 210), the most important aspect of PAR is that “the design and process are negotiated with the researched group and carried out in ways appropriate to the context, the time available, and the people involved including [myself].” The PAR researcher also works with the research group to “achieve change that they desire” (Kindon 2005: 208). The use of participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews as well as secondary sources ensured the validity and rigour of my research and allowed for the “triangulation” (Winchester 2005: 4) of information gained through such methods. Validity deals with the truthfulness of knowledge arising from research; whereas rigour...
is a means of establishing the trustworthiness of research (Mansvelt and Berg 2005: 260; Bradshaw and Stratford 2005: 74). Ensuring validity and rigour required that I maintain “an appropriate checking procedure” which included the major types of triangulation: multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories (Bradshaw and Stratford 2005: 74).

Clifford (1997: 191) explains, “anthropological fieldwork requires that one do something more than pass through. One must do more than conduct interviews, make surveys, or compose journalistic reports.” A multidisciplinary approach that includes forensic methods in areas such as skeletal biology, forensic anthropology and archaeology, forensic science, international law, and criminalistics (Steadman and Haglund 2005: 24), helps to bring closure to the survivors by reuniting them with the remains of loved ones, which in turn will assist with the process of reconciliation as individuals and as a collective (CEH 1999: 56). The problem that persists despite forensic analysis is the continuation of injustice and the prevalence of impunity. I plan to do more than simply “pass through” with my fieldwork. The fieldwork completed in collaboration with the FAFG is the first partnering of its kind with the foundation⁵, which makes this research all the more significant and exciting.

Since the summer of 2007, I have set up my research work in collaboration with the FAFG who have guided me to meet a number of organizations that are studying the issue of femicide, GBV and human rights violations. One of the limitations of my direct fieldwork was time because I was only in Guatemala for four weeks⁶. Through connections I made in the summer 2007, I was able to develop rapport with Rocio Garcia, who is affiliated with Facultad

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⁵ This collaboration with the FAFG was the springboard to the current exchange program with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). The agreement for the exchange program was signed in May 2008. The first installation of the exchange saw two members of the FAFG travel from Guatemala to UNBC in March 2009 to participate in a condensed course. The second installation saw three students travel to Guatemala from UNBC in the summer 2009 to participate in an internship with the FAFG. This partnering is one of the first of its kind.

⁶ I have returned to Guatemala every year since my initial fieldwork to continue a working relationship with the FAFG and to maintain contact with the survivors.
Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (The Latin American School of Social Sciences) (FLACSO) and CALDH and was able to act as a gatekeeper. Her role was essential to my research as she is local and has access to resources and potential informants (Schensul et al. 1999: 77). It was important to establish a level of trust between myself and potential informants because this relationship is “critical to the collection of opinions and insights,” which is why I began so early to develop working relationships that will continue well after my research is complete (Dunn 2005: 91).

My fluency in Spanish is a key advantage. I was born in Chile and have traveled extensively throughout Latin America. As an ‘insider’ researcher, I understand certain nuances in the body language, and within the language itself. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and therefore I did not need to hire a translator. These interviews were potentially sensitive for the informants, in which case presentations on the research are an excellent means of involving the informants, and “giving them the opportunity to participate by listening and asking questions” which enables the informants to become empowered (DeLyser and Pawson 2005: 269). Between the limitations and advantages my research was as rewarding as it was challenging.

Through my affiliation with the FAFG, I had a direct route to several governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Ministerio Público (Public Ministry) (MP), Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office) (PDH), Organismo Judicial (Judicial System) (OJ), Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Políticas de Guatemala (Guatemalan Institute of Comparative Studies in Political Science) (IECCPG), Coordinadora Nacional para la Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar y Contra las Mujeres (National Coordinator for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women) (CONAPREVI), and Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial
(Community Studies and Psychosocial Action Work Team) (ECAP). In 2006, the Canadian and Chilean Embassies were both present during the course that was part of my CIDA internship. The embassies were interested in the outcome of the course and have expressed an interest in the outcome of my current research project on femicide as well. In this regard, I had support from members of the Canadian and Chilean Embassies in Guatemala. Bernard (1988: 185) suggests that the intense experience of fieldwork will test the [social] scientist’s ability to function “under sometimes stressful emotional conditions.” The support network at the FAFG works with its members during the many stressful and emotional periods of the exhumation process, which extended to me and my work as well.

I had access to a wide scope of information housed at the FAFG that was in their capacity to share. However, limitations existed in what I had access to because of confidentiality and safety issues, as some of the case studies and exhumation/investigation information had not yet been released to the public. Ethically, I cannot use unreleased information due to privacy and confidentiality obligations of the sponsors (FAFG) and the subjects of investigations (Dowling 2005: 20). The FAFG is associated with exhumations of mass graves from the period of the armed conflict, as well as human rights organizations and contemporary forensic investigations (Steadman and Haglund 2005: 23).

I began using participant observation the moment I stepped off the plane in Guatemala, as it is the foundation of cultural immersion and ethnographic research. “As with all crafts, becoming a skilled artisan at participant observation takes practice” (Bernard 2002: 324). It is important to be “sensitive to the feelings of your informants, and it is sometimes a good idea to just listen attentively to an informant and leave your notebook in your pocket” (Bernard 1988:
I interviewed five families of victims of GBV over a period of four weeks in May 2008. During this time, I met with informants several times, for many different reasons. In some instances the informants had more details that they wanted to add to their statements; for others their experience was very recent and initially difficult to talk about. In these cases, understandably, the informants needed time to absorb and process the loss of their loved one before they could talk in depth to me. I utilized various types of primary interview questions and secondary prompts to gain more in-depth information (Dunn 2005: 82). As a means of recording the information gathered from observations and participation that involved “face-to-face communication” I utilized a digital voice recorder so that I would not miss any nuances of the informant (Kearns 2005: 203). I took notes on visual cues that occurred during interviews that I added to the transcripts (Dunn 2005: 95). I also recorded my interviewees by taking photos with their authorization.

“The biggest problem in conducting a science of human behavior is not selecting the right sample size or making the right measurement. It’s doing those things ethically” (Bernard 2002: 25). Another aspect of research is the ethical obligations I have to the informants. It was important to appropriately inform the individuals I planned to interview of the research I was conducting and gain consent from each informant prior to the actual interview (Dowling 2005: 21). The participants and I signed the consent forms and photocopies were made available on site to them. Consent was also recorded by digital recording and photographs of the informants were also taken while they were signing the consent forms (Appendix I).

The interviews ranged in length from one hour to close to three hours, depending on the informant’s state of mind. During some of the interviews, the informants’ testimonies were quite fresh, particularly in the cases of Don Vicente and Don German, where Don Vicente’s daughter...
was killed one month prior to the interview, and Don German’s wife was killed just one week prior to my interview with him. In their testimonies they chose to share much of their experience with me. I was very grateful at the extent to which my many questions were answered. Despite the full responses to the questions that were presented (Appendix II), the informants were given the opportunity to voice issues that were not addressed. Their testimonios are a means to combat the impunity that continues to exist in Guatemala. Geographers Catherine Nolin Hanlon and Finola Shankar (2000: 267) state that testimonio is a form of collective remembrance and is “embraced by those who speak from the margins, usually about the systems or situations that have historically suppressed the ability to speak.” Furthermore, I will be always grateful to them for speaking out against this violence and, therefore, I will make the findings accessible to the communities where the research took place (DeLyser and Pawson 2005: 269).

When I conducted the interviews, the initial meeting took place on neutral ground, where the informants felt most comfortable, and with a familiar organization mediating the interview. Such organizations included Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (Guatemalan Group of Women) (GGM) and Fundación Sobreviviente (Survivors Foundation) (FS). The reason for organizing accompaniment by a familiar mediator was to “[have] the support of a reputable organization [because it] would help to build trust between myself and my participants” as geographer Michelle Switzer (2005: 5) found in her work with war widows in rural Guatemala. Based on my previous experience in Guatemala with the FAFG, I conducted the second and consecutive interviews at the informant’s home, once they were comfortable with me conducting the interview.

Travelling was necessary to get to the interior of the country in the department of Baja Verapaz for the second set of interviews. Key components within the interviews focused on the
informants describing their experience with violence; for example, what happened to themselves or their family member, and where the assault took place. I also asked the informants to discuss the degree of justice they received, and what they would like to see happen in regard to the judicial system. I asked why the informants believed this form of violence continues to occur, and the perpetrators go unpunished. Finally, several victims’ families travel internationally to talk about the violence that occurs in Guatemala (Killer’s Paradise 2006). I asked if this level of exposure is effective for the survivors and if they could elaborate on the effectiveness or lack thereof.

During my fieldwork, I participated on May 12, 2008, in the screening of the film Killer’s Paradise (2006) at the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (University of San Carlos of Guatemala) (USAC). A debate took place among the students and guest speakers from the various organizations dealing with violence towards women. Additionally, through my relation with the FAFG, I was invited to participate in the inauguration of the Centro de Apoyo Integral para Mujeres Sobrevivientes de Violencia (Centre for Integral Support for Women Survivors of Violence) (CAIMU) in the department of Escuintla, on May 20, 2008. This centre is sponsored by GGM, CONAPREV1 and the Embassy of Netherlands. Participation in these events is a key element to understanding how Guatemalan society is reacting to GBV, and to also how various individuals and organizations are working to put an end to the silencing of the victims and survivors.

An advantage of my Spanish language fluency is that if my informants come to a consulted agreement to have this research translated and published in Spanish, they will be able to use it as another form of denunciation and as a means to further their path to justice. On that note, I also discussed issues concerning confidentiality, the use of their names or the choice of
anonymity, because the safety of my informants is of the utmost importance (Dowling 2005: 21).

Also most universities require the formal approval of a research proposal by an ethics committee prior to conducting research that involves people; I received approval for my research proposal from the UNBC Ethics Review Board prior to my own departure to Guatemala (Appendix III).

The fear the informants felt was present at all times, but all stated that if they did not speak, then who would speak for their wives, daughters and sisters? In hope of giving voice to the victims, and greater legitimacy to their cases, all of the informants consented to the use of their actual names and locations in the research. By providing their real names, the informants stated that they gained a sense, or feeling, of safety. Despite the fear and death threats, by publicly denouncing the actions of the perpetrators, the informants put forward a very real face and intimacy, accumulating legitimacy to their cases. I recall in one interview with Señora Rosa Franco. “I will sit with you and tell you whatever you want to know, because the more people you tell, the better it is to keep this going, and who knows, they might start listening.” Don German stated, “In the name of my family we thank you for this visit and we hope that through you somebody listens to our needs” and he continued by saying “that way this crime does not end in impunity as many other cases of our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters.”

The words of my informants are poignant and serve as an intimate lens into the broader perspective of life in Guatemala. In order to situate this intimacy, I utilize what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973:1-115) describes as a “thick” description. Geertz (1973: 1) states that good qualitative research comprises “thick” description. As part of the “thick” description of my research, I used secondary literary sources from books, journals, local Guatemalan newspapers, and internet resources. The analysis of secondary resources supported the primary sources and information that I accumulated while conducting my research, and provided information on pre-
existing research, historical context, and possibly opposing ideas as well, as this gave broader perspective on the subject at hand.

The FAFG also served as a source of information for the official reports of the human rights violations that occurred during the internal armed conflict (1960-1996). Such reports are used by REMHI and CEH (FAFG 2000). For example, the CEH requested and supported the FAFG investigation of the massacres of May 29, 1978 at Panzós, department of Alta Verapaz, during 1977 to 1983; Belén, department of Suchitepéquez, April 21, 1981; Acul, department of Quiché, April 3, 1982; and Chel, department of Quiché (FAFG 2000: 7). Additionally, the FAFG agreed to provide me with information on cases of femicide which, on my return to Canada, was presented in a panel for the conference of the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) (Silva 2008). Geographers Delyser and Pawson (2005: 267) state “by sharing our findings we may inspire others to take up action as well.”

My dual position of being an insider and an outsider was the most difficult aspect of conducting my research. I am a Latin male; I speak Spanish and have an internal grasp of Latin culture, including an understanding of gender hierarchy having grown up in Chile. My struggle was that despite my cultural underpinnings the research I was conducting was about the brutal violence inflicted by males on the female population of Guatemala. As such, there was a dichotomy of responses from my informants. Women wanted to know why I would care to do this type of research, and most of the men I spoke with seemed indifferent at times, wondering why I was not focusing on other issues.

I have been witness to the work of the FAFG as they uncovered the remains of men, women and children, where there is blatant evidence of torture, where victims were found blindfolded, their hands and feet tied and their bodies mutilated. The psychological damage that
persists within Guatemala in regions where voices have yet to be heard, specifically with female victims, must at times be unbearable. I can only hope that the duality of my situation will help to break down barriers so that these silenced voices are finally heard.

My thesis is divided into three broader sections beginning with testimonios of victims and survivors of GBV, moving to the historical context and finally the analysis of my finding which examines the challenges to reconciliation. These sections are further divided into a total of four chapters. I have organized the thesis in this way for the purpose of contextualizing and situating the voices of Guatemalans throughout the text. My hope is that as the readers move through the chapters they get a sense of the intensity of life in Guatemala, and it is my intention that the voices of the informants reverberate off of the pages to the final word. Readers will also gain an understanding into how multiple disciplines such as anthropology, geography and history work together to create a whole (or holistic) finding.

A roadmap of the four chapters begins with the testimonios that I translated from Spanish into English as, in Chapter One, I introduce the individuals who graciously gave of their time to talk about the tragedy of GBV and how it continues to affect their daily lives. Impunity is a constant struggle that all the informants have had to grapple with as they search for justice. Chapter Two discusses the antecedent of contemporary femicide through the examination of one hundred years of GBV dating back to the dictatorship of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920). I chose this time frame, rather than delving into Guatemala’s colonial past, in part, because it punctuated a time period when the violence of Cabrera’s authoritarian regime, “filtered down to community and family relations,” creating an atmosphere of domestic violence and systematic impunity that was commonplace, and was normalized, which enabled men to assume ownership over women’s bodies (Carey Jr. 2007: 5). The manner of violence that filtered to the community
Chapter Three describes the final stages of the armed conflict and post-peace GBV; that is, the period of time since the signing of the Peace Accord in 1996 (REMHI 1998; CEH 1999).

Describing the challenges to reconciliation, Chapter Four outlines the stages of recovery the FAFG uses during the exhumation process. I analyze a historical case study of a recently exhumed clandestine site related to the armed conflict and compare the findings to the state of women's bodies as they are found in contemporary cases and discuss the mode and method in which they are killed, as well as the mode and method in which the remains are recovered in each case. In the Conclusion, I discuss possible methods that can be used in the prevention of GBV and recommendations to consider when approaching the justice system with the purpose of effecting change and preventing impunity in Guatemala.

I often ask myself, "How can a place as beautiful as Guatemala haunt the soul with such ferocity?" During the many times I have travelled to Guatemala over the past several years, I have come to the understanding that there is a deeper truth; of which, for me, the surface has merely been scratched. Yet despite the tension and sense of the ambiguous, my love for Guatemala and its people grows stronger with each visit. In the preface of the book *A Beauty that Hurts: Life and Death in Guatemala*, geographer W. George Lovell (2000: xiv) states, "Words alone will never change Guatemala, but they do afford contemplation of a gnarled, captivating land, as stunning to look at as it is painful to know." The words that follow on these pages are my contribution to the many contemplations that describe the wonder that is Guatemala. The poem prior to the testimonios provides a lens through which the reader gains a restrained view of what it means for a loved one to be disappeared. Without a tangible sense of closure, family members and friends are left with a void and a promise that their loved one will return.
Cuando me enseño su fotografía

Cuando me enseño su fotografía
me dijo
ésta es mi hija
aún no llega a casa
hace diez años que no llega
pero ésta es su fotografía
¿es muy linda no es cierto?
es una estudiante de filosofía
y aquí está cuando tenía
catorce años
e hizo su primera
comunión
almidonada, sagrada.
Esta es mi hija
es tan bella
todos los días converso con ella
ya nunca llega tarde a casa,
yo por eso la reprocho
mucho menos
pero la quiero tantísimo.
Esta es mi hija
todas las noches me despido de ella
la beso
y me cuesta no llorar
aunque sé que no llegará
tarde a casa
porque tú sabes, hace años que
no regresa a casa
yo quiero mucho a esta foto
la miro todos los días
me parece ayer cuando
era un angelito de plumas en mis manos
y aquí está toda hecha una dama
una estudiante de filosofía
una desaparecida
pero no es cierto que es tan linda
que tiene un rostro de ángel
¿Qué parece que estuviera viva?

Marjorie Agosín (Chile).

When she showed me her photograph

When she showed me her photograph
she said
this is my daughter
she still has not come home
it has been ten years that she has not arrived
but this is her photograph
she is beautiful is she not?
she is a student of philosophy
and here is when she was
fourteen years of age
and did her first
communion
dressed so neat, sacred.
This is my daughter
she is so beautiful
everyday I talk to her
she never returns late to the house,
and for this I reproach her
much less
but I love her so much.
This is my daughter
every night I say farewell to her
I kiss her
and I find it difficult not to cry
even though I know she will not come
home late
because you know, it has been many years that she
has not returned home
I love this photograph very much
I look at it everyday
it is like yesterday when
she was like a little angel of feathers in my hands
and here she is made up like a lady
a student of philosophy
a disappeared
but is it not true that she is so beautiful
she has the countenance of an angel
she seems like she is still alive?
PART ONE: Testimonios

Chapter One: Survivors Speak for the Victims of Gender-Based Violence
The people of Guatemala can be divided into two separate (yet often overlapping) groups: the people who suffered during the armed conflict, through the loss of their family members during the scorched earth operations, the counterinsurgency, and the main military objective to provide *el castigo ejemplar* (exemplary punishment) (Diez and Herrera 2004: 17); and current Guatemalan families who live in constant fear wondering “when will it be my turn” to be disappeared or murdered (Samayoa 2007: 28). According to the REMH1 report (1998) and the CEH (1999), during the armed conflict, all Guatemalan citizens, the majority of whom are Maya, suffered the murder, disappearance, displacement of their families, terror and the loss of their dignity by the armed forces. Today, the society is living with multidimensional problems rooted in the “historical trend of widespread violence” (Carey Jr. 2007: 1).

I conducted the majority of interviews for my fieldwork in Guatemala during the summer of 2008. They depict the very real nature of gender-based violence (GBV) and rampant impunity seen throughout the country. The following are a group of five interviews with informants whose experiences of violence together span a time period that ranges from 1982, the peak of the violence in Guatemala under General Efrain Rios Montt (REMHI 1998), through a period of what appears as resurging violence to 2008. The *testimonios* of the five interviewees are representative of the GBV seen historically throughout Guatemala. Guatemala is divided into 22 departments (see Figure 1.1), and the interviews were conducted in three of the 22; Chimaltenango (coloured pink in Figure 1.1), Baja Verapaz (coloured yellow in Figure 1.1), and Guatemala (coloured green in Figure 1.1). The department of Chimaltenango is located centrally in Guatemala, roughly 60 kilometers west of the capital Guatemala City, and it shares its northeastern border with Baja Verapaz. Like Chimaltenango, Baja Verapaz is centrally located, but is
north of the department of Guatemala, and shares its northern border with Alta Verapaz. The
department of Guatemala is located east of Chimaltenango, and south of Baja Verapaz.
The interviews are presented here in their transcribed form with photographic images to provide visual representation of those with whom I was speaking. When reading the words and looking through the images, keep in mind that textual representations (of an interview), even when writing verbatim, do not convey the full meaning of the speaker. Without the benefit of hearing a quivering voice, listening to the sounds of a child play nearby in a garden, smelling wonderful or unsightly scents of the surrounding foliage or of the animals, or witnessing the tears of remembrance, the words on the page do not communicate the full sense of emotions that rumble just below the surface. I will do my best to contextualize the interviews as they bear so much heartfelt memory.

The first of the five interviews is with Jesús Simón Telón (Figure 1.2). This particular interview was conducted in Chimaltenango by members of the FAFG in 2006 when I was an intern at the foundation. Jesús' interview is a representative of the violence that occurred during the peak of the armed conflict in 1982. Following Jesús are interviews with individuals who lost their daughters, wife, and niece to the current wave of GBV seen in Guatemala and who are caught in the vicious cycle of impunity as they try to search for justice. The final interview was conducted with a woman who survived years of abuse at the hands of her stepfather. Her story is one of survival as she and her mother fight not only for themselves but for many other women and children oppressed by a patriarchal system.
This interview was conducted by members of the FAFG in Chuibalá, San José Poaquil, Chimaltenango, a month prior to the exhumation of Margarita Telón on July 5, 2006. I am using an interview conducted by the FAFG because the case study itself was theirs; I was merely a participant observer and a listener of the process of the exhumation as it took place. I was not at the exhumation at that time to conduct research of my own, but was participating as an intern. I am fortunate to now use this case study as part of my thesis. I utilize Margarita’s case study here as a comparison to the contemporary cases, firstly due to the fact that she is female, and secondly due to the manner in which she was killed, and subsequently buried. The individual interviewed was Jesús Simón Telón, the youngest son of Margarita Telón who was with her the day she was killed. Although Jesús speaks both Spanish and Kaqchikel (a Maya Indigenous language) the
interview was conducted in Spanish. As Jesús is a teacher of elementary school and teaches in both languages, there was more direct communication, making for a more 'literal' translation. The goal of this particular interview was to gain as much information about Margarita as possible so that the FAFG could translate the information into a positive identification.

My name is Jesús Simón Telón. I am 33 years old, and I have seven brothers and sisters. I have always lived in Chuibalá, San José Poaquil, Chimaltenango, in the hamlet María. During the armed conflict my family moved a lot between the hamlet María and San José Poaquil. During the armed conflict I lost my father Rodrigo Simón Lún and his parents, my grandparents. Also, I lost my mother Margarita Telón Cún eight months after I lost my father. We lost both of them to the armed conflict. My father was killed by army, and my mother by guerrillas. My religion is Catholic. My language is Kaqchikel and Spanish. My occupation is elementary school teacher.

On August 14, 1982, I accompanied my mother back to the hamlet María to get our domestic animals back, after visiting for a while; we started our return back to San José Poaquil. But we got ambushed by armed men dressed in green with big guns; now I think the weapons were probably automatic. I was able to escape even though they followed me, but they could not catch up with me. I was able to stay close, but I did not know what was happening to my mother because I could not see or hear anything. When I realized that my mother was killed I ran back to my family and told them what happened to our mother.

My mother was 35 years old when she died. She was a good mom; she took care of the house and us. She helped with the milpa, and she did her weaving. The next day my family and myself, and people of San José Poaquil and the army, went to the hamlet María and one of the intentions was to look for my mother’s body. But, the truck that we were traveling was ambushed by the guerrillas. People got killed, soldiers too. My mother did not get buried for a few days. The fourth day after she was
killed, the father-in-law of her brother and the mayor buried her in the same spot where the body was found. My family provided some clothes for her to be buried in. They told us that my mother was cut with a machete, but when they buried her the body was still complete.

We are here, all eight siblings supporting this exhumation to give our mother a proper burial and to have a place to mourn her. About justice I do not know. But, what I know is that we wish for her to be buried right beside our father. She was always sad about losing him.

**Señora Rosa Elvira Franco Sandoval**

I spoke with Rosa Franco informally on several occasions about her tragic experience with her daughter, María Isabel. However, this particular interview with Rosa Franco was conducted specifically for my research on May 16 -17, 2008, in the office of the GGM in Zone 1 in Guatemala City with Wendy Vélez Hernández, a member of the GGM, and Rocío García (my gatekeeper) (see Figure 1.3). The interview was conducted in Spanish as this is Rosa Franco’s first language. The second day of this interview was a sad day, the weather outside was rainy, cold, and grey. Mentally preparing for the news that was about to be shared was difficult, but I felt honoured that Rosa Franco was reliving this pain with me. Once we sat down to conduct the interview the sound of the rain thundered against the tin roof so loudly that we were forced to move to a different room so that we could hear each other speaking. When we were finally settled the interview began.
My name is Rosa Franco and I am 46 years old. My religion is Evangelical, same with my family. I am a ladina and my language is Spanish. I have always lived in Guatemala City in the Centro Histórico of the capital. I have two sons; Leonel Enrique Véliz Franco of 21 years of age and José Roberto Véliz Franco of 18 years of age, and my mother, all of who live with me.

My occupation is receptionist and also I am attending university. I want to become a lawyer to help other mothers of murdered daughters. One of my dreams is to begin an organization that will help them legally, and as well to speak to them about God, because it is necessary, because when you suffer the way we have suffered, your mind is blocked and your heart is clouded. But I do not have money to start this organization, and I do not want to belong to a political party, I do not know any honest politician. I am tired, my soul is tired, but, I want to graduate this year and somehow help other mothers.

For me it is not easy to tell this again, because it is like living it all over again. Well, in Guatemala it is customary when you are young,
on holidays from school, to work. So, you ask for permission from your parents. So, my daughter María Isabel Veliz Franco did ask me and I did not see anything wrong with it. It was a boutique right in Zone 1, in Guatemala City, it is a chain store with prestige, only women working in the store and a security guard, who was a male. On Sunday, December 16, 2001, my María Isabel was kidnapped when she was leaving the store. I started an intensive search for my María Isabel; hospitals, friends, morgue, everywhere. I did not know of her death until I turned the news from Telediario and Notisiete, to see that a body of a woman was found, without identification and approximately of 22 years of age, but when I saw her clothes I knew it was her, my María Isabel. She was only fifteen years of age. She was only a few weeks away from turning 16.

The body of my María Isabel was found on December 18, 2001, in a waste land plot of San Cristóbal, in Zone 8, municipality of Mixco, far from Zone 1. The perpetrators choked her with their hands and with a rope as well. They stabbed her several times in the back of her head, raped her, and beat her as though she was a boxing bag. María Isabel had a perforation in her chest, close to her heart that was made with a knife. When I went to the morgue, it took me a long time to recognize her body. As though the humiliation of hearing from the MP that they believed my daughter was a prostitute and a drug user was not enough, on top of that the district attorney Ileana Girón who had the case of my María Isabel, did not send her clothes to evidence, knowing that her clothes were full of fluids, men’s semen and blood, her interior clothes were ripped. I know this because they gave me her clothes. The Forensic doctor, Pedro Barreno Pech did not even perform the autopsy, and did not collect any evidence from my daughter’s remains.

In my search for justice, I have been insulted, humiliated and my life threatened, as well as my two sons. We have had cars with dark windows with no license plates follow us, men with guns come to the house, as well as follow us by foot and bike. I did denounce this persecution to the
Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) (CIDH) and the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL). The CIDH recommended to the Guatemalan government in November 16, 2005 to give us protection. The harassment has not stopped; one of the police officers assigned to us was injured protecting us. This happened on July 27, 2007, the people responsible for this attack were captured, but they were let go shortly afterward.

I have to tell you many delegations have come to interview me, because of the murder of my Maria Isabel, young students from California and many other places, reporters such as Patrick Bard, people from Amnesty International such as Sebastian Elgueta, and you now. Everybody comes and goes, but my daughter’s case is still unresolved. I will sit with you and tell you whatever you want to know, because the more people you tell, the better it is to keep this going, and who knows they might start listening, I told you, I am tired of this evilness, impunity and the humiliation. But God keeps me strong and he armed me with the opportunity to see the end of this.

Before you go I have to tell you that I buried my Maria Isabel on December 20, 2001, in my father’s mausoleum at the general cemetery here in Guatemala City, where impunity reigns.

At the end of the interview, we all felt drained, the story that Rosa Franco relayed to us held such raw emotion and showed Rosa Franco’s courage to continue with her struggle for justice on behalf of her daughter. We called for one taxi; Rosa Franco with her body guard, Rocio García and I all hopped in and went for coffee and cake so that we could process what we just experienced. For myself, this was the first ‘for the record’ interview I conducted, and it was difficult for me to simply say good night to Rosa Franco that evening, knowing that no matter what I said to her I could never understand the extent of her suffering. What I can offer her are these pages so that her story be told.
Don Vicente Rodríguez Rodríguez

I conducted this interview with the collaboration of GGM on May 22, 2008, at the home of Don Vicente Rodríguez Rodríguez in the hamlet of La Laguna, village of Cubulco, Baja Verapaz, just 37 days after the murder of his daughter, Gregoria (Figure 1.4). The journey to the place of this interview was one of deep reflection. Wendy Vélez, who was present at the previous interview with Rosa Franco; Yesenia Chen and Lucrecia Jeronimo both members of CAIMU, and I drove to this interview, and parked along the road just in front of the home of Gregoria. We waited for Victoria, Don Vicente and Doña María Luisa’s eighteen year-old daughter to meet us so that we would not get lost along the way. The day was hot, yet as we made our journey past Gregoria’s house to the home of Don Vicente and Doña Maria Luisa the air became cooler and held a slight breeze. Stones piled along the walkway seemed to move with life and with closer inspection I could see large winged ants crawling along the crevices. Our journey took us past the milpa (corn field) that had once belonged to Gregoria. The field that a month earlier was well tended had been taken over by weeds and stood in stark contrast to the surrounding fields, a sign of the rupture that had taken place.
When we arrived Don Vicente and Doña Maria Luisa were waiting for our arrival. We introduced ourselves, and we settled into the chairs they had designated for us.

My name is Vicente. I am 53 years old. I have always lived in the hamlet of La Laguna, village of Cubulco, Baja Verapaz. I am Catholic and my family too. I am Achi and speak Achi and Spanish. I am married to Maria Luisa. I have five children now, one of my daughters was murdered a month ago (April 15, 2008) Gregoria Rodriguez Rodriguez. She left seven orphaned children who live with us now. The youngest is just a baby, he is only one year and three months old. His health deteriorated because he was used to his mother’s milk, it took a while to get used to the other type of milk. My daughter’s husband, Macario Ajualip was arrested by the people of the community as the murderer of my daughter. He is currently under arrest by the Policia Nacional Civil (Civil National Police) (PNC). The emotional health of my grandchildren and my children is affected by fear, because the husband of my daughter
threatened them with disappearing them. I am a Jornalero (day laborer), for this work I have to travel to other departments to make 30 Quetzales a day (about 4 US dollars) and work from Monday to Sunday, and still there is not enough to support my family. I am afraid because of my age, some plantations do not want to hire me, and because I do not have a solvent income, the government will take my grandchildren. We need psychological, legal and economical support.

My daughter was alive. He came to kill her on April 15, 2008. My daughter was alive for 12 more days, even though he already had put a notification of her being dead since April 3, in the municipality. He committed a horrible crime; I have not seen him since then. He is in jail in Salamá. He did a terrible thing to my daughter. He said if he was free he would continue to kill his family. More than anything it is painful, so I have the responsibility for my grandchildren now. Where are they going to go? The murderer’s mother said that she is too old, so how she can take care of them. So, I am responsible, and right now I am trying to get any work in Salamá for my grandchildren. And if he is going to be free I feel for my grandchildren, he is a criminal, he took my daughter out of her house to the mountains far away to the mountains, like 35 kilometers, close to Tres Cruces.

On April 3, he told the municipality that his wife was dead. He had a death certificate that said she died from a sickness called pneumonia, but that was a lie, my daughter was alive for another 12 days. But we do not know how he obtained the death certificate. So, when we found the body, the police asked for her identification papers but the murderer did not say anything, so the police asked me to go to the municipality and find out what happened, and this is when we found out that my daughter’s husband already told the municipality that she had been dead since April 3. But my grandchildren remember that their mother and father were home on April 15, because that day was the day of the earthquake. So, I
confronted the husband of my daughter, and told him that he took my daughter at dawn to kill her in the mountains.

I started looking for my daughter. I went to the police, with the judge to put the denunciation that my daughter was missing, but they did not accept it, because they told me that the husband of my daughter has already put in a denunciation, so they would not do another one. They told me that it is probably that my daughter left with another man, maybe she left to look for work, or she went into hiding. But I told them that my daughter left the house without identification papers, cellular phone, without anything. And I told them that she would never leave the baby because he needed his mother's milk. I told them that the man took her, to kill my daughter.

I was crying all the time looking for my daughter, but the husband, he acted like nothing was wrong. We found her eight days later, on April 23. I put an ad on the radio around four in the afternoon, and by seven we receive a notification that a body was found in the mountains, a woman's body. When I heard that, I said, "that is my daughter". We arrived at Tres Cruces around 11:30 or midnight. They were Jornaleros who found my daughter's body, ten to fifteen meters from the new highway. We found her body without a head, without arms and without chiches (breasts), we found some hair and she was covered with gasoline and her back side was covered with maggots and was somewhat burnt, her body was not complete, it was all mutilated. We went back four days later, in the morning and we found some bones, more hair and some teeth. We called the MP, and they arrived around six o'clock in the afternoon. Her clothes were all over the ground and were covered in blood. I want for the judge to make him talk, but he is not saying anything.

My daughter was married to that monster for sixteen years, she suffered with him. She never had her own money, sometimes she did not eat, she was a good wife and mother, she worked hard to look for firewood and she was always with her patojitos (children). But he never
did help her; even though he had a pick-up truck. Gregoria suffered a lot with him, the only time he gave money to her was on Sundays to go to the market, but it was not much, maybe 70 Quetzales. She was only 31 years old when she died, she left four girls and three boys.

They did an autopsy, but it was done at the cemetery. I have a copy of the examination, it said that she was burned, but they kept her clothes. We could not do a wake for her, because her body smelled bad, so after the autopsy we buried her at the cemetery. We are Catholics, we always trust God, but if the justice lets him go, I hope that the community lynch him for what he has done to my daughter, he mutilated her! The community of Cuatro Barrios has already said they will do justice. If the people of Tres Cruces caught him killing my daughter, police or no police, they would have lynched him anyways. One time a thief, from Cubulco was captured in Tres Cruces, they did not care that the police were there, they lynched the thief anyway.

On April 24, we went into town to meet with the community because they were upset of what happened to my daughter, and especially how he was able to get a death certificate without the body on April 3. So, the whole town got together at the PNC building, the news was there too. The town collected some money to help with my grandchildren; they helped us with money, frijoles (bean), corn, bottles of milk for the baby, coffee and sugar. The town set up at the local convenience store of La Tienda de Don Ricardo a place to do donations for my grandchildren. The help was much appreciated, but now it is up to us, and we need psychological, legal and economical help, my grandchildren now know that their father killed their mother and they are sad all the time, so if you can tell people what is happening to us. And if God helps us we will keep all the children, they do not want to be apart, because if they send them somewhere the people might like them for a bit, but maybe later they might hurt them. They have suffered enough already.
Thank you for coming, I know you came with good intentions, but we do not want him to know, because we are afraid that he will be free one day, and somebody will come one day to hurt us all.

After listening to Don Vicente’s testimonio we had lunch with him and his family; some old tortillas and sompopos -the large ants like those I had seen earlier along the pathway crawling through stone crevices that come out during the rainy season at the beginning of May—had been toasted and served with the tortillas. Sharing this meal with them, a stranger who came to know about their tragedy, my perspective was altered, and life’s meaning was shifted once again in an instant. They had re-lived their tragedy for me, and their concern at the moment was my wellbeing and if I had enough to eat. We spoke for a few moments longer, played with their grandchildren, shared same other stories with each other, and after a while I said goodbye to Don Vicente and his family. We wished him good luck for the next day as he was getting prepared to travel to Salamá, for a court date, with the hope that the murderer of his daughter, would remain in jail.

**Don German Margarito Xitumul Franco**

The interview with Don German was conducted in his home in the hamlet of Los Encuentros, Salamá, Baja Verapaz. Natalia Pérez Chen, Don German’s wife was killed on Mother’s Day, May 10, 2008, and (Figure 1.5) this interview was conducted eleven days after this tragic event took place. Wendy, Yesenia and Lucrecia accompanied me to this interview as well. When we arrived at his home, Don German was waiting for us at the gate. We could see a beautiful garden and his youngest son Williams kicking a soccer ball around inside the garden. I was drawn to the garden as it was the first time I had seen a garden as beautiful and deliberate as this one. Despite the dryness and hardness of the ground the plants sprang forth with such life
and vibrancy that the contrast caught my attention. Don German must have seen my expression as he looked at me and said "this was my wife's garden."

Figure 1.5: Don German (right) with four of his children. May 21, 2008. Home of Don German in the hamlet of Los Encuentros, Salamá, Baja Verapaz. Photo: Cristian Silva.

The interview was conducted in Spanish and this excerpt from the interview is from the one time we were able to meet with him.

My name is German Xitumul, I am 46 years old. I am Catholic, and I am Achi. I lived in the hamlet of Los Encuentros, Salamá, Baja Verapaz. I have five children. Three of them work. The first born works as a Jornalero in Petén, and the other two (boy and a girl) in a bakery in Salamá. The other girl is the one who takes care of the house; the cooking, the cleaning and watching over the youngest boy. The two girls, because one is working and the other caring for the house, they go to school only on the weekends, my youngest is the only one going to
school in the weekdays. I work too. I am a *bodeguero* [shopkeeper or warehouseman] for the municipality of *Salamá*.

I had a wife and my children had a mother, her name was Natalia Pérez Chen, but she was murdered on Mother’s Day May 10, 2008. Nata went to school at ten o’clock in the morning because they were celebrating Mother’s Day. She phoned me to let me know that she would see me in the morning the following day, because I was working a 24-hour shift for the municipality of *Salamá*. But, around one o’clock she phoned back to tell me that when she was coming home from the school celebration, my nephew was right behind her and that he stopped to tell her that he had a surprise for her. She told me all this once she got home. She continued telling me that he said Nata (this is how we call her) I have a surprise for you, so she asked what kind of surprise, well he said I want to give you a present for it being Mother’s Day today. But Nata said that your mother might not like this, because she had been having a lot of problems with us. He said, I know but I do not want to be a part of that anymore. My Nata told him well if you want to give me that present give it to me when I get home, but he said no, because Israel is home (Israel is my youngest son) and I do not want him to see it, and I do not want you to tell your other kids either. And especially do not tell my uncle. So, he told her to go by the river and he will gave it to her there, but she said no, she said that he could meet him closer to the house. So, when my wife was telling me all this I told her if you are going to accept the present bring a plastic bag that way he can put it inside, but when you get home leave it outside close to the well. I told her not to touch it because you never know what it could be. So she met him on the path, where my other niece and nephew where picking mangos. She told me that she would do that.

Nata phoned me back around two o’clock to tell me that she got the present and that she put it by the well, but that he was still around the property, close to an empty house, walking back and forth and that he
was calling her to talk some more, and to tell her things that concerned us about the families. So, she told me that she would phone in thirty minutes to tell me what happened. Well, the thirty minutes went by and she did not phone, another thirty minutes went by and nothing, so I started to phone her, but the phone was just ringing. I phoned every five minutes but no response.

Before I continue I should tell you about my siblings, especially about one of my five sisters. She was always jealous because my father gave me more land than what he gave them. The truth is that she told me months before that one way or another she will divide me from my wife, because she never did like her as sister-in-law. She hated her. She got her wish. My own sister had her own son murder my wife.

My son phoned me around 4:30; I know this because the people from the offices were already gone. He told me: Papa came home my mom is lying on the ground, she is dead. I got a taxi, the only thing I was wishing is that the taxi could fly, but when I got home she was already dead. My son told me that he was looking for his mother, but when he heard the voices and saw his mother talking to my nephew he went back in the house to watch TV. A few minutes later he heard two gun shots and he ran outside, and saw my nephew running in the other direction, my other niece and nephew ran towards my son. That is when they found my wife.

She died instantly, one of the bullets hit her chest and another went into her neck and the other behind her ear. She landed in the barbed wire; that was how he killed her, my own nephew. He killed her; he tried all day to get her out of the house to do this awful thing. That same day people saw him taking a truck to Cubulco where his grandparents live. But, by Saturday he was back, I phoned the PCN and they came and picked him up, but by Monday he was already free. The entire family moved out of their house, that is fifty two meters away from our home. I do not know where they went, but, I think it was because the way that they acted, their bad conscience is haunting them.
Now my children are destroyed, they miss their mother, especially Israel; he used to spent most of the day with her. I miss her too. I was married to her for twenty three years; we used to talk about the future, not any more. They killed my Nata. They killed her in cold blood. I do not know how long he probably tortured her with that gun, only he and God know. I do not feel secure any more, because there is a lot of empty space now, there is like five hundred meters to the main road and it is quite dark at night. I do not know if they are done with us or not. Only God knows what they think. The problem is that there are many people they sell themselves for five hundred Quetzales and those are the sicarios (hired assassins). I am afraid, because I work shifts of twenty four hours, and my first born works in Peten and one of the boys and girl work in Salamá, the two youngest stayed home alone. Put yourself in my place, what if one day I come home and they are not here. I am very afraid for my family.

When the MP and the PNC arrived I told them everything, about the present, the calls, the tricks to get her outside, I even tried to give them the present that was still in the well, they told me that was not evidence. I took it out anyways and brought it to them, I told them that the present might have fingerprints, that nobody touched it. I took pictures, but I did put gloves on. They lifted the body of my wife around seven in the evening, and took it to Salamá. They returned her body to me at one in the morning right after the autopsy.

Nothing else has been done, I do not have the money to hire a lawyer and if they do not find him before six months, we do not have a chance of seeing any justice. No money, no justice for my family. Like I said I do not have money to follow up in the case, I can not afford to miss work. Even though my bosses are being really good. Now I put everything on God’s hands. I do not want revenge I just want justice. God said if you ask for something good for yourself, you should ask for others too, so if you ask for something bad for others what kind of reward you would get.
My coworkers ask me to leave it in God’s hands, because He does not forget.

In the name of my family we thank you for this visit and we hope that through you somebody listens to our needs, that way this crime does not end in impunity as many other cases of our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. My nephew has to pay for what he did. God bless you.

At the end of the interview, Don German left us at the same spot he met us, at the gate that led into the garden. That evening at the motel I looked at the photos I had taken of Don German and his family. I reflected on my family and my own children. My partner was also in Guatemala at the time, a participant with the same UNBC Geography-sponsored human rights field school I had participated in four years earlier, and had spent that Mother’s Day hiking up to Pacoxóm, Rio Negro, a site where 177 people (107 children and 70 women) were massacred at the peak of the violence during the armed conflict March 13, 1982 (EAFG 1997: 213, 216). The realization of past and present connections to violence is palpable. That this human rights delegation travelled to a massacre site of women and children, the very day Don German’s wife was murdered speaks volumes to the historical trend of violence toward women in Guatemala.

**Don Salomón Ortiz Sis**

The interview with Don Salomón was conducted in his home earlier the same day as the interview with Don German, in the hamlet El Cacao, San Jeronimo, municipality of Salamá, Baja Verapaz (Figure 1.6). Wendy, Yesenia, Lucrecia and I stopped at a tienda for directions to Don Salomón’s home. The woman pointed in the direction of a field across from her tienda and replied that the man with the oxen plowing the field was who we were looking for. We started waving at him, he had known that we were coming but the field needed to be plowed as well. He
shouted at us to go on to his property and that he would meet us there once he was finished that row. The day was hot and I glanced back at Don Salomón just as he removed his hat and wiped his forearm across his brow. I went back to the tienda and grabbed bottles of cold water, and I introduced myself to him by offering a drink of the ice cold beverage.

Figure 1.6: Don Salomón with Wendy Véliz from GGM. May 21, 2008. Home of Don Salomon in the hamlet El Cacao, San Jeronimo, municipality of Salamá, Baja Verapaz. Photo: Cristian Silva.

My name is Salomón Ortiz Sis. I have always lived in the hamlet El Cacao, San Jeronimo, municipality of Salamá, department Baja Verapaz. I am Catholic. I am Achi and speak Achi and Spanish. I am married and I have five children. My wife right now is in the hospital with my youngest daughter, she is only a year and half and she is very sick with a fever. The other four are in school at the moment. I work as an Albañil (bricklayer) and I am also a farmer, my day starts at five in the morning every day. As you can see I have my two oxen
in the field. The dirt is really hard, I think that the death of my niece has been a bad omen, it has not rained here for a long time, but everywhere else is poring, even in Salamá.

My niece’s name was Delfina Reyes Ortiz. She was the daughter of one of my sisters. She was born in the hamlet of Coyolito, San Jeronimo, municipality of Salamá. She was born January 25, 1972. She was a moledora (maize grinder) for a woman here in San Jeronimo. She had a little house and some land, but she was poor. She had two children, a girl and a boy. The boy, I think he is nine years old, has lived in an orphanage since he was little. The girl lived with my nephew, she is eleven years old, and is in school. The children’s father died a long time ago. Delfina had two brothers but they do not live here.

Well, here in San Jeronimo everybody works the fields. They found her body on a Saturday, I think it was January 26, 2008, around five in the afternoon. I think I am sure of the day, because one of my cousins was getting married that day, and I told my wife that we were going to have dinner at the wedding, so I told her to go first and I will follow later. Around seven o’clock in the evening I saw a young man and a woman entering my property, I turned the lights off, and I started watching them to see what they would do. They called my name, so I came outside, and they said to me to go to the hospital because someone filasiaron (cut) your niece. I said to them, you are telling me lies, that is not possible. So I told them to wait because I have to tell my wife about it. So, after telling my wife I went to get a taxi and I saw one of my cuates (friend) and he took me to the hospital. When I got there, they asked me if I was a family member, and I said yes. The doctor told me that they had to amputate her hands and that she had suffered a heart attack, so we had to send her to Guatemala City. The doctor told me that the ambulance could
take a family member, so I phoned one of her brother’s that was here for the wedding. He went to Guatemala with her.

Around 4:30 in the morning I got a called from my nephew telling me that she died. So what I did was I went to talk to the mayor of Salamá to see if he could help us bring the body back. He put a car to our services and he did not charge a cent for it. So, I went to Guatemala with my sister to get the body.

Who killed her was her ex-partner Agustin Torres. Delfina did not live with him anymore, she had put a denunciation with the MP, she put four or five denunciations of abuse. So, he could not be anywhere close to her. But, Agustin had threatened her many times that he would kill her, especially if she did not sell her house and land. He just wanted the money so he could keep drinking; he liked his chelas (beer). But, he phoned her, to tell her that he was going to give her clothes and pisto (money), that he has changed. Instead, he filasió (cut) my niece. What he did was premeditated. Where she was attacked is a path between farmed land and a soccer field. The only reason he did not kill her there was because a young man heard her screaming in agony. When he approached the site he saw Agustin cutting her with a machete, the young man grabbed a few stones and told him to stop, if he did not stop he will kill him. So Agustin charged at him with his machete, but the young man was ready to stone him. Agustin told him you should not get involved, this is not your business. More people came to the site, and they phoned the PNC and the bomberos (fireman). The PNC arrested him on site, and the bomberos took Delfina to the hospital.

Agustin is a bad man, on one occasion he took her to the mountain, got her naked and told her that he was planning to kill her, but an old woman saw what was happening and helped her. The old woman covered her with a towel and took her home. Every time I saw Delfina I asked her “what happened now?” She would show up
with black eyes and bruises. She would say to me that she got Agustin upset again and he punched her. One of the last time before he attack her I had a talk with him, and I told him if you touched her again (I apologize for the word I am going to use but I was mad at him) I am going to give you a vergueada (beating).

When we got to Guatemala City, we went to the morgue in zone 3, that is where Delfina was. My sisters went inside the morgue to dress her, but when they saw so many dead bodies, they could not do it. I went inside the morgue and they told me to look for her among all those body bags, so I started opening bags until I found her, she had like more then twenty cuts between her head and arms, and her hands were missing. I started to try and dress her, when they told me that I have to leave, because there were more bodies coming in. We had to wait to dress her until we got back to San Jeronimo. When we arrived at my home the family members of Agustin were there, they brought food and other things, they told us that they wanted to help. We did accept their help because it was not their fault or ours. The one to blame was Agustin. One of the daughter’s-in-law of Agustin brought the coffin. His daughter was crying and sorry for what her father did to Delfina. We did the wake in my house, and we buried her with clean clothes, but we did put her bloody clothes in a bag inside the coffin.

Agustin told us that he will be free soon, because he had sons in El Norte (United States). We were really upset, but the MP told us that he could have fifteen children in El Norte but he would not go free. The problem to us now is that nothing has been done to keep him in jail. By June he could be free, because we do not have the money to pursue the case, and nobody is been here to collect information, talk to witnesses, and like I told you we buried her bloody clothes with her. The only thing that has been done it was on March 8, 2008, people from the PDH were here to put a little plaque
to celebrate the International Day of Women, and they give us 730 Quetzales.

Thank you for coming, I do not know how else to help you, but tell people that we need economical help to solve the problems here, if you are poor, nobody listens, plus we are so far from Guatemala that the help never gets here. I cannot do anything for Delfina, she is gone. I hope he pays for what he did, but I do not think it will happen. Well I have to go, the field is waiting and the dirt is really hard, I wish for some rain, can you help me with that? Ha, Ha, Ha. If I want to get it ready before dark I need to attend it now.

As we said good-bye, we caught a glimpse of Don Salomón back on the field with the oxen, getting ready to continue plowing. He still had half of the field to go, and he told us that he had agreed to help his cousin with his field as well. That morning Don Salomón began work at five o’clock, as the sun was rising and he mentioned he would be in the field until dusk. When we were getting into our vehicle, Don Salomón waved to us and told us where Delfina’s grave marker was located (Figure 1.7), the place where she was assaulted. We drove out to the location and it took us ten minutes to find the marker that had been placed on March 8, during the International Day of Women. When we arrived, the marker had already been vandalized, broken in two.
Norma Cruz and Claudia María Hernández Cruz

Rocio and I met at the doors to Fundación Sobrevivientes (Survivors Foundation) (FS) in zone 1 in Guatemala City on May 19, 2008. We rang the bell at the door and a guard asked if we had an appointment, if we were there to see somebody in particular. We told him yes, and he asked who we were there so see and that we needed to show him a piece of identification. We were ushered into the reception area, with room for about 30-40 people, and the room was full with women and children seeking assistance. Glancing around the room, the women appeared to be from all social statuses: Ladinas and Mayas all in need of some form of assistance. After a few minutes, somebody came to get us and took us to the office of Norma Cruz. Because Norma
Cruz had been on a hunger strike for the eight days previous to our meeting, she referred us to her daughter Claudia. The first part of the interview is of Norma introducing herself and then introducing Claudia.

My name is Norma Cruz Córdoba. I am 47 years old. I have lived in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and now back in Guatemala. I have two children, my daughter Claudia who was born in Nicaragua and my youngest son who was born here in Guatemala. Today I am the Director of FS. What I can tell you is that this organization was founded in the suffering and bravery of my daughter. Who better than she can explain to you who we really are. I am sorry, I am not trying to avoid you, but I spent eight days on a hunger strike in the

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8 Norma Cruz had just been on an eight-day hunger strike in protest of the illegal adoptions of Guatemalan babies and children. May 5, 2008 journal entry of Katherine Carlson participant of 2008 University of Northern British Columbia sponsored, Geography human rights field school led by Catherine Nolin Associate Professor, Geography Program.
Cultural National Palace, protesting for illegal adoptions that occur here in Guatemala, and I am worn out.

My name is Claudia Maria Hernández Cruz. I am 24 years old. I was born in Managua, Nicaragua. I have lived in El Salvador too, and now in Guatemala. My religion is Catholic and I am ladina and my language is Spanish. I lost my real father when I was nine years old. Now, I have my own family and my husband works with me at the FS, where I am the sub-director.

Well, where can I start, as I mentioned, I grew up in different places, this was because my parents were quite involved in the revolutionary movement. But at the end of the 80s my mom had a new partner Arnoldo Noriega, who was also involved in the revolutionary movement. And he asked my mom to move back to Guatemala. Throughout the years he become a member of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity) (URNG), where my mom was a member also, she was a member of the National Committee Executive of the URNG. Well, this is where my odyssey started. I started being abused by my step-father at the age of five, this lasted until I was twelve years of age. This ended when my mom separated from him in 1998. For awhile I forgot about it, or probably just blocked it from my mind.

Well, as you know here in Guatemala it is a big deal when you turn fifteen, so my mom was preparing a big party and she was making a list of people to invite to the event. This is when I broke down and told my mom what happened to me for like 10 years. My mom right away confronted him, and subsequently she started a legal case in my name, because I was a minor she was with me all the way. It was painful, let me tell you, I had to take medical examinations, remember places where he abused me; I had to declare what he did and how he did this to me. And on top of this I have to hear people
calling me a liar. I was under a lot of stress; I had to get psychological help. My mom tried everything to find help, but the only thing we found was a lot of people and women in the same situation; girls who were raped, women who were abused and killed by partners. We all have the same situation, we were looking for justice, but everything was against us. Nobody was interested in our cases.

It took years of fighting; fighting the patriarchal system, but the courts found him guilty of sexual abuse and gave him twenty years in prison. Of course he did appeal the conviction and it was reduced to eight years, of which he only served four years. He is free right now. This is when my mom and I decided to start an organization. An organization that would support women in the pursuit of justice, with the collaboration of the lawyer that had my case, and a group of professionals such as other lawyers and psychologists we started the group of survivors, where other women showed their solidarity. In 2006 the FS was born, having as its objective the prevention and eradication of violence towards Guatemalan women.

Our mission is to fight any type of violence against women, and to fight the impunity that reigns in our Guatemala. We believe in our rights as human beings and as women too, to live without fear and violence. FS offers legal support, psychological assistance to the victims and their families. Please, if you have any questions I am here. I hope this helps you understand why we do what we do. If not, just read today’s newspaper, and see why it is so necessary that we continue this work. Please feel welcome to our information, and I hope we can help you.
Fig. 1.9: Norma Cruz (centre) sitting on the steps of the National Palace of Culture during her hunger strike. May 5, 2008 Photo: Catherine Nolin.

I had several meetings with Claudia, while in Guatemala for my research, in order to collaborate and share information, and since I have been back in Canada we have maintained contact. FS is one of the institutions fighting for the rights of women in Guatemala.

Throughout the experiences of the six families, the endless atrocities in Guatemala are depicted before, during and after the armed conflict. The endurance and challenges that families encountered in relation to gender-based violence continues to grow. Women in Guatemala have been historically excluded from any form of justice (Beltrán and Freeman 2007: 6); impunity surrounding these cases still exists toward the victims of gender-based violence (Beltrán and Freeman 2007: 7). This impunity is a consequence of the great deficiency and negligence of the state of Guatemala. According to the URNG (2005: 29), 26 percent of murders of women in
2004 occurred in Guatemala City and 19 percent in the municipalities of Villa Nueva and Mixco, which are municipalities that surround Guatemala City. The other 55 percent of murders occurred throughout the remaining 21 departments of Guatemala (Muralles and Lacayo 2005: 36). Escuintla recorded eight percent, followed by Chimaltenango, Izabal and Quetzaltenango with four percent each (Muralles and Lacayo 2005: 36). The lowest percentage recorded was one percent from the departments of Sacatepéquez, Alta and Baja Verapaz, and Sololá (Muralles and Lacayo 2005: 36). According to Dania Roldán of the PDH, during 2008 the murder of women continues to increase drastically in Guatemala from the previous year, for example; in the department of Izabal, where in the municipalities of Puerto Barrios, Morales and Los Amates in 2007, 20 women were killed, whereas in 2008 in the same municipalities 40 women were killed (Perdomo 2009: 29).

These testimonios are a reflection of the gender-based violence that occurs in Guatemala. However, they are snapshots of moments in time; thus to better understand how these experiences are situated within the historical context I explore the trends in gender-based violence over time. In the following chapter, I demonstrate that this mode of violence can be traced back at least to the late nineteenth Century, and continues through to the peak of violence during the armed conflict, known as La Violencia (Carrey Jr. 2007: 5) and increases in the post-conflict era, to such a degree that this form of violence is now defined as femicide (Godoy-Paiz 2008: 20, 30; Russell 2001b: 3; Sanford 2008: 61-62).
PART TWO: Historical Context

Chapter Two: One Hundred Years of Gender-Based Violence
Violence Defined

To understand the underpinnings of the many forms of violence over the previous 100 years, in this chapter, I examine the theoretical definition of violence and how it is linked to the twentieth-century state. I then provide a brief description on what Lovell (1988) describes as the first of three cycles of conquest—that by Imperial Spain. Following this point, I examine how the concept of masculinity is defined in Latin America, and then explore the violence related to the next two cycles of conquest and how the mode of violence parallels the mandate of the governments in power. I argue that gender-based violence (GBV) has been part of the cultural fabric of Guatemala throughout its history. Written laws were drawn up and ratified along the hundred-year pathway, however; the de facto laws practiced and condoned by the hegemonic society were the order of the day, and were lived and enforced by the broader society. The preceding century provided the footing for the degree of violence witnessed today in urban and rural Guatemala.

“Do you know how to make moronga (blood sausage), Diana [Diane M. Nelson]? Well, you take a mess of blood, and boil it and boil it and boil it until it hardens into sausage. That’s what’s happening to Guatemalans. All the suffering, the blood spilled in the violence and then the boiling and boiling of the decades of war, the counterinsurgency, we have a hard time thinking new thoughts because our brains have become hard like moronga.” — Guatemalan Ladino (quoted in Nelson 2009: 39)

Guatemala has gone through several political, economic and social transitions, both marked and marred by violence and repression (Garcia Garcia 2006: 1; Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 4) to such a degree that violence and rupture have become the grey background through which threads of history weave the pattern of life. It is these threads that reflect the systematic violence that trickle down from the elite oligarchy and seep into domestic reality. Carey Jr. (2007: 1) suggests although the 36-year internal armed conflict may have facilitated the current
trend of brutal murders of women, "identifying [the conflict] as the sole or even primary catalyst ignores a larger historical trend of widespread violence against women and disregard for their civil rights that dates back at least to the dictatorships of the early twentieth century."

Guatemalan historian Mario Monteforte Toledo (1972: 253) previously stated that violence has been “an almost permanent social state in Central America from independence until the present day.”

Is there a greater affront to the natural dignity and freedom of a person than an act of violence? (Holden 2004: 9).

Violence can take on many different forms, and there is no exception to this rule in Guatemala. The effects of violence are seen in the bodies and minds of the people as a result of fear. Anthropologist Jack David Eller (2006: 1, 6) also states violence takes many different forms, and he suggests that “in every case it seems to share some fundamental characteristics—harm, cruelty, destruction, domination, evil.” He lists several key components of violence which include:

- Force and the different kinds of force
- Intention, or the subjective state of the perpetrator
- Personhood, or whether only persons can be agents or victims of violence
- Rationality/irrationality, or whether violence involves or requires a loss of control and of “clear thinking,” whether it is “meaningless”
- Legitimacy/deviance, or whether some injurious actions are acceptable and normal, and under what conditions we make the distinction
- Perspective, or whether all parties in the situation observe and evaluate the situation in the same way (Eller 2006: 5)

This list is relevant to the violence that occurred in Guatemala during the armed conflict and to the country’s longer history of violence as well. What stands out is the concept of force, because force has both physical and non-physical aspects. The physical aspects are obvious with
force, exerting physical power over or onto something or someone else. However, if we consider as Eller (2006: 5) suggests, that non-physical force refers to a “lack of options” or “lack of freedom to exercise options,” then violence becomes a very broad concept that affects the whole body politic. Recall the Caudillo ideology previously mentioned, and patria potestad ideology, the maintenance of ‘women’s (private) place’ through the actions of a father figure trinity, an ideology that will be discussed further below (Dore 1997: 108).

During the armed conflict women were raped, tortured, disappeared and extra-judicially executed (Beltrán and Freeman 2007: 6; Amnesty International 2005: 4). “Guatemala is no stranger to violence, especially that which is predictable and organized by the state” (Afflitto 2004: 239). In his discussion of the relationship between state and violence, historian Robert H. Holden (2004: 10) states:

No discussion of the state should begin without acknowledging the twentieth century as humanity’s golden age of killing, in both the monumental scale, and the astonishing inventiveness of the planning, organization, financing, execution and legitimation of killing. The killing’s great catalyst, advocate and consolidator was the modern state.

The most poignant incidents of state violence in Guatemala occurred from 1980 to 1983 under the scorched-earth policies that destroyed crops and homes with survivors witnessing the brutal deaths of family members and the displacement of people (Green 1999: 99; Nolin Hanlon 1997: 53; Manz 1988: 121). “Fragmentation and attempted erasure of families and communities hinged on the visible terror of witnessing bodies out of place along roadsides, piled together in churches, or in the garbage dumps of Guatemala City” (Nolin Hanlon and Shankar 2000: 279). Above all, the purpose of these campaigns was “to destroy the cultural values that ensured cohesion and collective action in Mayan communities” (CEH 1999: 24). Many testimonios of women who were violated during the armed conflict suggest that 97 percent of the atrocities committed towards women, girls and senior women (60 and above) were committed by the
armed forces to ensure that the "effects of sexual assault" maintained a patriarchal legacy of "long-lasting shame, fear, and self-degradation" (Green 1999: 32), and entire communities were left facing "silence and denial" (Nolin Hanlon and Shankar 2000: 273).

The characteristics of gender-based violence differ from one gender to another in Guatemala; in particular, the act of murdering women is more personal and has more physical contact between the victim and victimizer than in the cases of men who are murdered (García García 2006: 9). Torres (2007: 2) describes and believes that this form of violence against women can be labeled as femicide. Neighboring countries of Latin America such as Mexico also show similarities in violence towards women, although the number of victims is higher in Guatemala (Ertürk 2005: 11; CIDH 2006: 7). Comparing the rate of murder of women in Guatemala and Mexico even seven years ago, the numbers are disparate. In 2003 alone there were 416 murders of women in Guatemala, whereas in ten years between 1993 and 2003 in Chihuahua, Mexico, 370 women were murdered (Ertürk 2005: 11).

The Guatemala of today sees a number of women venturing out of the private sphere and into the public sphere to study and to work; in a society gripped by a conservative patriarchal state, where violence is a male (public) sphere, women “have become a target” once again, and they are killed because they are women (Prieto-Carrón et al. 2007: 28; Killer’s Paradise 2006). In fact, feminist organizations and defenders of women’s rights in Mexico and Central America, such as Las Dignas, a women’s association for dignity and life based out of El Salvador, state that “femicides are the ‘tip of the iceberg’ of cycles of gender-based aggression that patriarchal societies impose on women in the private and public spheres, and in different and combined forms” (Prieto-Carrón et al. 2007: 28; Las Dignas 2004). Russell (2001c: 187) adds that women’s organizations and movements have a particular task ahead, which is to no longer deny
the existence of men’s hatred towards women in patriarchal societies that is in turn manifested increasingly in GBV, and to “embark on militant and multifaceted actions to combat and prevent femicide.” In Guatemala, as Torres (2007: 14) describes, the task is not only to understand why women are murdered, “but more importantly how killing with impunity becomes possible and acceptable.”

Guatemala’s failure to prosecute the perpetrators and to act on the commitments of the Peace Accord regarding women’s rights “has left a terrible legacy that continues to foster much of the discrimination and violence that threaten the lives of Guatemalan women today” (Beltrán and Freeman 2007: 7). Violence and impunity are “deeply embedded in daily life” in Guatemala (Green 1999: 172). Insight into femicide in Guatemala that was gained through interviews of individuals and groups during a Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA (GHRC/USA) Women’s Right to Live Delegation, Professor in Spanish and Women’s Studies, Roselyn Constantino (2006: 113, 115) stated the main contributing factors to basic issues of femicide are:

- Dismissal of gendered crimes by scapegoating youth gangs. Disenfranchising youths have become targets of security-force sweeps and of social cleansing by unnamed sectors of the population, even though very few of the women’s murders have been attributed to them.

- The general devaluing of women in Guatemala, especially in rural areas, inscribed in cultural and legal codes. The crimes evidence a backlash against women now visible in public life. The lack of accountability for them somehow further validates the idea that women deserve the treatment they receive.

- Remilitarization of the country and the buildup of security forces responsible for mass disappearances, torture, and genocide of the civilian population during the armed conflict. This tactic is a carryover of the rage and cruelty that characterizes these groups’ actions during the internal conflict directed specifically at indigenous population and women.

- Continued lack of resources for and oversight of the infamously inefficient and corrupt police system. There were no forensic units to investigate these murders until the summer of 2005 when Argentine and European units arrived to train Guatemalans and also absent was the independent judiciary to prosecute.
• Groups of untouchables. These include power players, such as military officers, drug traffickers, and state-sanctioned private security forces, who, for complex reasons, remain outside the law.

• Continued marginalization of and racism toward indigenous Guatemalans.

• Pressure from foreign interests to make Guatemala safe for intensified foreign investments, especially in light of many Latin American government’s movements to the left.

• Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA, translated as Tratado de Libre Comercio or TLC): the recently brokered and U.S. House-approved neoliberal economic agreement. Guatemala’s congress approved CAFTA after intense pressure from forces within and without, particularly the United States. The approval came despite a widespread, vocal, and at times violent rejection of CAFTA by the Guatemalan populace.

Both Torres (2007: 1, 14) and Russell (2001b: 4) agree that in the discussion of femicide, they are not suggesting that there are more women killed than men, that in fact there are indeed more men murdered than women. What they are suggesting is that women who are killed by men are killed because of an underlying hatred for the fact that they are biologically female and culturally women (Torres 2007; Russell 2001b). More precisely, Russell (2001b: 3) states, “When men murder women or girls, the power dynamics of misogyny and/or sexism are almost always involved. Femicides are lethal hate crimes.” She further states in regard to the politics of femicide, through “locating the killing of women within the arena of sexual politics, [she] rejects the popular conception of women [being killed] as private and/or a pathological matter” (Russell 2001b: 3). Torres (2007: 1, 14) continues this discussion as she questions whether women are being killed in Guatemala because of their gender or because killing is acceptable. “Processes of impunity, in Guatemala, begin by categorizing citizens into those that matter and those that are dispensable” (Torres 2007: 2). Torres (2007: 1, 14) argues that violence against women in Guatemala today “though reflective of long standing traditions of gendered discrimination and violence, is a phenomena that is primarily sustained and expanded by the presence of systematic
impunity (defined as pervasive inability to hold perpetrators of crimes legally, socially, morally accountable).”

**Historical Precursor**

The *Caudillo*, or strong man, held a masculine cultural ideology that suggested dominance and violence that spanned throughout most if not all of Latin America, and Guatemala was no exception (Derby 2000: 1113). Consider what sociologist Ralph Dahrendorf (1990: 42) suggested in his discussion of civil society, “it takes six months to create new political institutions: to write a constitution and electoral laws. It may take six years to create a half viable economy. It will probably take 60 years to create civil society.” In this vein, if it takes 60 years for a political institution or ideology to take root - roughly three generations - 60 years after Guatemala’s independence from Spain in 1821- was the 1880s or turn of the century, Dahrendorf’s theory would prove correct as this period of time was the era of the regional strongman, the *Caudillo*, considered the “formal ally of the regime in power” (Holden 2004: 14). This ideology developed teeth in Guatemala with the establishment of the regime of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), “the first national *Caudillo*” (Holden 2004: 54).

Keeping this in mind, I draw from Carey’s research and explore the antecedents of contemporary femicide through an examination of 100 years of GBV dating back to the dictatorship of Cabrera. I chose the 100 year time frame rather than exploring Guatemala’s colonial past in part because Guatemala was an emerging state (Garrard-Burnett 1997: 35) in the late 1800s and was punctuated by a time period when the violence of Cabrera’s authoritarian regime “filtered down to community and family relations” (Carey Jr. 2007: 5).
With the arrival of the Spanish in Guatemala in 1524, Indigenous peoples were subject to the conquistador’s ideology of gendered power; an eventual forced submission and subjugation, an ideology maintained and manifest today through systematic violence. Latin American historian Susan Migden Socolow (2000: 32) suggests that “the early years of European discovery and conquest of America was a period of violence, dramatic social change, and profound transformation in the lives of Indigenous people.” English professor Michael Hardin (2002: 16) and Latin American historian Karen Vieira Powers (2002:7), among others argue that the Spanish Conquest was a conquest of the Indigenous body; primarily a ‘conquest’ of the Indigenous female body, as the Spaniards forcibly redefined masculinity through their direction of abuse, including the rape of Indigenous women. The current “epidemic” (Carey Jr. 2007: 1) of GBV in Guatemala is rooted in the historical past of the country. In the twentieth and twenty first centuries the “culture of fear has been the motor of oppression in Guatemala” (Green 1999: 65).

**Masculinity Defined**

A shift in the positionality of the masculine, or the self identification of ‘the man,’ occurred as a result of the changing atmosphere and the theft/disappearance of many men from communities through armed conflict and violence (Viveros Vigoya 2001). Growing up in a Spanish (Chilean) household and witnessing the realities of male/female relationships/roles in that environment, I suggest that with a greater number of women entering the work force due to the depleting number of men, men would have found it difficult to re-identify and situate themselves within the masculine ideal of Latin America that had been entrenched with the notion of authority and tradition, of *machismo*. 
Originally the roots of *machismo* emerged from Spain and are “traced to the quixotic idealism and the distinctive cult of chivalry that developed on the Iberian Peninsula, an idealism and a culture that viewed males as strong warriors and protectors of womanhood” (Torres *et al.* 2002: 166). Currently, *machismo* is seen as a negative Latin American male stereotype that is characterized or recognizable as a form of “male pride that combines courage...with an aggressive maleness that may also take the prestigious form of the successful pursuit of women;” other characteristics include drunkenness, individualness, and competitiveness (Hardin 2002: 2). The characteristics of *machismo* are traits or remnants left over by the Spanish, as a product of the conquest (Hardin 2002: 3). The Spanish were known throughout Europe to use sexual forms of violence as forms of terror against those they sought to intimidate and conquer (Trexler 1995: 55). This ideology was then brought to the New World with the arrival of the *conquistadores* and exacerbated the pre-existing male ideology. Although multiple masculinities exist in Guatemala, historically, the notion of *machismo* particularly is manifest in social and cultural practices within Latin America.

**The Second Cycle of Conquest**

The second cycle of conquest, as described by Lovell (1988: 37), was the conquest by local and international capitalism. In 1821, Guatemala saw its independence from Spain and maintained a liberal government until roughly 1839. Thereafter, for 31 years Guatemala maintained a conservative government with the political and economic power in the hands of “families descended from the *Conquistadores* or Spanish colonial administrators” (REMHI 1998: 181).
During this time, the governments overturned reforms accomplished by the earlier liberal administrations, and "created a stable, paternalist state founded on restored Hispanic institutions" such as the Patriarchal Law (Dore 1997: 108, 111; Lovell 1988: 37). A result was an increase of poorer individuals working for wages for wealthier people and the development of a regional market system whereby Indigenous merchants traded locally and internationally (Lovell 1988: 37-38). This move, in effect, opened the region for the onslaught of capitalist development in 1871 when Justo Rufino Barrios ushered in liberal reform (REMHI 1998; Lovell 1988). Shortly after Barrios assumed power, in 1873, he issued the Declaración de Libertad de Conciencia y de Cultos (Declaration of Liberty of Conscience and of Cults), establishing freedom of religion in Guatemala that was really meant to open the doors to foreign missionaries with the hope that they would help consolidate his authority in the highlands where opposition was most violent (Garrard-Burnett 1989: 128). Barrios believed that "Protestantism might serve as a tool of social control" and together with Liberalism, Positivism and Social Darwinism the leadership could craft a modern nation (Garrard-Burnett 1989: 128; Garrard-Burnett 1997: 35).

Further drawing in tighter control, Cabrera’s authoritarian regime’s ideology leached into the common sphere and a strong notion of the patriarchal identity took hold in communities. Patriarchy, meaning “the myth of the traditional family and central tenet of popular history in Latin America, where a senior male controlled and protected everyone in his household, male and female” (Dore 1997: 102) was linked with Cabrera’s regime (1898-1920) through acts of control including the maintenance of women as private beings. For example; Desideria Ocampo (the wife of Cabrera) was never seen at public functions with Cabrera, but was relegated to her home for domestic chores, “for what women were supposedly intended” (Valdez Ochoa 2008: 2973). During the nineteenth century, patriarchy was the law of the land throughout Latin
America (and was also a reflection of the tenets of a Spanish colonial past), and the legal powers of the father-figure trinity (father-husband-patron) remained prevalent "until the Liberal reforms of mid-century" (Dore 1997: 108). According to the patria potestad, the centerpiece of patriarchy meaning "power of the father," the male head of the household held extensive legal authority over his wife, children and dependents; therefore, "the patriarch was the state's representative within the household" (Dore 1997: 108). This ideology created the conditions for an atmosphere of domestic violence and systematic impunity that was commonplace and normalized, and which enabled men to assume ownership over women's bodies; some hitting their wives because they "did not want to obey what I commanded" (Carey Jr. 2007: 5-6). The violence also reflects and is reflected in the historical misogynist tendencies found throughout the country even now, when the perpetrators of such violence continue to live with impunity (Torres 2007: 4,11). Such violence is reflected in both a rise in the degree of brutality, and an increase in the number of murdered women.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw women in the role of the subordinated gender during the Liberal regime, regardless of social class, race, ethnicity or geographical location (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 2). The mission of a woman was to govern the home, raise children and, above all else, to make her husband happy (Ericastilla Samayoa 1997: 10; Valdez Ochoa 2002: 2). A decade after Cabrera's regime, the oppression of women continued and the violence toward women took on a darker tone with Ubico.

On February 14, 1931, Jorge Ubico Castañeda was elected president and instituted an obligatory public works program (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 11); "He ruled the nation as his own private fiefdom, implementing semi-fascist policies that left deep scars on the body politic" (Forster 1999: 56). One of these policies was the use of a repressive model to stay in power
through the mechanism of torture, firing squads, and spying on his fellow citizens in favour of
the oligarchy (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 25). Ubico’s objectives were to dismember any opposition to
his government. “In September 1934, ‘plan terrorista,’ (terrorist plan) provided an opportunity
for the arrest and liquidation of more political enemies (identified as communists) and the
consolidation of dictatorship” (Holden 2004: 56). In fact, during his regime he ordered the arrest
of old friends and incarcerated their wives. During the Ubico period, women were seen as
political enemies of the new regime for the first time (Jiménez Chacón 2003: 7).

Historically, both men and women were each subject to forms of violence; however; the
violence that was inflicted differed according to gender. During Ubico’s regime mens’
punishment involved hanging by thumbs and whippings which inevitably lead to dislocated
limbs (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 25). As another form of punishment, men were stripped completely
naked, with their hands and feet tied so that their testicles hung down, and then the Guardia
Rural (Rural Guards) would hit the men’s testicles with a stick (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 25).

Women were not excluded from forms of punishments that characterized this period of
patriarchal society. In urban Guatemala, women’s identity was shaped to suit their family status,
that is; “the limited universe of domestic space and ‘private life’” (Cicerchia 1997: 124). Some
of the torture applied to women included having their naked bodies, their hands and feet tied,
being submerged in ice water (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 26). In September 1934 women who were
part of the rebellion were executed for the crime of sedition against Ubico’s second re-election
(Valdez Ochoa 2002: 26). For example, Maria Molina, and Maria Oliva Tobias for their role in
opposing Ubico’s re-election, were sentenced to prison for twelve to fifteen years each, and were
on an execution list (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 26). Women were also hanged by their breasts; their
breasts were burnt, and in the end, they were all shot in the back to apparently stop them from
Escaping (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 26). Punishment and elimination were carried out to prevent those in opposition of the Ubico regime from having an opportunity to defend themselves against the regime, and to end the long list of the President’s enemies as well (Valdez Ochoa 2002: 25-26).

The ten-year period between 1944 and 1954 came to be known as the decade of springtime, or the October Revolution (REMHI 1998: 184). Two presidents reigned during this decade; Doctor Juan José Arévalo (1945-1951) and Colonel Jacobo Arbenz (1952-1954) (REMHI 1998). Campesinos organized into political blocs, carefully orchestrated by a sympathetic government (May 2001: 149). The governments, at this time, actively took the side of the workers in labor disputes and organized campesinos into agrarian committees (May 2001: 149). This period saw Agrarian Law reform, whereby the government expropriated acres of land (particularly from the United Fruit Company of Boston, USA) and redistributed the land back to the peasants from whom it was taken (Green 1999: 177). Yet, according to Carey Jr. (2007: 8) and “despite their rhetoric of social equality and justice, the governments of Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán (1951-1954) refused to address sexual violence.” Shortly after Arévalo’s election, the new Constitution of March 1945 recognized the citizenship of both men and women, despite their limited rights and duties – only the literate could vote, and in a society where the majority of women were illiterate, the vast majority of women were deprived of this right (Rodríguez de Ita 2004: 14). Literate women voted for the first time in 1948, and all women were given the right to vote two years later in 1950 (Rodríguez de Ita 2004: 14).

Failure to secure a progressive government in Guatemala that brought “land reform and laws that protected labor” began in 1954, with a military coup de état (Nelson 1999: 9). This event was backed by the CIA and saw the elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz overthrown (Garrard-Burnett 2001: 68; Nelson 1999: 9); the coup was followed by the
installation of Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, commander-in-chief of the National Liberation Army, and then by a series of military dictatorships (REMHI 1998: 188). In November of 1960, unrest rose once again in Guatemala, and what followed was a 36-year armed conflict between armed forces and the guerrilla movement: a movement that was formed not by “Marxist intellectuals, class-conscious workers, or peasants,” who joined later, but by patriot military officers who did not want to see their country under the “subordination” of the United States (Afflitto 2004: 239; Stoll 1999: 47). As many men left communities in support of the revolution, women were left behind, alone, and took up new roles in their families and communities. The 1960s saw a profound transformation of family life, women became more visible in the labour market, and they gained greater access to the social and public arena (Cicerchia 1997: 124-125).

In the mid 1970s, Indigenous workers from the highlands of Guatemala who worked for large landowners making extremely low wages formed the ORPA (Stoll 1999: 49). The EGP began in January 19, 1972, when the “Edgar Ibarra” guerrilla group entered Guatemalan territory to initiate hostilities toward the army in the mountains of Quiché and Huehuetenango (Payeras 2006: 15).

It was around this time when the third cycle of conquest, conquest by state terror, began with the massacre in Panzos, Alta Verapaz in 1978 (Lovell 1988: 45). By the early 1980s four revolutionary movements, the ORPA, EGP and FAR and the PGT operated in various regions of the country (Stoll 1999: 196). “By the end of 1981, the situation was sufficiently desperate to bring the four groups together” to form the URNG (Stoll 1999: 196). Counterinsurgency characterized the conflict which left approximately 200,000 dead, more than 45,000 disappeared, 70,000 widows and over 1,500,000 displaced people from their homes (REMHI 1998; CEH
During this period of violence – *La Violencia* – the Indigenous Maya were the majority of the victims (REMHI 1998; CEH 1999). The government played on the traditional conceptions of gender roles and identities, and portrayed women involved in the guerrilla movement as transgressing the cultural norms, suggesting that these women threatened the nation because of their access to youth as teachers and caregivers (Carey Jr. 2007: 19). The military government identified a need to “tame and control women who would not be traditionally seen as participants in politics or insurgency.” Women were seen as dispensable once the threat was determined by/through their gender (Carey Jr. 2007: 19).

The violence against both Maya men and women is portrayed by the number of massacres throughout the country. During the massacre of December 4, 1981, in Panacal, municipality of Rabinal, department of Baja Vera Paz, the army and the *Patrulla de Autodefensa Civil* (Civil Self-defense Patrols) (PAC) took 58 men from their homes (Montes 2006: 34). A *testimonio* of a male survivor of the massacre in Panacal described how the soldiers cut off the ears, noses and tongues of the men (Montes 2006: 34). This method of torture was followed by feeding the body parts to the prisoners, and immediately after that the men were hanged, burned, and shot (Montes 2006: 34). The *testimonio* of a woman, a survivor whose name and place of residence was left anonymous for her safety, describe her ordeal during the conflict, “I was eight months pregnant, and many soldiers raped me, I closed my eyes to not see their faces. I could not even walk, my waist hurt and my heart because I was pregnant, I was looking at my husband and it hurt, because I had been unfaithful to him” (Montes 2006: 42). Characteristics of the sexual violence during the armed conflict include the high level of cruelty used; massive and multiple sexual violations as a form of torture in public places, mutilation of genital organs, and public...
exhibition of the bodies as a form of psychological torture for the survivors of massacres (Diez and Herrera 2004: 17).

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to link the historical gender-based violence to the GBV manifested in contemporary Guatemala. The backdrop of violence has bloodied the threads woven through rural and urban landscapes and drastically affected the lives of generations of Guatemalans. Carey Jr. (2007) suggests that the 36-year armed conflict was not the genesis of GBV and femicide. Through the examination of cycles of conquest defined by Lovell (1988), Carey’s statement appears to be true. The people of Guatemala have suffered through the different cycles of violence, but particularly those most vulnerable; the Indigenous Maya. The Maya, suffered through forced relocation of the larger, wealthier corporations and rape of their land as a result of capitalist ideologies, and policies. Throughout this milieu, masculinity became redefined through violent means as authoritarian rule filtered down through to the local family level, with men assuming ownership over all within the home, including women. The onslaught of the 36-year armed conflict further exacerbated the already prevalent GBV by enabling and enforcing the perpetrators through the privilege of impunity. These actions engaged the state in naturalizing GBV and femicide.

In conjunction to these actions is the location of where mangled bodies are found. Prior to and during the armed conflict, battered and mutilated remains of women were found mostly in rural areas, now; however, similarly disfigured bodies such as the remains of María Isabel Vélez Franco (Figure 2.1) are turning up in both rural and urban areas in public spaces. The authorities are just as unwilling to help locate the perpetrators, and often blame the female victims. The
following chapter will describe the post-peace GBV that is occurring since the signing of the Peace Accord in 1996.

Figure 2.1: María Isabel Vélez Franco the day of her First Communion. Photo provided by Señora Rosa Franco, mother of María Isabel (May 17, 2008).
Chapter Three: Post-Peace Gender-Based Violence
Introduction

This chapter describes the final stages of the armed conflict and examines post-peace violence, that is, violence that has occurred in the time since peace was officially declared with the signing of the Peace Accord in December of 1996. I briefly examine the peace and reconciliation process in Guatemala, and then move to define what I describe as “the trinity” of hidden powers, neoliberalism and violence (particularly gender-based violence) and discuss the connections they have with each other and explore how these connections foster impunity. I approach this chapter in this way to first situate Guatemala in its vulnerable state of transition and to strengthen the argument that the common thread binding this trinity is impunity.

General Romeo Lucas Garcia came to power in 1978, and unleashed a savagery throughout the country; his term lasted four years and saw the bloodiest violence in Guatemala to that point (Taylor 1998: 9), “with thousands of documented cases of human rights abuses by the military” (May 2001: 63). A summary of events from 1978 to 1980, shows that the first phase in the army’s assault was to commit massive and selective assassinations (Figueroa Ibarra 1991: 138). In 1979, the regime of General Lucas Garcia was the source of 100-200 deaths per month, the majority of which remained in the urban areas where killings were directed toward labor leaders, students, and political reformers, such as Manuel Colom Argueta, former mayor of Guatemala City, who was followed by assassins using a helicopter in the capital (Manz 1988: 14; Ball et al. 1999: 22). These events continued escalating in the capital, where individuals: professionals such as lawyers, doctors and university professors among others were kidnapped, tortured and their mutilated bodies appeared “in the metropolitan area” (Ball et al. 1999: 25). Anthropologist Beatriz Manz (1988: 15) states that “in some instances people were shot down in front of friends, family, or coworkers.” Once they had control over Guatemala City, the focus of
this violence shifted towards the countryside, an area long ignored by the government (Ball et al. 1999: 26). Rural massacres such as one that occurred in Panzós, Alta Verapaz, on May 29, 1978, were conducted at the request of landowners, when the army gunned down a crowd of campesinos who were “demanding their rights” (Stoll 1999: 51).

The second phase stressed massive terror in the population through the scorched earth campaign, a policy that was based on a military ideology meant to cut any bond between the peasants, Mayas and guerrillas, by destroying the peasant’s and Maya’s crops, houses, health clinics, co-operatives, killing their animals and even going as far as raping women and killing men, women, and children (Ball et al. 1999: 27; Zur 1998: 70). The investigation of the CEH (1999: 23) determined that one of every four victims of human rights violations were women. Women were disappeared, tortured, and raped because of their beliefs and political and social ideas; others became victims of massacres and indiscriminate killing (CEH 1999: 23). After the terrorization, massacres, disappearances, and arbitrary executions the Guatemalan army forced the remaining population to “policing themselves by creating the PAC” (Taylor 2007: 186). The Patrulla de Autodefensa Civil (Civil Self-defense Patrol) (PAC), constituted members of the civil population, who were in many cases forced into military service by the military commissioners (González 2000: 320). This strategy was a conscious means of involving the population in counterinsurgency, and led to a high degree of militarization of the society (Schirmer 2003: 68; CEH 1999: 124).

During the armed conflict, extreme acts of sexual violence were marked on women’s bodies. The following testimonios, drawn from the REMHI report, reflect the type of discernible fear that was prevalent on a daily basis. The first testimonio is from a perpetrator, and the second testimonio from a witness to the actions of the perpetrators.
The other girl, maybe about twenty-three years old, was between the kitchen and the bedroom. She also had three gashes here in the neck, and they had taken away her baby girl, who was still nursing. There she was, already dead and still nursing her. Case 1871 (perpetrator), various locations, 1981 (1998: 73).

The women who were pregnant. One of them was in her eighth month and they cut her belly, and they took out the little one, and they tossed it around like a ball. Then they cut off one breast, and they left it hanging in a tree. Case 6335, Barillas, Huehuetenango, 1981 (1998: 74)

These testimonios reflect particularly gruesome attempts by the military to destroy the future generation and to incite terror in the hearts and minds of the people. The installment of General Efrain Rios Montt saw this level of violence continue on its macabre path.

On March 23, 1982, 950 young officers ended the regime of General Lucas Garcia, and replaced him with General Efrain Rios Montt (REMHI 1998: 228; Falla 1992: 130). Rios Montt, a military dictator and born-again elder in a California-based Gospel Outreach Mission, “ruled the country with the Bible and an iron fist” (Green 1999: 153). The new regime presented itself, and stated to the Mayas that “now they do not kill,” that was before with “President Lucas, but we took him out,” and now “this is the army of Rios Montt, so we do not kill people” (Falla 1992: 129). On May 12, 1982 a group of members of the Comité de Unidad Campesina (Campesino Unity Committee) (CUC) went to the Brazilian embassy to denounce that from March 23 to May 12, the army of Rios Montt occupied the departments of Chimaltenango, Quiché, Huehuetenango, Alta and Baja Verapaz and others, committing the mass murder of more than 3,000 men, women, children and elders; through “torture, slitting their throats, and burning them alive” (Falla 1992: 141). According to General Rios Montt, “[n]aturally, if in a subversive operation where the Indigenous are involved with the guerrillas, the Indigenous will die. However, it is not the philosophy of the army to kill Indigenous, but, it is to re-conquer and help them” (Rostica 2005: 12).
The slaughter of the Maya population and the desire to terrorize the sympathizers of the guerrillas followed under the strategy that General Rios Montt called “draining the sea that the fish swim in” (Ball et al. 1999: 27). Nolin Hanlon and Shankar (2000: 280) argue that the tactics implemented by the army left the countryside with clandestine cemeteries and “erased communities from the map.” A survivor of the 1980s counterinsurgency described that “[u]nder Lucas García, they kidnapped people and left their cadavers in the road. Under Rios Montt, they kidnapped people and buried them” (Stoll 1999: 149). This method of burying the dead left families and communities not knowing what happened to their loved ones; their loved ones were in effect disappeared, which caused even greater confusion and rupture within families and the larger community.

**Signing the Peace Accord**

According to anthropologist Diane M. Nelson (2009: 39), the euphoria in the streets of Guatemala City on December 29, 1996, the day the URNG and the Guatemalan government signed the “*Acuerdo de Paz Firme y Duradera,*” (Firm and Lasting Peace Accord), seemed like a honeymoon. After so many years of conflict, guerrilla commanders and army officers stood next to each other in a public space, individuals who previously fled from violence began returning, and youth “came down from the hills to rejoin their families” (Nelson 2009: 39).

The signing of the Peace Accord saw both positive and negative changes. Signing the Accord meant implementation of new structural transformations, a result of generous funding, nearly $2 billion in pledges (Jonas 1997: 6) that had been promised by the international community (Nelson 2009: 39). The problem was and still is that no conditions were put in place to receive these funds. There was no “peace conditionality,” that obligated the parties involved
(particularly the Guatemalan government) to comply with the Peace Accords (Jonas 1997: 6). Despite the establishment of hundreds of new commitments for the state and society, only a few were considered cornerstones of the Peace process (Molina Mejia 1999: 1):

- Full respect for the right to life and liberty;
- Human rights guarantees;
- Demobilization of the insurgent forces together with a process of demilitarization;
- Truth-telling - the report of the Commission for Historical Clarification; and
- Constitutional reforms to institutionalize fundamental transformations of state and society.

The act of truth-telling is the only one of these cornerstones that have been realized. Human Rights lawyer Lisa J. Laplante and anthropologist Kimberly Theidon (2007: 229) question if “the act of telling the truth to an official body helps or hinders a victim-survivor in their healing process?” I argue that telling the truth or truth-telling helps in the healing process, as long there is action as a result of the words being spoken, that such words are not simply lost on unhearing ears.

Truth commissions like the one established in Guatemala are assured two certainties, first, that they are a product of political compromise and, second, that the former repressor retains and maintains power (Dyzenhaus 2000: 471; Ross 2004: 73-74). Geographer Amy Ross (2004: 74) suggests that despite the truth commissions forming as a “response to the demands of the victims, it is the balance of power among those at the negotiating table that dictates the terms under which such truth commissions operate;” in Guatemala, this involved military and the URNG/insurgent. These terms of peace for the victims were, in effect, negotiated by the perpetrators of the victims (Ross 2004: 74).

A commission may have the authority to seek and tell the truth as it sees fit, but that authority may be bought with the promise of a formal amnesty for all those implicated in abuses. It is usually the case that the oppressors, working as they did within the state or with its assistance, could command the resources of the state in committing and
covering up their crimes. Justice, or at least a large chunk of justice, can then be traded for truth because without that trade the truth revealed would be sparse, at best (Dyzenhaus 2000: 471).

Within the document that first launched the process of peace and reconciliation in 1994, the Commission for the Historical Clarification of Human Rights Violations and Other Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Suffering of the Guatemalan People, Ross (2004: 74) notes “truth” is conspicuously missing from the accord itself, and suggests that in reality ‘truth’ was a contentious ideology, and subject to the interpretation of the teller.

After the Peace Accord was signed community members reported lower levels of political violence; however, an increase in the levels of economic and social violence was evident (Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 41). The disbanding of the civil patrol and the decrease of military numbers left many men out of work, and individuals and families who fled as refugees to Mexico and Honduras also returned to Guatemala (Nolin 2006). This large influx of people and limited number of available jobs resulted in increased levels of delinquency (Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 41). A manifestation of this delinquency saw a shift in the location of violence, from rural to urban-based (Moser and McIlwaine 2001: 41).

Much of this contemporary violence affected areas that were previously relatively immune from the worst components of the armed conflict (Moser and McIlwaine 2004: 45). In fact, it has been reported that the level of violence since the signing of the Peace Accord is higher now than during the armed conflict (Moser and McIlwaine 2004: 45). In the introduction to their book Encounters with Violence in Latin America: Urban Poor Perceptions from Columbia and Guatemala, Social Anthropologist Moser and Geographer McIlwaine (2004: i) describe the issue of urbanized violence:

Latin America is both the most urbanized and the most violent developing region, where links between social exclusion, inequality, fear, and insecurity are clearly visible. The banal,
ubiquitous nature of drug crime, robbery, gang, and inter-family violence destabilizes countries' economies and harms their people and social structures.

Guatemala is considered one of the most violent of the Latin American communities (UNDP 2010), and with the majority of the violence enacted in urban sectors, I would argue that the degree of destabilization within the country is palpable.

According to the URNG (2005: 29), 26 percent of murders of women in 2004 occurred in Guatemala City and 19 percent in the municipalities of Villa Nueva and Mixco, which are municipalities that surround Guatemala City. The other 55 percent of murders occurred throughout the remaining 21 departments of Guatemala (Murales and Lacayo 2005: 36). Escuintla recorded eight percent, followed by Chimaltenango, Izabal and Quetzaltenango with four percent each (Murales and Lacayo 2005: 36). The lowest percentage recorded was one percent from the departments of Sacatepéquez, Alta and Baja Verapaz, and Sololá (Murales and Lacayo 2005: 36).

One example of urban gender-based violence is the case of María Isabel Vélez Franco⁹, a teenage girl who was found wrapped in a black plastic bag dumped near an area on the outskirts of Guatemala City known for drug trafficking and gang violence (see Figure 3.1) (Constantino 2006: 111). The following is a description of how her remains were found:

Her body showed familiar signs of torture: her feet, hands, and throat had been tied with barbed wire. They had fractured her bones. She had a deep knife wound below her heart. María Isabel died of a severe blow to the back of her head, which her assassins then wrapped in a green towel. When authorities found her, María Isabel’s arms and hands were frozen in a 90-degree angle, in a position of begging or protecting herself. The firefighters (not the police) called to the scene found her clothing there, covered with blood and large amounts of semen (Constantino 2006: 111)

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⁹ It is important to note here that the mother of María Isabel Vélez Franco, Rosa Franco was a participant in my research. Her testimonio follows in Part One, Chapter One.
The depths of these acts of violence are manifestations of how the trinity of hidden powers, neoliberalism (neoliberal ideology) and gender-based violence are entrenched in Guatemalan society. The following section describes hidden powers and explores its connections to the other two prongs of the trinity.

Hidden Powers

The 36-year period of violence that saw many people killed ended with the signing of the Peace Accord. A period of four years was established for implementing the agreement that was supposed to see the Guatemalan army with the one function to defend Guatemala’s borders and territorial integrity, however; pressure from the United States to have the Guatemalan army participate in anti-drug campaigns undermined the Accord, and in effect maintained the army as
a strategic ally (Jonas 1997: 6). This form of ‘back room’ antics confirmed external sources operating as part of a de facto regime reminiscent of hidden powers active in Guatemala for several decades.

Hidden powers have a relationship with nearly every political party in Guatemala, including the actors of counter-insurgency efforts such as the supporters of Rios Montt in the mid 1980s and during the 36-year armed conflict and later, the supporters of a then retired Rios Montt in his candidacy for presidency in 2003 (Peacock and Beltrán 2003: 33). Hidden powers are forces involved in illegal activity that exercise de facto power in the shadow of formal state power; they include private citizens, such as retired military and government officials, as well as current civilian and military government officials who “embed themselves within the structure of the state” (Peacock and Beltrán 2003: 5). “Hidden powers are a network, whose individual members sometimes compete, and play out personal rivalries,” whose relationships and overlapping webs of influence in government and society make them a powerful and hidden set of structures, and “acting in concert this relatively small constellation of individuals wields so much power that the justice system can no longer effectively control and punish their illegal activities” (Peacock and Beltrán 2003: 5). They are often involved in organized crime and drug trafficking, but due to the nature of the members, they are distinguishable from traditional mafia. “This nexus allowed hidden powers to wield great influence and to achieve more control within state institutions, further weakening the government’s ability to fight corruption and impunity” (Peacock and Beltrán 2003: 33).

In October 2002, American Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Ambassador Otto J. Reich testified before a U.S. congressional committee about the threats to democratic stability in Guatemala (Peacock and Beltrán 2003: 8). He stated:
There were increased signs of the participation of clandestine groups in illegal activities linked to employees of the Public Ministry, military intelligence, justice system, and police. These groups appear to act with relative autonomy, and while there was no evidence that they were a part of government policy, they did operate with impunity.

Individuals are affected by hidden powers. In May 25, 2007, Fredy Peccerelli, Executive Director of the FAFG, received an email threatening the life of his sister, Bianka, if he did not stop performing exhumations of the mass gravesites from the armed conflict. In the following quote from that email two issues are of concern. First, that a perpetrator is making death threats with impunity (quoted in Sanford 2008: 70-71). Second, this example marries the notion of hidden powers to gender-based violence and femicide.

Sanford (2008: 70-71) suggests that despite the death threat directed at Peccerelli, the resulting threat of action was done through the body of his sister, just as in the 1980s when women were targeted through the relation of their male family members. An example of this practice from the 1980s involves the young niece of a human rights activist who was the victim of a gang rape, where the perpetrators told her specifically that they were raping her because her uncle was a subversive (Sanford 2008: 70-71). As it was and is practiced in the patriarchal structure, women are placed in a protective sphere by the males of the families, but also within this repressive structure, women and their bodies are placed in the line of fire against male family members by perpetrators, continuing a cycle of abuse, gender-based violence and impunity (Sanford 2008: 71). According to psychologist Carlos A. Paredes (2006: 55-56), the

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10 The name was withheld to protect the privacy of his niece (Sanford, 2008: 71).
testimonios of the majority of the violations towards women depict no regard for the suffering of their own bodies, instead their concern is for their fathers, spouses, and sons. Women have suffered similar oppression as men; the difference, according to Paredes (2006: 49), is that Maya and Ladino women are not owners of their bodies. Anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (in Paredes 2006: 49) states that women are the community’s “goods” and as such they are subject to use and changes.

Recently, the CIDH stated that the purpose behind the contemporary murders against women is to tell them to be careful, and to return to the private sphere of their own homes and the duty to their families; for as long as women continue to take public positions they are perceived as a threat to men (Sanford 2008: 68). One example of a strong outspoken political woman is Nineth Montenegro. Montenegro is a founding member of Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (Mutual Support Group) (GAM) which is an organization that searches for the disappeared in Guatemala, and was created after Montenegro’s husband went missing in 1984, the peak period of violence. Montenegro became a congresswoman in 1996, and fights for the rights of every Guatemalan who suffered the rigors of socio-economic inequality: a serious impediment to human development, especially among women, where gender exclusion in Guatemala goes beyond discrimination (Cereser 2010: 5). Carlos Castresana, the Director of the Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala) (CICIG) recently warned Montenegro through statements due to that attempts against her life, the CICIG and the Guatemalan government are forced to recommend for her to leave the country (Cereser 2010: 5). Montenegro responded: “I will not be quiet. I will not stop doing my work. Not even in the period of sadness when my husband was kidnapped, did I leave my country...So, I will not leave” (Cereser 2010: 5).
A common thread in the preceding cases is that they are examples of individuals working to uncover human rights violations, and create social justice for the people; practices where the end result could reveal a “Truth” that someone wants remained hidden, or silent. Another similarity lies with the fact that in all cases the threats were conducted through the female body in some way, either directly or indirectly. I argue that this reflects a sense of power struggle; with Peccerelli and the human rights activist, threats against the females in their lives suggest the notion of being overpowered, and not able to protect the women or themselves on one hand; and the ease with which threats to the female body (and psyche) are made on the other.

Sanford (2009) also suggests that connections exist between the practice and discourse of past and present violence. For example, in the 1980s and 1990s the military regimes and army blamed the victims, stating that the victims were either subversive, or at fault for the massacres. In the 1980s, the regime threatened those in opposition, and in the 1990s anyone who sought an exhumation was threatened by the army. In each decade, amnesty was claimed for crimes that were committed, blaming the guerrillas for the killings and disappearances that occurred, and claimed ignorance of any violence committed by the military regime or the army (Sanford 2009). These similarities are echoed once again in the current atmosphere of increasing violence towards women (femicide and feminicide). Victims of violence are considered less worthy by authorities because they are assumed to be gang members (Sanford 2009). In many cases gangs are blamed for the violence, enabling authorities to claim social cleansing does not exist (Sanford 2009). As a result of claims of ignorance toward acts of violence, there is an implication that threats toward women are acceptable, and in turn reflect the impunity which continues to be rampant in Guatemala (Sanford 2009).
The following section describes neoliberalism and its effects on the whole of Guatemalan society. I suggest that this component of the trinity is the mechanism through which finances are filtered, and support acts of violence through the action of hidden powers.

Neoliberalism

What happens when hidden powers are involved in corporations in Guatemala? I argue here that neoliberalism is a gateway through which hidden powers and violence become an accepted, normalized, and even encouraged method of coping with individuals who are seen as ‘obstructing’ the machine of economic growth. Recall from the previous chapter, Eller’s (2006: 1, 6) description of force (both physical and non-physical) and violence, as well as Holden’s (2004: 10) statement expressing “the golden age of killing;” the financing and legitimizing of killing in the 20th century. Now weave this discussion together with the neoliberal ideology, a political and economic philosophy that affects every dimension of social life that emphasizes profits over people and has a “willingness to punish rather than serve the poor and disenfranchised” (Giroux 2004: 51). According to Marxist Geographer David Harvey (2007: 22), neoliberalism:

has become a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political economic practices to the point where it is now part of the commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world...[but] above all, neoliberalism is a project to restore class, dominance to sectors that saw their fortunes threatened by the ascent of social democratic endeavors in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Neoliberalism in effect channels wealth from “subordinate classes to dominant ones, and from poorer to richer countries” (Harvey 2007: 22) which has resulted in the “dismantling of institutions and narratives that promoted more egalitarian distributive measures” (Harvey 2007: 22). The cost of these measures includes “slow growth and unemployment, rising debt of the Third World and states and the emergence of the new neoliberal order and specific social...
violence" (Dumenil and Lévy 2001: 580). The benefits of these measures are reaped by world finance, and despite the “misery of the Third World and unemployment everywhere,” it is the wealthiest fraction of individuals who benefit from the rising wealth, and the poor and those in need be damned! (Dumenil and Lévy 2001: 580).

Neoliberal ideology, coupled with Guatemala President Oscar Berger’s stating (in Mychalejko 2005), “the government has to establish law and order...we have to protect our investors” to a group protesting a World Bank-funded Canadian mining project in Guatemala, suggests the state is in the corporate ‘back pocket’. Berger’s threat culminated hours later when Guatemalan military and police forces in riot gear opened fire on the protestors, killing one and injuring dozens more (Mychalejko 2005; Nolin and Stephens 2010: 53).

International lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank use economic and political power to impose ‘market-oriented’ policy on the people of low-income countries, which in turn creates a major obstacle for democratic economic development, suggesting that the governments of the lower income countries “have little interest in promoting either democracy or the material needs of the majority” (MacEwan 1999: 4). Neoliberalism proposes that rapid economic growth equals limited or no government regulation on the movement of goods, services and capital, regardless of the state of the country (MacEwan 1999: 31) suggesting the very real potential for abuse and exploitation by ‘stronger’, wealthier countries (in the north) directed at less wealthy countries.

While the basic tenets of neo-liberalism operate in the rich countries, the policy plays its most powerful role in many of the low-income countries like those in Latin America. Within these countries, influential groups see their fortunes tied to neo-liberalism, but the conflict over economic policy is seldom confined within a nation’s borders (MacEwan 1999:4)
Neoliberal ideology becomes problematic in countries like Guatemala, where hidden powers are at work seeking to make their fortune on the backs of labourers, many of whom are women. Ertürk (2005: 12) discusses how maquiladoras in Guatemala employ 130,000 workers, of which 70 to 80 percent are young women who, because of poor regulations, suffer human rights violations through physical, sexual and psychological abuses. Many victims are low paid migrant workers who are also ostracized and similarly low paid workers, such as members of the maras and sex trade workers, are “more likely to be attacked” (Prieto-Carrón et al. 2007: 27; Garcia García 2006: 8). The socioeconomic, intra-familiar, political, and GBV create an ideal environment for violence against women, with impunity permitted by the state, which places women at greater risk in this society that enables gender violence and does not punish the guilty.

Some causes of the increased number of murders, from 213 women murdered in 2000 to approximately 722 women murdered in 2008 (GHRC/USA 2009: 6; Musalo et al. 2010: 179; Nolin and Fraser 2010 forthcoming) are related to the migration from rural to urban areas, the rising population of women in zones with low income, alienation and social isolation of essential services, and the lack of governmental attention to these deficiencies (Kepfer et al. 2006: 36; Ikonen 2006: 12). A high percentage of victims come from areas of the city and have low-paying occupations. Many are homemakers, students, professionals, domestic employees, maquila workers and some are migrant workers from neighboring Central American countries (Constantino 2006: 10; Amnesty International 2005: 12). In some cases victims are characterized by the presence of tattoos that identify them as gang members or former gang members, and sex workers which in turn stigmatize the investigations of the victims (García García 2006: 7; Amnesty International 2005: 12). In fact, “[v]ictims of GBV are often re-victimized by police and judicial personnel who harass them...or blame them for their fates because of their clothing
or lifestyle choices” (Beltrán and Freeman 2007: 12). Members of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), Beltrán and Freeman (2007: 12) describe high level officials in the Guatemalan National Police who believe that “women’s liberation was the cause of the increased number of murders and concurred that there were few innocent victims.”

The organizations formed for the prevention of crimes against women in Guatemala lack protection from the state and funding to carry on their work. Organizations such as Mujer en Solidaridad (Women in Solidarity) (MS) and Asociación Mujer Vamos Adelante (Association for the Advancement of Women) (AMVA) suffered from acts of intimidation in 2001 (Muralles and Lacayo 2005: 48); in Escuintla, a member was attacked by perpetrators with machetes while on her way to give a presentation on GBV (Muralles and Lacayo 2005: 48). In 2001, AMVA suffered a break and enter in the middle of the day, by a group of heavily armed men who proceeded to rape one of their members. The perpetrators acted without fear and with complete impunity, especially with the knowledge that the office of AMVA is located two blocks away from a police station, in zone 1, Guatemala City (Muralles and Lacayo 2005: 48).

Conclusion

This chapter examines post-peace violence, as it relates to what I termed the ‘trinity’, that is hidden powers, neoliberalism, and violence as well as how this ‘trinity’ is connected and reinforced through acts of impunity. Although the signing of the Peace Accord in 1996 established cornerstones of the peace process, many of these cornerstones have yet to be met. Many PAC members went back to their communities, as did several individuals and families who fled to other countries in Central America and Mexico, or to the highlands, for safety. This influx created a shift in where the violence actually took place. With people flooding into
Guatemala City, violence is increasingly concentrated in the urban setting; however, that violence continues in rural areas as well.

*Hidden powers* are forces involved in illegal activities embedded within the structure of the state, with real power in all aspects of a *de facto* regime reminiscent of the armed conflict. This network of *hidden powers* helps to ensure and enforce the reality of a neoliberal ideology through violent and coercive actions to those who oppose or question violations caused by corporations. The individuals most affected by this regime are labourers, female labourers specifically, as they become more involved in the market economy. Opposition to women in the market place is revealed as warning that their place is in the private sphere, tending to their homes and families, and when this does not occur, gender-based violence ensues as the *hidden powers* seek to redefine power and place.

The next chapter provides an introduction into the forensic anthropology and archaeology used in the exhumation process, a relatively new component in the struggle of identifying human rights violations and establishing the characteristics of GBV; compares an exhumation case from the period of the armed conflict to the GBV seen today in Guatemala and explores the analysis and problematic nature of available statistics.
PART THREE: Challenges to Reconciliation

Chapter Four: The Role of Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology in Exhumations and the Analysis of an Historical Case Study and Victims of Femicide During 2001 to 2006
Human rights violations such as the massacres and acts of terror that occurred (and are still occurring) in Guatemala are not new events. Only recently, however, “the importance of the methods used to collect evidence to investigate human rights abuses involving mass killing has been acknowledged” (Blau and Skinner 2005: 450). This chapter describes the stages of recovery the FAFG uses during the exhumation process. Here, I analyze a historical case study of a recently exhumed clandestine site related to the armed conflict and compare the findings to the state of women’s bodies as they are found in contemporary cases. I discuss the mode and method in which the women are killed as well as the mode and method in which the remains are recovered.

I explore the development of forensic anthropology in Latin America and the role that forensic anthropology and archaeology play throughout the process of the exhumation. I will examine the historical case study of Margarita Telón Cún and explore the case from the beginning of her exhumation to the analysis of her remains. Margarita was killed during the armed conflict, her case study exemplifies the disdain with which individuals, particularly women, were killed during the conflict. I then examine the contemporary trend of gender-based violence (GBV), despite the fact that the statistics available are limited and unreliable.

The first attempts to exhume clandestine graves occurred in Argentina in the mid 1980s in an uncontrolled environment by “gravediggers using heavy earth-moving equipment…which resulted in a mass of unprovenanced bones lying heaped next to opened graves” (Snow 2008; Blau and Skinner 2005: 451). The broken and comingled bones led to the loss of important forensic evidence, limited the possibility of identification, and reduced the credibility of medical experts (Snow 2008; Doretti and Snow 2003: 291; Blau and Skinner 2005: 451). Forensic anthropology and archaeology techniques were first recorded, publicized and used for forensic

Since the development of the EAAF international forensic scientists have “gained an unparalleled level of expertise in the investigation and exhumation of mass graves” (Blau and Skinner 2005: 450), whose practitioners are poised to apply their skills to “neglected humanitarian and criminal events” (Blau and Skinner 2005: 450). Forensic anthropologists Soren Blau and Mark Skinner (2005: 450) state that investigations into human rights abuses are undertaken for two reasons, first, “to obtain evidence for prosecution of alleged prosecutors” and second “for the humanitarian aim of retrieving the remains of victims for a positive identification so that surviving relatives can obtain some degree of closure.” The EAAF also played a significant role in the investigations of human rights abuses in countries such as Guatemala (Blau and Skinner 2005: 452).

The Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (Guatemala Forensic Anthropology Team) (EAFG) (currently the FAFG) was founded in 1992 “through the efforts of Dr. Clyde Snow and a group of courageous Guatemalan archaeologists” including the current Executive Director, Fredy Peccerelli (Sanford 2003: 396). Forensic anthropologist Alan Robinson (2007) described the FAFG as an autonomous NGO with scientists who contribute to the judicial system
to spread and document historical actions through investigation of violations of the fundamental right to live, and cases of unclear death through the application of forensic and social science which in turn strengthen respect of basic human rights. The FAFG (Robinson 2007) also helps society to reconstruct its recent history bringing identification to the victims and their families through the use of forensic anthropology, assisting in strengthening the judicial system through impartial investigation, and by hearing the truths of victims affected by violence and educating the people on the work conducted by the FAFG.

Blau and Skinner (2005: 451) define forensic archaeology as “the application of archaeological field and laboratory techniques within a legal context.” The forensic archaeologist applies excavation and mapping skills to “recent death scenes or places where bodies have been disposed” (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 223). They are trained to recognize and recover complex features and material culture from a wide variety of site types, as well as assess site formation which includes “landscape surveying and mapping of physical features such as discrete deposits within graves” (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 223). Archaeological methods ensure that physical evidence is preserved and the greatest amount of information is obtained from the site (Burns 1998: 66). The forensic archaeologist identifies temporal and spatial relationships at the scene that help in the investigation as they explain how a body came to be in the observed state (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 224), the goal is “to reconstruct the activities of the past (whether the recent or distant past) and to investigate physical remains whether they are objects, corpses or residues” (Blau and Skinner 2005: 451).

Forensic anthropologist Karen Ramey Burns (1998: 65-66) states that (forensic) scientists can promote human rights by providing verbal testimony that can in turn be corroborated with physical evidence which is evaluated by scientific analysis. Burns (1998: 66) states that forensic
anthropologists – both physical and archaeological – contribute by assisting in death investigations increasing the likelihood the “events surrounding the death are interpreted accurately and completely.” Burns (1998: 73) further states that to contribute effectively in human rights missions there needs to be a multidisciplinary group of scientists and social scientists who are equally able to “describe and document individual anomalies and effects of ante-mortem trauma” as well as be able to communicate clearly with survivors in order to obtain reliable identification.

Forensic anthropologists and archaeologists work in tandem with each other at the exhumation site to help in the identification process. One of the main goals of forensic investigations is to establish positive identification of the victim (İşcan and Solla Olivera 2000: 19). The rate of identification is dependent on three variables. First; knowledge, or lack of knowledge, that the law enforcement agencies have regarding which data are “relevant to obtain positive identification from skeletal remains” (İşcan and Solla Olivera 2000: 19). Second, often crimes go unreported. A legacy of the armed conflict is the cultura de silencio (culture of silence), a legacy that persists today and affects both Indigenous and Ladino communities, though is more widespread in Indigenous communities (Moser and McIwaine 2001: 43). One result is the lack of missing people reports to the police. A positive identification cannot be established when there is nothing for comparison as “factors of individualization,” the process whereby a set of unique skeletal characteristics is matched with those of a missing person (İşcan and Solla Olivera 2000: 19). The third variable relates to the rarity of dental and health records, particularly in less affluent countries like Guatemala; however, without something to make a direct comparison to, positive identification is difficult (İşcan and Solla Olivera 2000: 19).
Both forensic anthropological and archaeological aspects of exhumations make substantial contributions in human rights investigations; in fact, anthropology is at the forefront of all exhumations; the process itself uncovers more than bones and it is essential to have cultural sensitivity at each stage. As a result, in Guatemala forensic anthropologists and archaeologists, as well as social and cultural anthropologists are present at the exhumations. Social and cultural anthropologists conduct interviews and observe family members and interactions of the community at the site; while forensic anthropologists and archaeologists conduct the exhumation. Differences and similarities exist between forensic anthropology and archaeology in their roles at the exhumation site as well as in the lab during analysis.

Anthropological training leads to an understanding of the effects of cultural differences and nuances (Burns 1998: 66). Forensic anthropology, one of the fastest growing disciplines of forensic sciences (İşcan and Solla 2000: 16), is a “scientific discipline that applies population-based standards to individual skeletal remains” which assist in the identification process (İşcan et al. 2005: 213). Identifying a victim based on the skeletal remains is one of the most difficult (and main) concerns of the forensic anthropologist. One of the main problems is the lack of information to determine local population-based standards making positive identification somewhat difficult.

Forensic anthropologists document past atrocities through the quantification of casualties, and evaluation of the circumstances of their death (Steadman and Haglund 2005: 24). They are also utilized in cases requiring disinterment, personal identification, and trauma analysis (Burns 1998: 66). Forensic anthropologists are trained to analyze skeletal and dental tissues, with the recognition and interpretation of varying and altered states of bone as their primary skill (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 224). Such altered states of bone can occur at
various times; “during the individual’s lifetime, around the time of death, or subsequently due to various influences such as cremation, (re)burial, decomposition, scavenging and weathering” (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 224). Understanding this process is significant in making positive identification of remains.

Awareness of local cultural practices, particularly relating to burials, is important for anthropologists and archaeologists (Burns 1998: 66). Anthropologists and archaeologists also are important in the development of investigating, documenting and predicting “pregenocidal and genocidal situations” (Totten et al. 2002: 77). Forensic archaeologists determine how to approach the site with the help of guidance from survivors (FAFG 2001: 12). Once the burial site is determined and the exhumation has begun, forensic archaeologists can determine the cause of death, which will depend on the preservation of the remains, which vary depending on the climate as well as how the body was initially buried (FAFG 2001: 12). In Margarita’s case, to be discussed in this chapter, the family members spent much time tending to and caring for her gravesite and therefore it was easy to locate when the team arrived to initiate the exhumation.

Anywhere we go on these cases, Africa, Kurdistan, Latin America- the families want to be there from the moment we start. They watch the bones of their family members being exhumed, and they become part of it (Clyde Snow quoted in Guntzel 2004: 15).

Having family and community members openly witness the process and progress of the exhumation helps to break the ‘culture of silence’ and begin healing these once ruptured spaces. Human rights organizations that specialize in forensic sciences are currently carrying out investigations, workshops and “doing training exercises for people involved in the examination of instances of suspicious deaths” throughout the collaboration of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), and the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee (Totten et al. 2002: 79). I was fortunate to
participate in one such course offered by PHR International Forensic Program and the Tarrant County Medical Examiner’s Office in Forth Worth Texas in the fall of 2008. With the help of these, as well as other, organizations dedicated to the accreditation of individuals working on exhumations, the work being conducted will stand up in court and lead to increased justice for those affected by these atrocities.

The principal reason for individuals and communities affected by the violence in Guatemala to demand exhumations are to find the remains of their loved ones and to give them a dignified burial (Suazo 2002: 72). According to former Dominican-Catholic priest Fernando Suazo (2002: 89) individuals who died violently and unjustly are “suffering, shouting, and crying” and they will not rest until their victimizers pay their debt to them. However, communities often neglect the demand for legal prosecution due to a number of reasons. The survivors may not have relevant information to proceed legally, they cannot afford the cost, or more significantly, the perpetrators of the massacres in many communities, still live side by side with the victims (Suazo 2002: 63). Furthermore, the armed conflict ended and “destroyed years of accumulated trust and social relations amongst community members” (Taylor 2007: 185). There is also a certain degree of fear that continues to exist and is reflected by the lack of trust in government institutions (MINUGUA 2000: 26).

Despite fear and uncertainty, survivors still initiate human rights activities inside the country. They are in search of the disappeared and the dead, and one way for them to become more effective is to form or join with an NGO (Burns 1998: 71). Forming such organizations has the potential to free the survivors of acute guilt which many feel for having survived while loved ones did not (Suazo 2002: 77). One NGO, the Coordinación Nacional de Viudas Guatemaltecas (National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows) (CONAVIGUA) founded by a group of rural
highland Maya widows in 1988, demanded respect for their human rights, rights as women, and rights as citizens, as well as “compensation to those women whose husbands were killed during the counterinsurgency war” (Green 1999: 106). They demanded an “end of forced recruitment of their sons into the military,” and, with the help of the EAAF and the FAFG they “began to literally unearth the long-denied number of clandestine cemeteries scattered throughout the highlands” (Green 1999: 106).

The next section describes the methodology used by the FAFG during an exhumation process. In order to situate the landscape within which the FAFG works, the section begins with a brief narrative of the circumstances surrounding the death of Margarita Telón Cún.

**Qualitative Methodology by the FAFG during the Exhumation Process**

On August 14, 1982, Margarita Telón Cún decided to return to Hacienda Maria, to recover some of her domestic animals left under the care of friends and move them to San José Poaquil to her new family dwelling (FAFG 2007: 4). She took her nine-year-old son Jesús Simón Telón with her and, after she acquired her animals, Margarita and Jesús began their return journey home (FAFG 2007: 4). After walking for a while they were ambushed by armed men; Jesús managed to get away but Margarita was murdered and left along the terraceria (see Figure 4.1) (FAFG 2007: 5). Jesús was able to get back to his family and told them what happened.
Margarita’s case file explores a specific example of an exhumation process from beginning to end (FAFG 2007). For an exhumation to be conducted, family members of the victim(s) act through a NGO and defenders of human rights as they provide a denunciation to the Ministerio Público (Public Ministry) (MP) (FAFG 2001: 12). The MP then approaches the FAFG to begin the exhumation process, which begins with social anthropologists travelling to the community to explain the work of the FAFG, their history and purpose of being at the site (FAFG 2007). This information session is conducted in Spanish, or one of the 23 Maya Indigenous languages through a translator.

At the same time the information session is conducted with the community, blood samples are collected from surviving family members, and questionnaires as well as the first of
three sets of interviews are conducted (a discussion of the interviews follows shortly) (FAFG 2001: 12). Falla (1992: 84) outlines four classes of witnesses: first, the witnesses who fled when the army entered the hamlets and communities; second, the witnesses who remained in the hamlets and communities and survived the massacres, and then became witness to the actions carried out by the Guatemalan army; third, individuals who witnessed the actions of the army from a distance whom Falla (1992: 84) describes as ‘explorers’; and finally, the witnesses who arrived after the massacres occurred. Social anthropologists of the FAFG who conduct interviews work with all four types of witnesses, as the information gathered by such varied sources is necessary for a more complete understanding of what occurred in the moments surrounding the assault and, in this case, the subsequent death of Margarita.

Single or multiple interviews can also be used as, or lead to, ethnographic text. Clifford (1986: 6) states cultural fictions are “based on systematic, and contestable, exclusions.” These truths are pieces of a larger puzzle that may not be put together all at the same time. As an example of such puzzle pieces, anthropologist Richard Price (cited in Clifford 1986: 7) discussed how in his research among the Saramata of Suriname, he was taught through Saramata folktales that “knowledge is power, and that one must never reveal all of what one knows...a person’s knowledge is supposed to grow only in small increments.” Although individuals interviewed in Guatemala may not consciously share limited fragments of recalled information or intentionally withhold information, it is useful to use a system of mixed methods, or triangulation. These methods confirm or corroborate the data and build redundancy in data collection methods through interviews by asking repeated questions, discussion, and actual observation that focuses information on the same topic, and potentially from different data sources, or individuals through their testimonio (Winchester 2005: 4, 296; LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 90).
*Testimonio* is a collective witnessing, rather than a formal interview, which gives voice to marginalized peoples rather than eyewitness testimony (Nolin Hanlon and Shankar 2000: 267). It is the hope of many who give their *testimonio* that “anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and others will use the materials to help make sense of what has happened” (Buda 1988 in Zur 1998: 20). Nolin Hanlon and Shankar (2000: 267) state that “at this particular moment in Guatemala’s reality it has become necessary to see the multiple connections between gender, memory, *testimonio*, impunity, state terror and assault.” The act of providing/gathering a *testimonio* aids in the reconstruction of a lived history through the memory of a single witness (Nolin Hanlon and Shankar 2000). Each *testimonio* aids in the development of triangulation, and reinforces the physical findings of the exhumation as well.

In the case of the FAFG’s work, there are three sets of interviews conducted; the first set is somewhat different from a *testimonio*, as they are conducted before the exhumation begins and are meant to draw out basic information about the victim such as their occupation, how many (if any) children they had, how the family members presumed the victim was killed. From this basic information, the FAFG’s social anthropologists developed two types of profiles of the victim, which helps build identification, a family profile, as well as a physical profile of the victim(s).

During an exhumation, social anthropologists conduct a second set of interviews which are meant to reaffirm responses given during the first set of interviews, as well as obtain ‘new’ information. The entire process of conducting the exhumation opens old wounds for the survivors, and many tend to remember more once the ground is broken (Figure 3.2). “The way to deal with a wound is to open it up, drain it, and then let it heal” (Clyde Snow quoted in Russell 1996: 17). The violence of the past is always just below the surface and creates psychological trauma for the survivors, friends, neighbors, and communities of those who were disappeared or
murdered (MINUGUA 2000: 22). These exhumations recapture a harsh lived reality and have the potential to generate suffering and pain, and possibly destabilize communities. Survivors of communities where massacres took place have reoccurring dreams and traumatic flashbacks which actually help during ethnographic interviews. As survivors dredge up memories, the information gathered takes on a greater depth (Suasnavar 2008).

Figure. 4.2: The beginning of the exhumation of Margarita, with family members overlooking the site. Photo provided by the FAFG July 5, 2006

Once recovered, the remains are carefully labeled, packaged and sent to the FAFG lab in Guatemala City, where forensic anthropologists analyze the bones. The third set of interviews is conducted at the end of the exhumation process after family and community members have had an opportunity to examine artifacts and other remnants and personal effects of the victim. When the process of the exhumation and community input is completed, a report and analysis of the remains is then given to the MP. The FAFG must wait for final approval of the MP before they can return the remains to the community after the lab analysis is complete (EAFG 1997: 16). At such a time, the community and surviving family members are able to finally put their loved
ones to rest in a dignified burial. The survivors’ fear still exists, however; for many of them, exhumations generate the confidence to encourage the demand for investigation of other clandestine cemeteries (Robinson 2007).

The following is a brief synopsis of information gathered during the exhumation process of Margarita’s case. Ante-mortem (before death) information collected describes Margarita as female, short in stature, 35 years old, and a domestic worker who assisted in the milpas and who also participated in weaving as a form of livelihood. Her medical history collected from her children indicated that Margarita suffered from calambre (cramps in her knees). She had pain in her molars and to alleviate the pain she felt, she would use a hot wire and press it on her teeth. Margarita also gave birth to eight children. All of this information has the potential to leave imprints or altered states on bones, which in turn lead to individualization, and thus positive identification.

According to peri-mortem (around the time of death) information gathered, Margarita was last seen by her youngest son Jesús on August 14, 1982. She was wearing a red coloured güipil (traditional Maya woven blouse) with a triangular neckline that was specially made with openings in the front for breast feeding. She was also wearing a multi-coloured corte (traditional Maya woven skirt) that was held up with a woven belt with white lines; she wore rubber or plastic shoes as well. The community witnesses described how Margarita was wrapped in new clothes and had been buried four days after her death by her brother’s father-in-law and the mayor of the hamlet in an individual grave. These two individuals informed Jesús that the method of Margarita’s death was likely attack by a machete.

The analysis of Margarita’s remains and the process of identification began with the determination of the sex, age, stature and dental analysis (Figure 4.3). Correlations of the
physical remains and the ante-mortem information that was gathered prior to the start of the exhumation were examined. In the lab it was determined that the remains were incomplete, and had post-mortem fractures. Exfoliation (pitting or erosion) was evident on the bone and hair remaining on the skull. It was determined the sex of the remains was female, as the pelvis and pubic symphysis (the ventral end of the pubic symphysis) was pitted (like a sponge). This finding is important as it signifies that the woman experienced multiple pregnancies and childbirths; the ante-mortem information stated that Margarita gave birth to eight children. The age of the remains ranged from 25 to 38 years; according to ante-mortem information gathered Margarita was 35 when she was last seen.

Figure 4.3: Author reconstructing the bones in the lab at the FAFG. Photo provided by the FAFG 2006.

Through measuring the femur (thigh bone), her height was estimated to be 1.39 to 1.47 metres; Margarita was considered short. The dentition (teeth) showed evidence of severe cavities
on the molars and two missing molars as well. Margarita had trouble with her teeth and they
gave her a tremendous amount of pain. Marks of occupational stress were found on her femurs,
tibia (calves), metatarsals (feet), patellae (knee caps) and proximal phalanges (toes) that
indicated she knelt on the ground or floor for long periods of time, resting on her heels.
Margarita was a weaver for most of her life which meant she was on her knees resting on her
heals, with the loom strapped around her back. Peri-mortem lesions were found on the cervical
vertebrae number two and three (the neck): three cuts on number two vertebrae and ten cuts on
number three vertebra. The trajectory of the cuts on her neck determined that the victim was
approached from behind, grabbed by her jaw forcing her chin upward, and the perpetrator, using
his/her right hand sliced a blade across her throat at least five times which was determined to be
the cause of death. The ante-mortem information gathered prior to the exhumation, together with
the analysis of the altered state of the bones, helped to confirm that the remains were that of
Margarita Telón Cún. If this were not enough to confirm without a doubt that the remains were
indeed Margarita’s, the FAFG currently has a Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) lab and it is now
possible to make a positive identification in this regard as well, as there are still living family
members, her children, that the DNA of the remains can be compared to.

Data Analysis

In order to understand the link between past and present violence, and the rise of current
levels of gender-based violence, it is important to also understand the social processes that
connect one to the other. Since 2000, Guatemala has seen an increase in the murder of women;
however, data collection and statistical records of femicide numbers in Guatemala are unreliable
at best and the variation among state institutions and NGO numbers are significantly different
(see Table 4.1) (Musalo et al. 2010: 174-175; Guatemala’s Human Rights Commission/ USA 2009: 6; Amnesty International 2005: 3). Guatemalan authorities state to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) that between the years 2001 and 2004 1,188 women were murdered (Amnesty International 2005: 3). Statistical information from the MP registered the same numbers in both 2002 and 2003 (Amnesty International 2005: 8-9). However, the Committee on Feminicide in Guatemala and CALDH, note that 317 women were murdered in 2002, which is a difference of 154 victims (Ikonen 2006: 11; CALDH 2005: 43). Musalo et al. (2010: 174, 178) among others (Kepfer et al. 2006: 50; FAFG 2008: 4; GHRC/USA 2009: 5, 7; Godoy-Paiz 2008: 30-31) state that several factors contribute to the unreliability of these data:

- A high rate of under-reporting potentially 75% – 90% of the incidences of domestic violence go unreported;
- Deficient methodologies for the collection and recording of information; and
- A lack of a standardized or centralized system for recording data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of women Killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,159 to 4,327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Comparison of Number of Women Killed in Guatemala from 2000 to 2008. Adapted from Musalo et al. (2010: 179).
During investigations in Guatemala in February 2004, Ertürk (2005: 11) appointed by the United Nations (UN) to research violence against women, received a report by the PDH estimating that in the months of January to September 2003, 272 women were murdered. Fifty percent of those murders were a result of firearms, 12 percent to stabbing, eight percent were beaten to death, and five percent were strangled (Ertürk 2005: 11). According to the report by PDH (Ertürk 2005: 11), and a separate report by Kepfer et al. (2006: 39) of El Centro de Análisis Forense y Ciencias Aplicadas (Center for Forensic Analysis and Applied Sciences) (CAFCA) the remaining percentage of women murdered come from unknown causes.

According to the GGM (2005: 20) violence against women in Guatemala is not limited to a particular age group, although according to statistics from 2004 it is evident that the majority of women murdered in Guatemala are under 32 (See Table 4.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Number of women murdered in 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 - 22</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 - 32</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 - 42</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 - 53</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 and older</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Age Range of Women Killed in Guatemala in 2004 (GGM 2005: 20).

As mentioned previously, the victims came from areas with low-paid occupations, which lends a discriminatory factor to the socioeconomic, intra-familiar, political, and GBV (Prieto-Carrón et al. 2007: 26; García García 2006: 8). The Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA(GHRC/USA) (2009: 2; Nolin and Fraser 2010 forthcoming) reports a year after the April 9, 2008 approval of the Ley Contra el Femicidio y Otras Formas de Violencia Contra La Mujer (Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women, or Femicide Law), that
2008 was the “most violent year to date for women in Guatemala with 722 violent deaths reported.” The GHRC/USA (2009: 2, 11; Nolin and Fraser 2010 forthcoming) further states that in the first two weeks of January 2009, 26 women were murdered, and that by the end of January the number more than doubled. By the beginning of April 2009, the number of women murdered was estimated at 137. The broad range of statistics reaffirms that the records of registered deaths of women are unreliable and problematic; however, what is significant is that the statistics show a trend in GBV and femicide.

The next section is an analysis of contemporary cases conducted by the FAFG inside the morgue, and describes the revisions to data collected from the archives of the national morgue run by the Organismo Judicial (Judicial System) (OJ) in charge of all legal-medical autopsies. It is important to mention that the morgue is in charge of investigating all causes of death: violent, natural causes and death due to illness (FAFG 2008: 6).

In 2006, the FAFG gained access to the files at the OJ morgue, and determined that the files were in order according to the number of the autopsy, but did not identify immediately if the remains belonged to a child, a man or a woman. However; the files did have information regarding the cause and manner of death (FAFG 2008: 17). Each file contained up to 500 documents which were then analyzed in greater detail and separated according to whether or not an autopsy was conducted on a woman, disregarding the cause of death (FAFG 2008: 17). Once the files were separated to reflect only women, the FAFG analyzed the files once more to detect examples with violent deaths. The information was then entered into a data base specifically created for this project (FAFG 2008: 17). The objective of determining which files were connected to women who died as a result of a violent death was developed to establish a specific
group as femicide, and to determine a pattern of death, where the death took place and the ages of the victims (FAFG 2008: 18).

The FAFG reviewed more than 25,000 documents each presenting a measure of inconsistency in the detail of information, and a lack of interest in protecting the integrity of the investigations (see Table 4.3). Of the 25,000 documents, only a select few were legible and therefore it was determined that only 1026 victim records would be used for this analysis and data base project (FAFG 2008: 18). One of the first aspects of the project was to collect a biological profile of the women, as well as determine the victims’ origin and the cause and manner of death and establish the presence of particular characteristics in order to individualize the victims. This information in turn would assist in the investigation (FAFG 2008: 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>821</td>
<td>20/03/2003</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Not established</td>
<td>Cause of death non-determined. Found Monday at 11:00 am, three blocks from her residence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>787</td>
<td>30/03/2001</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Sex- trade worker</td>
<td>Related to a cranial impact. Signs of violence. In the interior of her home. Time: non-determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2933</td>
<td>09/09/2003</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Cause of death: non-determined. Signs of ante mortem violence and brutality. Found in her place of residence Monday at 4:00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>752</td>
<td>23/10/2003</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Not established</td>
<td>Cause of death: non-determined. Found at 10:00 am on a Monday with signs of non-specific violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>474</td>
<td>11/02/2004</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Not established</td>
<td>Cause of death: related to having a slit throat. Found in her place of residence on a Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>26/06/2004</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>Found in the interior of her place of residence on a Sunday at 6:00pm. There is no more information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: An Example provided by the FAFG that Demonstrates the Issue of Incomplete Data on File at the OJ Archives (FAFG 2008: 50).

The files themselves were in a deteriorated state, and in some cases lacked important information or were incomplete. For example, crime scene information, the transportation and autopsy of the victim, and the victim’s occupation were missing. The lack of this type of
information makes the interpretation of the files difficult, and particularly problematic considering that this information is what investigators rely on to complete an investigation. A lack of security and systematization was evident, as the documents in the files were packed in boxes, and the information was never digitized for easy access to investigators (FAFG 2008: 18).

The FAFG was able to determine the number of victims per year, and their age, over the six year period, from 2001 to 2006, based on the information of the 1026 victims (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). The FAFG identified a disturbing trend of an increased number of violent deaths of women during this period of time. They established that the higher percentage of murdered women fall between the ages of 16 to 30, with 16 to 20 as the peak age (FAFG 2008: 21-22). The Centro de Análisis Forense y Ciencias Aplicadas (the Center of Forensic Analysis and Applied Science) (CAFCA), an institution analyzing the death of women in Guatemala reached similar findings: that the murdered women and girls fall in range of 10-20 years old (Kepfer et al. 2006: 28). They found some of the occupations of these victims, suggesting that the majority of the victims in this age range are presumed to be students and domestic workers (Kepfer et al. 2006: 30). It is necessary to mention that in Guatemala, registration of occupation and activities on individual’s documentation is obsolete as it is too expensive to obtain separate forms of identification just to add one’s occupation (Kepfer et al. 2006: 30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Victims</th>
<th>Monthly Average</th>
<th>Monthly MIN- MAX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>65-97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Number of Female Victims of Violent Death from the Documents at the OJ Morgue (FAFG 2008: 20).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Age</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 10</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 to 20</td>
<td>238</td>
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<td>21 to 25</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
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<td>26 to 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>51 to 60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
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<td>61 to 70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 to 80</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 to 90</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Age Ranges of Female Victims of Violent Death, from the Documents at the OJ Morgue (FAFG 2008: 21).

CAFCA determined that in 212 separate cases analyzed in their study, the perpetrators did not bother to hide the bodies, that the remains were left for everybody to see. This blatant act of public violence indicates that the perpetrators and victimizers do not have the need to hide their actions, as they do not feel threatened by the judicial system, and they are not afraid of arrest (Kepfer et al. 2006: 41). The presence of bodies in public spaces, together with the atrocities committed to the bodies themselves, shows an intentionality to provoke fear in the population (Kepfer et al. 2006: 41; Nolin and Fraser 2010 forthcoming).

In many of the files examined by the FAFG at the OJ morgue, the files exhibited that there were lack of autopsy protocols followed. As an example, a toxicology exam is the only exam requested by the forensic medic. This lack of protocol can be a result of poor conditions and lack of resources in the morgue itself; with personnel in the morgue having limited access to these already sparse resources (FAFG 2008: 19). These issues and lack of protocols can only serve to weaken the evidence necessary to achieve justice for the victims of GBV.

Some files identified the victims as XX, which means the victims arrived at the morgue without a name attached; they are considered a Jane or John Doe. Thus, if the investigator is not
meticulous in their investigation, or if the evidence is contaminated or jeopardized, the victims will continue to be identified as XX (FAFG 2008: 19). Fredy Peccerelli (2008), Executive Director of the FAFG, suggests that every crime scene is different and that the need to train police and members of institutions such as the MP and OJ is key to preserving the evidence (see Figure 4.4). Jarrett Halcox, Director of the National Forensic Science Institute (NFSI) in the United States, and Amy Welch, the Forensic Training Coordinator for the NFSI (2006: 10) agree with Peccerelli, and outline eight steps to working a crime scene which should be conducted in order (with the exception of photographing the scene, which should be done once the investigator arrives at the scene and through each of the stages of the investigation):

1. Approach the scene;
2. Secure and protect the scene;
3. Conduct a preliminary survey;
4. Photograph the scene;
5. Sketch and diagram of the scene;
6. Perform a detailed search for evidence;
7. Collect the evidence; and
8. Conduct the final survey.

A manual and specific protocols for investigation become important procedures in formal training, and the collection of forensic evidence is key (Peccerelli 2008). For example: knowing how to collect what is important evidence (and identify what is important), what is secondary evidence, and what could help to solve the crime (Peccerelli 2008). In order to determine the relevance of specific evidence the crime scene needs to be reconstructed (Peccerelli 2008). These are all important protocols and procedures involved in formal training (Peccerelli 2008).
Figure 4.4: Victim of Femicide. Photo provided by Omar Bertoni Girón of the FAFG May 15, 2008.

It is important to contribute to the investigation and establish who is responsible, to condemn those responsible for crimes against women in general, particularly femicide, and to understand the social factors that make gender-based violence possible, as seen in the increase of femicide in Guatemala (Peccerelli 2008). Figure 4.5 illustrates a female victim of a violent murder with the phrase “MUERTE A TODAS LAS PERRAS” (“DEATH TO ALL THE BITCHES”), written on her back (Girón 2008). This photo, among many others, was not kept confidential by the investigators who were first on scene. In many cases, first on scene officials are firefighters who are not trained in crime scene investigations (Girón 2008). Several potential repercussions can result. For example, if the image goes public, the pre-existing sense of fear for the public could be exacerbated; it could induce a sense of pride in the perpetrator that his/her actions went (to this point) unpunished; and the potential for the case to be compromised is increased, which means that the perpetrators will get away with these actions (Girón 2008).
The purpose for me using this image here follows the argument of Norma Cruz when describing investigators in the documentary *Killer’s Paradise* (2006), “There is total indifference. They are just not interested in the subject. They are not interested in stopping the violence.” Images like this are used by the media as a way to desensitize the public of the violence occurring around them on a daily basis, “everyday, the Guatemala media log the soaring body count and show the lastest murders” (*Killer’s Paradise* 2006). Media describes violent events like this one in a way that is completely devoid of emotion, “What [reporters] discover or are told is often written up in cold, alienated prose, as if the victim’s sole purpose in life was to be, in death, so casually and unsympathetically described” (Lovell 2000: 83). To see a victim in this light, as a nobody, or to be indifferent to the violence is a mistake. We need to show the images, we need to wake people up to the reality of what this violence means and show that the women in these images are not only victims of violence, they are somebody’s mother, sister or daughter (Girón 2011). Thorough investigation into these forms of violence needs to be...
conducted on each of the cases, “they should investigate no matter how they look. That is their job (Pablo Velasquez quoted from Killer’s Paradise 2006).

Peccerelli (2008) suggests that database development with the purpose of determining a trend, or building graphics and tables to have them collected in a room is not sufficient. These evidence collection protocols should be seen as a tool capable of building information, similar to the exhumations from the armed conflict, where qualitative and quantitative information is gathered that help to develop profiles of victims of the armed conflict (Peccerelli 2008). Testimonies, archaeological work and analysis in the lab help in the comparison of male and female victims of the armed conflict. The characteristics that differentiate and link the victims, such as the type of weapons used, the amount of violence used, if they were brutal patterns of violence, can be determined. These same techniques can be used in contemporary cases, as well as in the mapping of geographical areas where these crimes are occurring (Peccerelli 2008). The first step to do this is to create a data base where kidnappings are prominent, where crimes took place and where the bodies of victims are found (Peccerelli 2008). Peccerelli concludes the following components are the minimum nature of questioning that should be considered during a crime scene investigation.

Biological Profile of the Victim:
Sex
Age
Height
Ethnicity

Socio-economical Profile of the Victim:
Address
Family Members (names, occupations, relation to the victim)
Place Situated in the Family
Ethnicity
Occupation
Extra-curricular activities

Specifics about the victim:
Daily routine
Alterations in her routine
History of physical violence: sexual or physiological, threats or any other forms of violence
Information on couples' relationship specifics if the partner was abusive, physically or verbally
How was her life in school, at work, at home
Suspicious people in her routine, such as somebody known to the victim or unknown to the victim
get biological profile too
Relation between victim and suspicious individuals - get to know if they have any criminal records

Another important issue is the medical forensic profile
Biological profile: sex, age, height, ancestral line (heritage)
Details of trauma mainly circummortem and postmortem
Vaginal fluid another possible way to collect evidence (DNA)
Toxicology
Cause of Death
Mode of Death
Time of Death as well as time between time of death and when autopsy was conducted

The information gathered from these questions would then go into the database as a tool for uncovering more information (2008). Accurate answers to the preceding form would help to identify the trend of areas with heightened danger to, as well as establish the relation between these areas and the crimes (Peccerelli 2008). Peccerelli's statements are parallel to Social Geographer Rachel Pain's (1997: 231-244) discussion on fear and crime mapping. Pain (1997: 232-233) suggests that, as in Guatemala, reliable data is imperative for mapping violent crime areas, but because violent crimes toward women are "seriously underreported" an accurate "mappable" depiction of these areas would be difficult. However, the mapping of these areas can be a practical step in the area's protection. For example, greater police presence and increasing the security of its citizens by providing more street lighting, better access to (public) transportation (Peccerelli 2008). As seen in the past during the armed conflict, places like garbage dumps were used to dump bodies of political victims. Today, these same locations are used as dump areas for the victims of femicide. Thus, we can hypothesize that past and contemporary crimes of assassination are hidden because of the similar characteristic of isolation (Peccerelli 2008). Once a working data base with qualitative and quantitative information is established, specific crimes can be examined and then societal and state responsibility can be
determined (Peccerelli 2008). When the proper diffusion of information by all the parties involved such as the various NGOs, and the Guatemalan government, important issues can be addressed, for example; the appropriate sentencing of crimes, the end of impunity and the lack of investigation. Once communication is established we can then talk about how to eradicate femicide from Guatemala (Peccerelli 2008).

In conclusion, throughout this chapter I explored how the historical case of Margarita Telón Cún exemplifies the violence that occurred during the armed conflict, and that this violence is replicated in contemporary cases of GBV. In the examination of the development of Forensic Anthropology in Latin America, forensic anthropology and archaeology play an important role in the holistic nature of the exhumation process. Specifically examining the exhumation process conducted by the FAFG, we can see that the process is a collaborative effort by the community and the FAFG as well.

It is important to understand the social processes that link past and present forms of GBV together when analyzing available data. The trend in such violent cases of femicide is on the rise in Guatemala but the statistics gathered by state institutions and NGOs on femicide cases is unreliable. The perpetrators of these crimes get away with murder, and these acts of femicide will continue to escalate because there is no agreement on what constitutes femicide, because there is under-reporting of incidents of domestic violence, because there is a lack of a standardized system for recording data, and because there is a lack of understanding of the Femicide Law itself.

During the FAFG analysis of contemporary cases conducted in the OJ morgue they determined that much of the necessary information that could help solve the cases was missing from the documents. When this information is missing, many times, the victims are identified as
XX, which means that the victim remains nameless. Peccerelli (2008) suggests formal crime scene investigation training for the institutions that are first on scene. This step would ensure the meticulous attention to data collection at the crime scene, as well as how this information can then be used as a tool to further the investigation.

The concluding chapter examines the prevention of femicide and recommendations bringing an end to impunity. I discuss resistance in the form of women’s organizations that struggle to effect change in Guatemala, the (re)education from above and below, so the GBV is seen as unacceptable to both men and women, boys and girls, and that the Femicide Law is understood by those who are a part of the judicial system. Finally, I discuss the standardization of methodology and data collection and a consensus in defining femicide.
CONCLUSION: Prevention and Recommendations
Gender-based violence (GBV) is based on interactions of unequal power between men and women. Over the past several decades in Guatemala thousands of women have been murdered, disappeared and deprived of their dignity. The brutality of the murders and signs of sexual violence and mutilation that the bodies presented are the disturbingly similar as during the armed conflict.

Throughout my research I sought to determine a link between historical and contemporary cases of GBV. I was self reflective, and considered what was asked of me before any of my fieldwork began – “Why do you want to look at gender-based violence?” to which I would add, “…when the majority of men in Guatemala do little about this violence, until it happens close to them.” The informants, who shared with me in painful detail their experiences with contemporary GBV and how it continues to shape their lives, with impunity always one step ahead in their struggle for justice. I explored the prelude to contemporary violence through an examination of 100 years of GBV that dates back to Cabrera’s dictatorship (1898-1920), choosing this time frame in part because it punctuated a period when the violence associated with Cabrera’s authoritarian regime “filtered down to community and family relations” creating an atmosphere of domestic violence and systematic impunity that was seen as commonplace, and was normalized to such a degree that men could assume ownership over women’s bodies (Carey Jr. 2007: 5). I examined the final stages of the armed conflict and examined the post-peace violence since the signing of the Peace Accord in December 1996. In order to situate Guatemala in its vulnerable state of transition, from conflict to peace, I explored what I described as “the trinity” of hidden powers, neoliberalism and (gender-based) violence, their connections with each other and determined that impunity is the common thread binding the trinity together. I then explored the history of forensic anthropology and challenges to reconciliation based on what was
recommended by the Peace Accord and explored some of the road blocks that occur for survivors and the FAFG during the exhumation process. I also described the negligence and lack of standardized data collection by the OJ and the MP on contemporary cases of femicide that in turn enables impunity to continue in Guatemala.

Concluding this text, I examine possible methods that can be used in the prevention of GBV and recommendations that should be considered when approaching the justice system, with the purpose of effecting change and preventing impunity in Guatemala. Some of these methods include resistance, as the act of creating awareness and a safe, non-stigmatized space for (particularly) women and children as well as men, to organize collectively and gain strength and comfort from within, in order to go forward with their own truth-telling and realized justice (Jeffries 2007; Fried 2003; Rapone and Simpson 1996). Education from below, and above, is key to stopping GBV, especially with consideration to the upper echelons of the judicial system and their (lack of) understanding and utilizing the latest Femicide Law when conducting and presiding over investigations related to gender-based violence/femicide (Musalo et al. 2010; GHRC/USA 2009; Godoy-Paiz 2008; Peccerelli 2008). Finally, standardization of methodology and data collection, as well as a consensus in defining femicide is important in establishing an accurate database that will in turn provide hard evidence of the vastness of this devastating phenomenon (GHRC/USA 2009; Musalo et al. 2010; Peccerelli 2008; Godoy-Paiz 2008).

Using the examples of Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (Mutual Support Group) (GAM) and the Coordinadora Nacional de las Viudas de Guatemala (National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows) (CONAVIGUA), Rapone and Simpson (1996: 120) examine the “remarkable character and basis for women’s resistance to oppression and depravation in Guatemala.” They (Rapone and Simpson 1996: 120) describe GAM as an organization consisting of families of the
disappeared and CONAVIGUA, which formed in 1988 after then president Cerezo “failed to address the concerns of widows and orphans as promised” (Tuyuc 1994: 112). They are “an organization of [predominantly] indigenous rural women who lost their husbands in the violence [of the armed conflict] or from diseases caused by work on the south coast fíncas” (Rapone and Simpson 1996: 120; Schirmer 1993: 50). Initially CONAVIGUA was not taken seriously, however; they have gained respect both nationally and internationally and is “currently the largest widows’ organization, working in 11 departments, more than 50 municipalities, and over 150 communities in Guatemala” (CONAVIGUA 2011). Both organizations share a strong sense of collective citizenry that ensure the past is remembered (Switzer 2005: 104). This collective citizenry is described by political anthropologist Jennifer Schirmer (1993: 60) as “political motherhood,” where women believe that “there can be no national security without social justice.” Rapone and Simpson (1996: 117) discuss how, historically, violence as a “structural feature of political culture” was used as a means to remove capacity for joint action from communities and popular organizations to “terrorize constituencies into political passivity.” Women particularly were affected by structural violence as a result of neoliberal development through “low wages, poor health and nutrition, illiteracy, shortened life spans and the death of children from diseases due to poor public sanitation and water supplies” (Rapone and Simpson 1996: 118). Yet despite these forms of oppression it was women “who broke the silence of repression in the mid 1980s” demanding the return of kidnapped husbands and punishment of their killers (Rapone and Simpson 1996: 119). Forming groups such as GAM and CONAVIGUA was “an important step in breaking the paralysis of isolation and politicizing participants when these small work groups began to receive threats” (Rapone and Simpson 1996: 122). But by mid
- 1988, the groups determined that they could only survive and have a strong voice if they united into a national organization (Rapone and Simpson 1996: 123).

Several years later, Susana Fried (2003: 90) reflected on acts of resistance through a United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) assessment of initiatives seeking to end violence against women on a global scale. As a key conclusion to this assessment, Fried (2003: 90) found that “framing violence against women in human rights based terms boosted the movement’s credibility and fostered a common language.” The assessment determined that strong and sustainable implementation was important for advances in legislation and policy and would reduce the gaps in evaluating, measuring and monitoring such legislation, programs and policies (Fried 2003: 90).

Sandra Moran, Guatemala’s Women’s Sector spokeswoman (interview in Jeffries 2007: 40,47) states that the Women’s Sector emerged in 1994 by 31 different women’s organizations, “out of the need to make women’s struggles and presence in the popular movement more visible.” More recently, the Women’s Sector is demanding justice against impunity (See Figure 5.1), “demanding a justice system that is based on democratic ideas, where the law is the same for everybody” (interview in Jeffries 2007: 44). Moran suggests that after the armed conflict the justice system was weak and, “now the justice system works for the wealthy and powerful” (interview in Jeffries 2007: 44). One of the key elements in their justice seeking is to be public and act collectively against fear of violence (Moran interview in Jeffries 2007: 47).
In the struggle for women to regain their voice and fight against the corruption of the state, women have come together as a collective voice, and have shown their resistance to uneven power. This type of resistance is one method of reducing violence against women; another method that will help reduce violence against women is (re)education from below and above.

Education from below includes redefining masculine/feminine/male/female roles – beginning with young boys and girls by instituting a system that sees the significance of either role taking mutual positions in the makeup of a strong, healthy community, and understanding that violence between and among each other is unacceptable. Crooks et al. (2007: 217) ask, “who is responsible for addressing the issue of violence against women and children?” Their response focuses on a holistic means of discussion, stating that “in an ideal world every man, woman and child would be part of the solution” (Crooks et al. 2007: 217). However, they do suggest mobilizing non-violent men and boys to make a personal commitment to stop violence against
women. One of the problems to making this commitment is that there is not a clear, linear path to violence prevention (Crooks et al. 2007: 222). A start to the prevention of GBV is to redefine masculinity.

An example of a program for the Prevention of Gender Violence that has men re-examining what it means to be masculine is occurring in El Salvador with the Campaign 'Entre Vos y Yo, Una Vida Diferente' (Between You and Me, A Different Life) (Bird et al. 2007: 112). Men who participate in this program reflect on the construction of masculine identity through critical thought and work on leadership development through the Masculinities Programme (Bird et al. 2007: 114-115). The Masculinities Programme attempts to “prevent and modify risk factors that influence GBV and to change cultural ideals that tolerate or legitimate violence” (Bird et al. 2007: 115). As part of the Programme’s activities, some men participate in ‘masculinities workshops’ which strategize to “create an environment of trust and confidentiality, reconnecting emotion with the physical body, and group reflection on the personal and social construction of masculinity” (Bird et al. 2007: 115).

Redefining what it is to be masculine is an important and significant step, and is a shift towards greater accountability. One approach that can be utilized to be accountable for, and to educate our sons on what it is to be men and be masculine, is to speak up, and speak out publicly against GBV. Tony Porter, an educator and faculty member of the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services Academy of Addiction Studies, recently presented a discussion for Technology, Entertainment, Design: Ideas Worth Spreading (TED)11 (Women on International Human Rights Day (Porter 2010). He spoke about growing up in a community in New York between Harlem and the Bronx, and about the collective socialization of men to what

11 TED is a nonprofit organisation that began in 1984, devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. They “believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives, and ultimately the world.” This sight is dedicated to sharing freely, “knowledge and inspiration from the world’s most inspired thinkers” (www.ted.com).
he termed “the Man Box” (Porter 2010). In the box were social definitions of what it was to be a man, including:

‘that men had to be tough, had to be strong, had to be courageous, dominating -- no pain, no emotions, with the exception of anger -- and definitely no fear -- that men are in charge, which means women are not; that men lead, and you should just follow and do what we say; that men are superior, women are inferior; that men are strong, women are weak; that women are of less value - - property of men -- and objects, particularly sexual objects’.

Porter (2010) debunks the hegemonic “Man Box,” and explores how we as parents can make a difference in this collective socializing of our children by through reflection on how and what we teach our sons and daughters; that it is okay for our sons to have emotions beyond anger, and it is okay for our sons to cry. Young boys and men are caught up in what society dictates to be masculine, that when Porter (2010) gives the example of asking a twelve year old boy football player “How would you feel if, in front of all the players, your coach told you, you were playing like a girl?” Rather than responding that he would be sad, mad or angry, the boy responded “It would destroy me” (Porter 2010). Porter’s (2010) reply to this was to question, “If it would destroy him to be called a girl, what are we then teaching him about girls?” We need to teach our children that there is equality in gender and value to being boys, girls, men or women.

Just as the basic understanding of gender equality and value is imperative, so is the understanding of the law, by the victims of GBV as well as the police, investigators, lawyers and judges overseeing cases. On April 9, 2008 the Guatemalan Congress approved the Ley Contra el Femicidio y Otras Formas de Violencia Contra La Mujer (Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women or Femicide Law) (Musalo et al. 2010: 165; GHRC/USA 2009: 9; Godoy-Paiz 2008: 27). The approval of the Law is good news for activists, and female victims of GBV, to finally have legal recognition of femicide (GHRC/USA 2009). However, more than two years later, the law is still in its infancy and it is unclear how and when to apply the Femicide Law rather than the Penal Code as there is confusion between femicide and murder.
According to the GHRC/USA (2009: 11), the Femicide Law has not made a dent in the culture of violence, with continued gender bias and a sense of “blaming the victim” that persists during investigations into cases of women’s death (GHRC/USA 2009: 11). A main obstacle in the pursuit of justice for individuals affected by femicide include a lack of consensus of the term itself (Musalo et al. 2010: 172). As a result, efforts to collect reliable data that can be used in femicide cases to prosecute the perpetrators and to evaluate the extent of the phenomenon are hindered (Musalo et al. 2010: 172-173). Several factors contribute to this unreliable data including “a high rate of under-reporting, deficient methodologies for the collection and recording of information, and a lack of a standardized or centralized system for recording data” (Musalo et al. 2010: 174; Peccerelli 2008).

In an interview with the FAFG’s Fredy Peccerelli (2008), Peccerelli also describes these inconsistencies:

If we analyze this from the social sciences we can see that the intents of investigation have been cut short by the inconsistencies and inadequacies in the data. So, to start focusing on solutions we need to standardize the process of data collection followed by the systematization of the hypotheses’ questions or objectives of such investigations. But before we can start something we need to have the institutions dealing with [the data], such as the OJ and MP to come together to standardize the data and collect and merge it in one file.

The key then, to gaining some justice in the fight against impunity and GBV, is for institutions such as the OJ and MP to agree on the definition of femicide. Once this consensus is achieved, a standard method of data collection and reporting can be implemented. A paradigm shift is necessary in how genders are viewed and interact with each other. This shift can happen through educating from a young age, and at all levels of a society and community.

I close my thesis with thoughts from Tony Porter (2010) with which I agree. In his discussion on collective socialization (or Man Box) he states that “it is okay to not be
dominating, that it is okay to have feelings and emotions, and to promote equality” and finally, “my liberation as a man is tied to your liberation as a woman.”
Appendix I: Statement of Consent and Understanding

Statement of Consent

Name of Interviewee: _____________________________________________________________

Place of Interview: ___________________________ Date: ____________________________

I agree to participate in research conducted by Cristian Marcelo Silva Zuñiga for the purpose of his masters research project at the University of Northern British Columbia (Canada) on gender-based violence.

I understand that my participation in his research is voluntary, that complete confidentiality is ensured and my identity will be protected if requested.

I understand that the information I provide in my interview will not be shared with any other person other than Cristian’s supervisor Dr. Catherine Nolin, unless I provide further consent. I understand that the information that resulted from the interviews will be kept in a secure location for five years, at this time audio cassettes and transcripts will remain on file while identifying information will be destroyed.

I understand that I can choose anonymity in the presentation and publication of results from our conversations.

Yes, I want my name used in the forthcoming presentations and publications [ ]
No, I do not want my name used in the forthcoming presentations and publications [ ]

I can withdraw my participation at any time for the duration of this research project and have any information associated with my participation removed from the project.

I agree to have this interview tape recorded: YES [ ] NO [ ]
If yes, I agree to allow direct quotes to be used from our recorded conversations: YES [ ] NO [ ]

If I have any further concerns with the project or my participation, I may contact the researcher at:

Cristian Marcelo Silva Zuñiga, Masters Candidate – Interdisciplinary Studies
University of Northern British Columbia
3333 University Way, Prince George, B.C., Canada, V2N-4Z9
Phone: 011-250-960-5875 Email: silvac@unbc.ca
Supervisor – Dr. Catherine Nolin
University of Northern British Columbia
3333 University Way, Prince George, B.C., Canada, V2N-4Z9
Phone: 011-250-960-5875 Email: nolin@unbc.ca

Participant’s Signature _________________________ Date: _________________________

Interviewer’s Signature _________________________ Date: _________________________
Statement of Understanding

Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in a research study? YES [ ] No [ ]

Have you received and read a copy of the attached research information sheet? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time? You do not have to provide a reason YES [ ] NO [ ]

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Do you understand that you will have access to the information that you provide? YES [ ] NO [ ]

This study was explained to me by: ________________________________

I agree to take part in this study: ________________________________

Participant’s Signature ________________________________ Date: __________________

Printed name of participant ________________________________

Interviewer’s Signature ________________________________ Date: __________________

Printed name of interviewer ________________________________
Appendix II: Interview Questions

1. General questions:

1) Name
2) Sex
3) Age
4) Address
5) How long did you live there?
6) How are you situated in your family?
7) How are you related to the victim?
8) Occupation
9) What is your ethnic background and language?
10) What is your religion or belief?
11) Do you participate in social groups?
12) What was your role in this social group?
13) Did/ do you participate in any activities in the community?

2. In depth questions:

1) Can you talk about an average day previous to the assault or disappearance?
2) Can you describe what happened to you or your family member?
3) Can you talk about where the assault or disappearance took place?
4) Can you discuss where she was found and in what state she was in when she was found?
5) How soon after the assault or disappearance were the police informed?
6) Are you satisfied with the actions of the police, and why?
7) Can you discuss types of support (for example; legal or emotional or other) that are available to you?
8) Can you explain why you believe this type of violence persists?
9) Can you discuss what motivates you to come forward at this time?
10) Can you discuss what you would like to see happen in regard to the judicial system?
11) Is there something that you would like to discuss that I have not mentioned?
Thank you for submitting the above-noted research proposal and requested clarification to the Research Ethics Board. Your proposal has been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the Research Ethics Board.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Greg Halseth
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Blau, Soren, and Mark Skinner

Bradshaw, Matt, and Elaine Stratford
Burns, Karen Ramey

CALDH Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (Centre for Human Rights Legal Action)

Carey Jr. David

CEH, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (Commission for Historical Clarification)

Cereser, Leonardo

Cicerchia, Ricardo

CIDH Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights)

Clifford, James

Clifford, James

Constantino, Roselyn
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2011  Viva la Lucha por la Paz, por la Dignidad y Unidad de la Mujer. Electronic

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