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Paradoxes of Grassroots Peacemaking:

Warrior Masculinity, Violence and Intergenerational Dialogues in

Postwar El Salvador

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by

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Dedication

To my mother, Rosa, for all that you did to raise my brother and me as a single parent in the midst of life challenges in times of war and peace. I would not have made it this far without your determination, support, and critical view of the world.

To my US parents, Anne and John whose everyday commitment to fight for a better world has been an inspiration.

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Abstract

Paradoxes of Grassroots Peacemaking:

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Postwar El Salvador

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This dissertation analyzes how the Salvadoran state, civil war veterans, and gang members share a common understanding of peace that enables them to occupy the paradoxical position of being both purveyors of violence and "peacemakers." I conducted this work in a violent, distrustful and hyper-masculine context with the help of civil war veterans who were mentoring relatives in youth gangs to support their efforts to make peace with other gangs and the government. Throughout my 2011 - 2015 ethnographic research in San Salvador, I found that many women, relatives of civil war veterans and gang member interlocutors, characterized the 1992 Peace Accords as *una paz masculinista* (a masculinist peace). While la *paz maculinista* denotes the absence of violence between men in conflict, for women living with social and gender violence and

struggling with poverty reinforced by neoliberal economic policies, life was anything but peaceful. I build on Johan Galtung's concept of "negative" and "positive" peace by using an intersectional theory perspective. I argue that the postwar experience is shaped by a negative notion of peace that is highly gendered. I further complicate the state's notion of postwar peacemaking through an analysis of the rise of gang and femicidal violence, and the state's punitive responses to both as a measure to attain peace. I discovered that gangs use their own peacemaking efforts to question the state's racialized violence and human rights violations against its members. However, neither top-down (state-led) nor bottom-up (gang-led) peacemaking efforts have seriously grappled with violence against women or with the harsh realities of living under neoliberalism. My dissertation contends that to build a lasting peace, peacemaking in El Salvador must address not just ending war, but transforming economic inequality, class-based political exclusion, and racialized and gendered violence.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Everyday Life in War and Peace

As I sit to write this introduction, I cannot help but think about the many ways in which my life history has shaped my academic intellectual trajectory and the ethnographic research you are about to read. In my native El Salvador, armed confrontation between groups largely composed of men has been defined as the main problem and obstacle to peace. Because of my life history, I have often wondered why confronting gendered violence, which I understand as violence against women and some men based on a hetero-patriarchal1 notion of domination, never became part of the strategy espoused by the state or the social movement for attaining a lasting peace. Most fundamentally, I have wondered how a divided nation comes together and moves forward to build a peaceful future.

The Salvadoran armed forces and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front guerrilla army (FMLN) fought a civil war from 1980 to 1992, leaving over 75,000 people dead, 500,000 internally displaced, over one million in exile, and many more who were tortured and disappeared (Thompson 1997: 456; United Nations 1992: i). The army, and in particular the Atlacatl Battalion, was notorious for committing atrocities throughout the conflict, including the 1989 assassination of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and

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1 I refer to *hetero-patriarchy* as the coming together of patriarchal and heterosexual social systems in which women and alternative practices of masculinity and sexual orientation are differently subordinated.

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her daughter, and the 1981 El Mozote massacre, in which over 1,000 peasants were killed. The war divided El Salvador, a densely populated country of 5.5 million people and 21,000 square kilometers (about the size of Massachusetts), into two camps: those who supported the state and its armed forces and those who supported the guerrilla movement. The war also created a division which the Peace Accords have not been able to heal: between those who were perpetrators of war violence, and those who were victims-survivors of that violence.

During this civil war, I grew up in the working-class municipality of Soyapango in the capital city of San Salvador. Many people who lived in Soyapango were factory workers, vendors who worked in the informal sector, and state employees. Some had relatives in the army, while others were FMLN collaborators and/or sympathizers who had relatives in the guerrilla army. This social network and the context of war further normalized silence, distrust, and secrecy as tactics of survival and coexistence in times of war. When people wanted to discuss a sensitive topic, they would lower their voices. Many Salvadorans associated the act of asking direct questions with the distrusted figures of the police and the military. Members of the state security apparatus often asked questions when seeking out guerrillas and collaborators.

Despite these internal divisions and socio-political dynamics, the municipality of Soyapango was considered a stronghold of the FMLN guerrilla army in the 1980's. State security forces set up continuous surveillance on the main roads to enter and exit the area. I remember the military checkpoint that my mother had to cross on a daily basis to go to work, to buy food at the ex-Soyapango market or to take my brother and me to the public

Parque Infantil (Children's Park). At an early age, I became aware of the complexities of living in a working-class, politically divided community, and the ways in which civil war violence caused a deep hatred and distrust that permeated Salvadoran society. Through my family experience, I also became aware of how the war violence interlocked with domestic violence.

In the mid-1980s, my Nicaraguan-born mother was a student at the Universidad de El Salvador (University of El Salvador)—considered a stronghold of the FMLN guerrillas. She was a wife and mother at the time, who taught catechism at home and attended the Pepeto Church, which was part of the Christian base communities. Given these affiliations and her Nicaraguan nationality, she could have been disappeared— anyone from Nicaragua living in El Salvador during the civil war was considered a Sandinista guerrilla, a war target. As a child, I worried about her safety outside the house, but also within the supposedly safe space of the home.

One of the episodes of domestic violence that marked me the most took place when I was eleven years old, days after the signing of the Peace Accords on January 16, 1992. One night my father beat my mother to near-unconsciousness. I was locked in the backyard of the house, unable to physically intervene as I had done in the past. I climbed to the roof of the house and shouted for help. No one replied. I do not remember how my mother, brother, and I got to the front of our home, but I remember pleading my father to stop beating my mother, to no avail. A group of people stopped to watch. After seconds or minutes, which felt like an eternity, someone reacted, pulling my father away. One neighbor volunteered to take my mother to the hospital. Worried about my brother and

me, my mother asked to be taken to a private clinic to quickly receive care. At the clinic, my mother requested written documentation of her injuries, but the doctor refused. The doctors' reaction is an example of how patriarchal gender norms concealed practices of gender based violence that took place during and after the civil war.

My experience of the transition from war to peace as a teenager (1991-1993) and, as a young adult, during the postwar period (1994-2001) further raised my awareness of the gendered practices of violence that took place during the civil war. These practices of violence were pervasive, occurring both in the domestic sphere and in economic life. By practices of gendered violence, I refer to both physical and non-physical forms of coercion that seek the subordination of women and some men. I met many sons and daughters of guerrilla fighters, collaborators and sympathizers at the Universidad de El Salvador where I studied law as an undergraduate. Some leftist sympathizers told me about their own experiences witnessing human rights violations committed by the armed forces in their communities, including killings and rapes. Some of the children of guerrilla fighters told me about the human rights violations that the military had committed against their parents, including torture, sexual abuse, and disappearances. During my college years, I also met some of the people who would become the key participants of this ethnographic research, including Diego, an ex-FMLN guerrilla, who told me about being sexually abused as a form of torture by army members during the war.[2] What troubled and puzzled me, although back then I could not articulate it, was the extent to which practices of gendered violence against women and some men had taken

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[2] I use pseudonyms for interlocutors who requested anonymity as a way to protect their identities.

place during the conflict. These practices remained a taboo subject during the negotiations and implementation of the Peace Accords.

The United Nations–backed Salvadoran Truth Commission documented torture, disappearances, assassinations, and displacement, but did not systematically document gendered violence. The experiences of victims-survivors of gendered violence further raised my awareness that while assassinations, torture, disappearances and other forms of military violence captured the attention of the peace process, the nation and even the world, much less attention was given to gendered violence that took place as part of war violence. Still less attention was given to gendered violence in the home. Practices of gendered violence, such as domestic violence, were not considered part of the civil war, nor has grappling with gendered violence been considered necessary to attain peace for all women and men. In the postwar setting, I wondered to what extent the silencing and invisibilization of gendered violence that took place during the war and peace process was due to the refusal of the state, the FMLN and Salvadoran society to grapple with widespread gendered violence as a key source of social suffering.

Seeking to understand gendered violence, I started volunteering in the family law program at *Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho* (Foundation of the Study for the Application of the Law), a respected research and social justice organization that provided affordable legal services in San Salvador. One morning I decided to go to the office early. I took the public bus at rush hour and got off at my usual bus stop. A few blocks down the road, I noticed a man dressed in a long-sleeved striped shirt and formal pants, who got off the bus at the same time and appeared to be following

me. Sensing danger, I walked faster, but kept telling myself that he might be going to work in the same office complex. However, as I rang the office doorbell, he sexually attacked me. I fought him, and began to scream for help. My assailant noticed a private security guard had come out, and he took off running. Angered, I ran after him, trying to hit him with my backpack, screaming as loud as I could: "rapist, rapist, rapist!" I asked another guard stationed at the bank next door to stop him, but he stood still, watching. I went back to the office, where staff members had come to the door. With my body trembling, I told them what had happened. We decided to not file a police report, I only had a description of my assailant's clothing. When I told other people about the rape attempt, many responded that filing a police report, *no servía para nada* (did not help at all), as *those* cases do not go beyond the police's desk. This experience prompted me to seek a deeper understanding of how patriarchal gender relations structured Salvadoran society, naturalizing men's power over women, while devaluing women's bodies as objects to grab and use. Patriarchal power relations had made my home, my working-class living conditions, and my sexualized gendered body vulnerable to gendered violence not only in times of war, but also in times of peace.

During this same period, in trying to understand how one moves forward from a history of violence, I embarked on a process of reconciliation with my father years after my mother had divorced him. My father is a very light-skinned man, a peasant who migrated from the countryside to the city in the early 1970s and became a factory worker. I engaged my father, who was now remarried, in several painful and difficult conversations about our family history of domestic violence. After years of exploring a

process of personal reconciliation with my father, two seemingly separate, but interrelated, events took place. My father began taking my brother, my step-brothers and sister, and me out. On one of these occasions, we were eating at a *comedor* (small family-owned restaurant) when a waitress came by to pick up the food order. Looking at my step-brother and sister, the waitress told my father, "your children are beautiful!" Pointing at my brother and me, my father replied, "they are also my children." The waitress ignored my father's reply and continued to admire my step-brothers' and sister's blonde hair, white skin, and light-colored eyes. This everyday practice of racialization is not limited to a single instance or to my family. On any day of the week one can pick up a newspaper and look at the advertisements within, or watch the local television programs, and see how the Eurocentric value placed on whiteness and the ideology of mestizaje continue to operate in Salvadoran society and structures prevailing ideas about identity, modernity, and development.

The ideology of mestizaje puts forward the idea that indigenous cultures had naturally disappeared in order to give birth to a unique "hybrid national culture" that incorporates elements of both indigenous and European traditions, resulting in a racially unified society (Hale 2004: 25; Peterson 2007) while erasing blacks. I had internalized this ideology of mestizaje, assuming that racial hierarchies and racism were not integral to mestizaje. However, everyday insidious racialized interactions such as the one I described above propelled me to grapple with how racialization operates in Salvadoran society. Specifically, in studying youth gangs' peacemaking efforts in the postwar setting, I became interested in understanding how not all mestizos are seen as equal, and how this

process of racialization within mestizaje affects the ability of the political elites and the state to unite a politically divided nation in order to attain peace in postwar El Salvador.

I cannot exactly say that *I arrived in the field* in 2013 to further conduct ethnographic research on civil war veterans and gang members' intergenerational practices of peacemaking in postwar El Salvador. This is because the field lives within me, and my research emerges from my life history. What I can say is that the field within me and my life history shaped my specific interest in the highly gendered dominant notion of peacemaking and of peace in postwar El Salvador.

Paradoxes of Grassroots Peacemaking

My research on civil war veterans' postwar practices of grassroots peacemaking began informally in 2004. I had traveled to the city of São Paulo, Brazil, to visit my friend, Diego, an ex-FMLN guerrilla. To my surprise, Diego was in Brazil to attend a course on nonviolent communication along with Roberto, a former captain of the Salvadoran Army's Atlacatl Battalion. Having in the back of my mind the history of war violence and political polarization of society in El Salvador, my initial reaction to witnessing these former enemies attending the training together was one of unease. Drawing on my personal experience of reconciliation to try to come to terms with what I was witnessing, I asked Diego, "How did you become friends with a member of the army?" He responded,

> There are no saints in war. Most guerrillas fought because the army was bloodthirsty from the beginning to the end. How will a son forget that his mother was killed after being raped by a soldier? [But also,] how would the wife of a soldier forgive a guerrilla for killing her husband in front of her? Yet many people

on both sides lacked understanding and political formation in the ideologies they supposedly defended. (Author's notes, Brazil, July 2004)

In 2010, I was living in the United States and had begun my graduate education at University of Texas at Austin. I was still perplexed by my experience in Brazil six years earlier. I returned to my home country of El Salvador as a student to research practices of coexistence among ex-combatants. I wanted to understand why and what had brought these ex-enemy war veterans to engage in practices of coexistence in the postwar setting where their experiences with war violence position them at the intersection of complex social relations. Many victim-survivors view ex-combatants from both sides, though particularly ex-soldiers, as war criminals. Many at the extremes of the political establishment view the coming together of ex-combatants as weakening the ideological purity of their parties. I was trying to understand how a country moves forward to build lasting peace.

I began my research assuming that the ex-civil war veterans would recognize their coexistence practices as what the state calls "reconciliation." However, when I identified these practices as "reconciliation"—the term that would be employed by most transitional justice scholarship (Teitel 2001; Wilson 2001; Shaw et al. 2010; Theidon 2004; Sieder et al. 1998)— war veterans whom I interviewed rejected the term as a way to describe relationships between former enemies. A former guerilla combatant told me:

> At first [after the civil war had ended], guerrilla and army combatants did not talk to one another, assuming the interactions would result in a confrontation. Then, lack of healthcare for veterans pushed us beyond fears, and to work together to call on the state for help (Author's notes, July 2010).

This account caused me to question my own understanding of reconciliation and its meaning in the postwar Salvadoran context. It also led me to a reexamination of the state-led reconciliation efforts, and encouraged me to explore grassroots alternatives for peaceful coexistence in El Salvador.

I found that the negative attitudes toward the word "reconciliation" among civil war veterans with whom I worked in El Salvador were not directed at the concept per se, but rather represent a critique of the state's understanding of the term and its actions towards that end. As the peace process symbolized the state-led reconciliation for the country, I asked José, an ex- FMLN mid-rank-guerrilla, to reflect upon the 1992 Peace Accords. In an online communication referring to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration peace process, he replied,

> Many compas [comrades] created cooperatives [with land they received] …
> Others received the order to enroll in the PNC [National Civilian Police], others
> were given a scholarship to study, and others were simply pushed aside. Then,
> cada quien vea como le hace [everyone for himself or herself] became a slogan.…
> [The reinsertion process has been] something like neoliberalism applied on a
> small scale. A few are doing well. Others, the majority, are as they were before
> the war, and even worse because they now carry the phantoms of war…

Regarding reconciliation, he stated:

> There was gato por liebre [trickery]. The truth commission only showed us a
> showcase truth… amnesty laws were in the middle… There is no such thing as
> borrón y cuenta nueva [to erase the past and create a new future on a blank slate].
> Nobody believes in that. There has not been reconciliation, because we have been
> extremely occupied with reintegration, or better said, we have been extremely
> occupied with surviving, like everyone else.

This critique of the peace process and its reconciliation motivated the group of civil war veterans with whom I worked to create their own practices of coexistence (e.g., friendships, political alliances), which I call "grassroots peacemaking" (See Velásquez

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Estrada 2015). The grassroots peacemaking practices I have observed include supporting

neighbors in economic need and advocating for healthcare benefits for civil war veterans.

These ex-combatants work collectively, but in an ad hoc manner that is not aligned with a

particular institution. They are, instead, dissidents who are often at odds with the

organizations they once represented.

While conducting this research on the civil war veterans' grassroots peacemaking,

I met with Raul Mijango, ex-ERP-FMLN commandant, at a Mister Donut Restaurant in

San Salvador. When I arrived with Mario, an ex-FAL-FMLN guerrilla, who coordinated

the meeting, Mijango was accompanied by Genaro, an ex-army Atlacatl Battalion

Captain.[3] Like other ex-enemy combatants with whom I had been working, Mario, Raul

and Genaro told me that disillusionment with their respective leadership and economic

hardship enabled their coming together. Their critiques had enabled them to work

together on book projects about the civil war, as they had become independent writers

and published authors. At this point, Mijango mentioned he had been talking with

Pandilla 18 gang members to mediate the entrance of private gas service trucks into gang-

controlled barrios. Mijango's comment became critical in my study two years later, as he

emerged as one of the two facilitators of the rival gangs' peacemaking efforts (See Lemus

& Martínez, 2012; Mijango, 2013).

In August of 2011, I returned to El Salvador to share the findings of my recently

completed master's thesis with ex-army and ex-FMLN guerrillas whose postwar practices

of grassroots peacemaking I had studied. In those conversations, the ex-civil war veterans

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[3] ERP, or People's Revolutionary Army. FAL, or Armed Forces of Liberation, was the armed branch of the Communist Party.

engaged in passionate critiques of the political establishment and the state's practices and understandings of reconciliation under the auspices of the 1992 Peace Accords, but they also revealed key differences in the ways that men and women experienced the post-war period. During one focus group discussion, Tere, a woman ex-guerrilla collaborator, interrupted the male civil war veterans to critique their understanding of peace. She stated that for women, the accords had made things worse because, other than ensuring women's participation in electoral politics, the Peace Accords had entirely overlooked the question of violence against women. The male veterans listened for a brief moment, then continued talking as if nothing substantive had been said. Sensing that the conversation was not open to them, Tere and the other women in the room largely kept silent; some went to the kitchen to make coffee and talk among themselves.

Moments later, Beto, who had been sitting quietly in the living room, entered the conversation. He said, los políticos sólo dan pajas (politicians only tell lies). Beto continued, "Like my uncle said, reconciliation would be if they had been friends before the war, hurt each other during the war, and then came [back] together. But they met after the war." Beto stated emphatically, "there has not been any kind of reconciliation in the country." Looking at me defiantly, he said, "Like you said in that folletito [master's thesis], these efforts have to come from below, but I think the state has to push them forward." I observed that, in contrast to when Tere had spoken, a deep silence took over the living room; everyone was paying attention to Beto. After a pause, he looked at me and said, "I am here because my uncle invited me and because the gang is exploring a truce." I was stunned by Beto's declaration about the exploration of a gang truce. I

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wondered whether to believe that the rival youth gangs were actually exploring a gang truce, if it would happen, and why Beto felt free to disclose such sensitive information in the focus group. After the focus group concluded, Diego, the ex-guerrilla, told me that some veterans had been informally mentoring their relatives, youth participating in gangs, to support a gang-led peace effort. Beto, his nephew, was present at these conversations. Some of the veterans at the meeting suggested I include these intergenerational peacemaking practices in my doctoral research.

In retrospect, this moment became pivotal in my work. I recognized the devaluing of women's view of peace when Tere's opinion was ignored. I began to realize how, throughout my study of civil war veterans' grassroots peacemaking, I had been complicit by not questioning how patriarchal gender norms sustained the subordination of women, not only within their peacemaking efforts but in everyday life. I began to question how women were experiencing civil war veterans' grassroots peacemaking and gang members' social violence, and how a gang truce would affect their lives. My dissertation research became bifurcated as it sought to examine intergenerational peacemaking efforts while incorporating the excluded views of female relatives of youth gangs and civil war veterans on those peacemaking practices.

Nine months later, on March 14, 2012, ElFaro.net, a respected online newspaper, reported that the rival Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 gangs had negotiated a national gang truce in exchange for government funds. The online newspaper portrayed them only as "criminal organizations" (Martínez, Martínez, Arauz, & Lemus, 2012, 2014). In response, the gang leadership published a memo rejecting a negotiation with the

government and emphasizing their desire to contribute to the country's peacemaking

efforts (MS X3 & Pandilla 18, 2012). They stated,

> We energetically reject the irresponsible, tendentious, perverse and unprofessional publication that an online newspaper made public, using fictitious sources to assert without foundation that we negotiated with the government.

Then they asserted,

> What it is true is that since last year, we have initiated an internal deep process of reflection and analysis about the grave problems that affect our country, of which we have been a part, as a consequence of the war we have been forced to wage due to the social causes [such as] exclusion, marginalization, repression, and survival.

They emphasized,

> For the good of the country, our families and ourselves, we ask to be allowed to contribute to the peacemaking in El Salvador.

They simultaneously critiqued researchers, saying,

> To those who make a living from doing analysis, we invite you to renew the framework with which you analyze our phenomenon. As long as you continue to analyze us like a criminal phenomenon, your analysis will be erroneous as will your recommendations to solve it. It is necessary for you to understand once and for all that we are a social phenomenon and that the war we have been forced to wage has socioeconomic roots and thus its solution is not only law and repression, but also social and economic measures.

When ElFaro online news media revealed the youth gang efforts towards a national gang

truce, I was relieved. I could publicly discuss what Beto had told me at the focus group

without putting at risk the rapport established with the civil war veterans who had

introduced me to their intergenerational grassroots peacemaking efforts. I hoped I could

explore the collaboration between civil war veterans and the youth gangs without risking

Bet's life or my own. Revealing the exploration of a gang truce among the rival youth

gangs could have been seen as meddling in the internal affairs of the gangs, as one of

their rules is, "if you do not mess with us we do not mess with you." But the intergenerational peacemaking efforts raised an urgent question for me: Why are those who are generally understood as criminal and purveyors of violence representing themselves as peacemakers?

After the signing of the Peace Accords, El Salvador became one of the world's most violent "peacetime" countries due to high rates of homicidal and femicidal violence. The various postwar governments held youth gangs responsible for this violence and pointed to citizen insecurity as the greatest socio-political concern. Since 2003, the right-wing Nationalist Republic Alliance (ARENA) governments of Flores and Saca and the left-wing FMLN governments of Funes and Sánchez Cerén have embraced the patriarchal notion of "protecting" as a peacemaking measure. Through this notion of protecting, they have inscribed the notion of violence against women as violence against the nation into political discourse. They have also implemented punitive measures to end this violence, although without success. In 2012, like the state, youth gangs portrayed their concern for the well-being of the country, their families, and themselves as a chief motivation to engage in a truce among youth gangs and between youth gangs and the government. In contrast to the state's punitive measures, the youth gangs' truce reduced the national homicide rate from 14 to 5 persons per day in the first months of its implementation. The Funes government and the youth gangs celebrated this drop of homicidal violence as peace.

Interestingly, the postwar governments and the youth gangs have embraced the patriarchal gender norm of "protecting" the family and women as a key motivation to

attain peace. This notion of peace was based on the absence of violence among the youth

gangs, as well as the absence of violence between youth gangs and the state security

forces which characterized postwar social conflict. Meanwhile, femicide and other forms

of gendered violence were once again invisibilized and normalized as an effect of the

"larger" conflict rather than being seen as social suffering that affects the daily life of

more than half of the population - women, as well as men who practice non-hetero-

patriarchal masculinities. The processes discussed above began to answer my questions

about the motives and processes whereby civil war veterans and gang members had

engaged in grassroots peacemaking practices. Yet these top-down and bottom-up

peacemaking practices raised questions about the role that patriarchal gender norms

played in the understanding of peace and practices of peacemaking. What notions of

masculinity had emerged from histories of violence? How do these notions enable war

veterans and gang members to work together? How can masculinity be the chief impetus

for peacemaking and violence in El Salvador?

Masculinity, Violence and Peacemaking

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, 2013

Throughout this ethnography, I draw on the Black feminist (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 2009 [1990]; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) theory of "intersectionality," and on Connell's (Connell, 2005 [1995]) concepts of "hegemonic and marginalized masculinity." I am interested in examining how "protecting" produces peacemaking practices that seek to attain a peace in postwar El Salvador that sustains intersecting oppressions that affect all women and some men, while privileging others. I am interested in exploring how the relationship among different masculinities enabled gang members to challenge the state's punitive peacemaking measures, while positioning themselves as an authority within, and as protectors of, the family—fighting against those who embodied hegemonic masculinity, such as male politicians in state power. During this project, I came to understand the complexities of my own identity and positionality as I continued to move up and down across classes and the patriarchal constructed political domain. Gang members' own notions of marginal masculinity and of my United States academic affiliation enabled me to occupy a space in what has been traditionally considered a masculine political domain. At the same time the relationships I established with research participants as a mestiza Salvadoran woman were precarious; I was constantly aware of my vulnerability, as a woman and a researcher. Gang members agreed to participate in my research and opened the doors to their homes because I was introduced to them by their own civil war relatives. They understood and accepted my interest in studying their practices of grassroots peacemaking, but challenging their patriarchal practices could easily have resulted in physical and gender violence against me and my family.

Throughout this work, I conceptually deploy the concept of intersectionality as an analytical tool to understand how interlocking systems of power based on economic inequality, class-based political exclusion, and racialized and gendered violence affect some sectors of society while privileging others. I also use Connell's division of masculinities (2005 [1995]: 77-88), including hegemonic masculinity, which is attained when there is "some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power" (e.g., top-level businessmen, military, government) who "successfully claim authority" instead of operating through coercion. "Subordinated masculinity" is that in which "dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men" takes place through social and material practices. "Complicit masculinity" takes place when males are aware of benefiting from women's subordination, and thus in "marriage, fatherhood, and community life… [engage in] compromises with women rather than naked domination." In the case of marginal masculinities, racialized males benefit from women's subordination, and can even withhold "fame or wealth" but their practice "does not yield social authority." I deploy the term *patriarchy* to denote the social system that grants males power, authority, privileges, and control over the political domain, while at home males are assumed to hold authority over women, children, and non-heteronormative masculinities. I refer to "masculinist society," which I understand as being structured to meet the needs of dominant, heteronormative men, and to produce the subordination of women and non-heteronormative and dissident masculinities.

I also use Johan Galtung's concepts of "negative peace" and "positive peace," to analyze how youth gang members understand peacemaking and are attempting to put it

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into practice. Just as violence can take various forms, such as direct violence and structural violence argues Galtung, so does peace. Galtung defined negative peace as the absence of personal violence, while positive peace, which includes the absence of personal violence, also requires a struggle to redistribute power and resources (Galtung, 1969: 183). Negative peace supposes that the structure of the state and civil society is adequate to creating the conditions for lasting peace; positive peace requires the transformation of the structural violence that brought about conflict (Galtung, 1969). I expand Galtung's concepts to incorporate a gender, race and class perspective.

Most of the debates found in the peace studies literature that center on approaches to creating conditions for peaceful relations between the states, social groups, and individuals are rooted in the concept of negative peace (Doyle, 2011; Gartzke & Hewitt, 2010; McDonald, 2009; Russett, 1993). This concept of negative peace also underlies transitional justice debates about which mechanisms can better transition a society from conflict to peace. Throughout this dissertation, I draw attention to the ways in which peace studies and transitional justice literatures are interrelated, sharing some common assumptions of the negative peace. I show how the concept of negative peace, combined with democratic and capitalist approaches, structures efforts for attaining peace in El Salvador. I demonstrate how feminist literature has called certain aspects of peacemaking and peacebuilding processes into question, disrupting and challenging the normalizing understanding of negative peace as gender neutral to expand the analytical lenses on the concept of peace.

Peacemaking, peace and gender

Peace studies theorists have for many years now engaged in a fierce debate about which approach can best create the conditions for peaceful relations between states, groups, and individuals. Theorists in the democratic camp advocate in favor of democracy, arguing that democratic nation-states tend not to fight other democracies, are less prone to internal conflict, and use less violence against their own people due to their attention to human rights (Doyle, 2011; Russett, 1993). Conversely, some peace studies theorists contend that democratic peace is in fact a capitalist peace (Gartzke & Hewitt, 2010; McDonald, 2009). They argue that capitalist economies respect freedom, bring development, and create common interest at the national level, while international trade transcends political differences that otherwise would have generated wars. They conclude that capitalism is a better system for creating conditions for peaceful relations. This thriving debate about whether democracy or capitalism constitute a better approach to create a context of peace, understood as the absence of violence, underlies the debates about how to transition a society from conflict to peace and how to build peace.

Transitional justice literature argues that, for a society to reconcile and transition to peace, it is necessary to publicly address human rights violations committed during a conflict (See Hayner 2001:24; Teitel 2000; Wilson 2001). Truth commissions and crime war tribunals become the dominant mechanisms to deter future violations and promote respect for human rights. In my research, I have found limited dialogue between peace studies theorists and the feminist literature on peacebuilding and transitional justice. I am arguing that feminist theory's contribution to peacebuilding and transitional justice is

essential because it grapples with the logics that made violence an acceptable element of measures to attain negative peace.

Many feminist peacebuilding and transitional justice scholars have critiqued the assumption held by proponents of negative peace that the absence of war violence would support building a context of lasting peace (See Theidon, 2004; 2009, 2013; 2009; Moran 2010: 266-267; Das 2008, 2009). They have asserted that the silencing of guns obscures how certain practices of war and gendered violence that take place during war are incorporated into everyday life where they continue to operate in the postwar setting (See Das 2008, 2009; Moran 2010: 266-267; Sanford, Stefatos and Salvi 2016; Theidon 2009). Feminist theorists contend that without transforming the logics that made the use of violence acceptable in the first place, violence will continue to emerge in different reiterations, causing further social suffering. By critiquing the assumption that the absence of war violence is peace, they have implicitly pointed to the limits of the negative peace that underlies peacemaking and peacebuilding in postwar societies.

Expanding on this fundamental critique, feminist scholars have challenged a dominant paradigm that essentializes men as an invariable source of violence and women as peacemakers who are perpetually victims of that violence (See Hodgson 2011, 2005; Shaw 2010: 281; Moran 2010: 268). They have urged for expanding the concept of gender-based violence to include men as potential victims (Kamara-Umunna 2011; Scully 2011; Theidon 2009; Visweswaran 1997). A fundamental contradiction of the peacemaking process in postwar El Salvador is that actors who are generally understood to be perpetrators or victims of military or gang violence now inhabited the paradoxical

position of being peacemakers. At the same time, they continued to participate in, perpetuate and collude in practices of gendered violence. I show that an effective approach to peacemaking requires an understanding of the highly gendered logics that made the use of violence acceptable in the first place and that grappling with those logics can lead to peace.

Youth, violence and poverty

In the 1970's, the "Culture of Poverty" theory (Lewis 1965) was at the center of debates about the causes and solutions to problems of poor urban youth in the United States. Contemporary scholarship has revived elements of the culture of poverty analysis (see Anderson 1999; Bourgois 1995; Ward 2013). For instance, Philippe Bourgois (1995) and James Vigil (2007) have each argued that youth's experiences of economic and racial subjugation in their communities leads them to engage in the underground economy and to join gangs, where they create their own notions of cultural capital through the use of violence. Much of this literature seems to have reached a consensus that the practices and values of urban poor youth work against their interests when they attempt to use their street smarts in the formal economy and other spaces where middle class values predominate. These authors have made an effort to examine structural and sociocultural root causes of the phenomenon of youth gangs. At its heart, most of the literature on youth and violence stems from a cultural deficiency model, "the idea that 'social deviance' and poverty of poor [Latino and] Black males are the consequence of their own dysfunctional culture, a culture that is separated, monolithic, self-sustaining, and

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immutable" (Gordon 1997). The cultural deficiency paradigm has found great acceptance in anti- gang policy and development literatures and in the international funding agencies working in Latin America (See USAID 2006; WOLA 2008). The result has been state policies that assume youth are delinquents because, as part of their culture, they must inevitably engage in violence and criminal behavior, especially if they are gang members.

Emerging literature that examines youth gangs and violence in Latin America, particularly in Central America, has critiqued this paradigm for not taking into account the transformation of the economic system from an agro-industrial to a service economy. The postwar era's transition to a service economy has closed job opportunities for youth, thereby reconfiguring the political and economic domains (Gareth, 2009; Hume, 2007, 2008; Levenson, 2013; Wolf, 2017; Zilberg, 2011). This emerging literature examines how the economic reconfiguration characteristic of neoliberalism has created a context in which the rise of youth gangs intersects with the growth of authoritarian measures designed to attain security and peace. It also addresses the growth of a global drug trade which inserts the gangs into an underground transnational economy.

In El Salvador, the 1992 Peace Accords democratized the political establishment and the state apparatus, and introduced neoliberal capitalist policies as part of the process. However, violence continues to be a prevalent reality of day-to-day life in postwar El Salvador (Moodie, 2010; Silber, 2011), and the Salvadoran state holds youth gangs responsible for this violence. In reaction to the widespread violence, many Salvadorans have come to view violence, including gendered violence, as a natural part of "a national (gendered) culture" (Hume 2008, 63). Scholars who are critically investigating youth

violence in El Salvador have called attention to the role of the state in the perpetuation of violence (Cruz, 2011; Cruz & Durán-Martínez, 2016). Other scholars are also examining the role that patriarchal gender norms play in the phenomenon of youth gangs and gendered violence (Bourgois, 2004; Hume, 2008; Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública, 2010). I draw on this emergent scholarly work on youth gangs, violence and gender violence in Central America to examine how gang members inhabit the paradoxical position of being peacemakers and purveyors of violence. As part of that examination I seek to understand how gang youth themselves imagine peace.

My dissertation summons these scholarly insights to analyze how patriarchal gender norms create a negative peace that normalizes gender hierarchies and violence against all women and some men in postwar El Salvador. I am especially interested in examining how patriarchal gender norms are being deployed as a motivation to attain this negative peace, even while many Salvadorans agree that violence is a byproduct of their culture. My dissertation demonstrates the role that the state, civil war veterans and gang members play in putting what I call "the negative notion of peace" forward as a legitimate and viable goal. It further examines how the nation-state formation structured a notion of masculinity, which I term "warrior masculinity," a way of being men, which continues to operate in post-peace accords peacemaking efforts in El Salvador.

Methods: Unspoken Challenges, Political Alliance and Gender Expectations

To conduct my fieldwork, I deployed "activist research" methods (Hale 2001), which call for researchers to establish a political alliance with a historically marginalized

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and organized group of people engaged in struggle (See Gordon 2007, Hale 2001, 2008, Speed 2006, 2008). Activist research calls for research design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings to be carried out in collaboration with research participants. At my prospectus defense, my committee members' methodological question was: "How could I conduct politically engaged research in a context where men were both 'peacemakers' and purveyors of violence?" I answered that most alliances are built upon strategic agreements where differential power dynamics exist, and that youth gangs are often targets of state violence. I hoped that the interest expressed by war veterans, the momentum generated by gang members' peacemaking efforts and my use of activist research methods would begin to address these complexities.

Having grown up in El Salvador, I was familiar with the country's dominant gender norms. Salvadoran society socializes women and men to believe that domestic roles, such as childrearing, housekeeping and serving men are women's tasks, and that men should assume roles of authority while providing for and protecting the family. Having used activist research methods in my masters-level work with veterans, I observed that a few ex-guerrillas practiced selected principles of the leftist "New Man" ideology—or gender equality—that had been part of the FMLN guerrillas' understandings of solidarity.[4] Some encouraged women to hold leadership roles, volunteering to care for children while women took on leadership tasks. Others invited their friends, army veterans, to practice more egalitarian gender relations. However, these advances did not seek to transform patriarchal gender norms. Instead, they were

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[4] As supposed to the FMLN political party position which had made it part of their ideological mission.

practicing what Connell (2005 [1995]: 79) calls "complicit masculinity," as they still benefited from the dividends of a patriarchal society without explicitly advocating for maintaining patriarchal power relations that subordinate all women and some men. These patriarchal gender norms structured the physical-verbal space I occupied. Though I often challenged veterans' patriarchal attitudes— at least during one on one conversations— during my previous fieldwork, I had never confronted them in front of other veterans or publicly. I entered "the field" of my doctoral research thinking about strategies to develop shared objectives and potential political affinities with research participants. While I continued to pursue a project of activist research, I underestimated what would emerge as a key methodological contradiction.

In August 2013, I returned to El Salvador to conduct Ph.D. research on civil war veterans' intergenerational practices of grassroots peacemaking. In particular, I intended to focus on the ways that masculinity affected notions of peace embedded in those peace efforts in postwar El Salvador. I met with Diego, ex-guerrilla, and Roberto, ex-army, at a Mister Donut fast food joint in San Salvador. At their suggestion, we had planned to discuss their informal mentoring of their relatives in youth gangs who were supporting the gang truce. After an hour, Diego's nephew, Beto, and his friend, Manuel, joined the meeting; both had been Mara Salvatrucha gang members for some twenty years. I described to Beto and Manuel the study that I had conducted on the civil war veterans' postwar practices of grassroots peacemaking with the veterans' input. I noted my use of activist research methods, emphasizing its call for dialogue and political alignment. Then I asked, "Would similar research be of use to your peace efforts?" "Yes," they each

replied. When I inquired about next steps for conducting participant observation, Diego joked, "You come with the gringo method, wanting to plan everything." As everyone laughed, armed private security guards, noting Manuel's MS-13 tattoos, surrounded us. To prevent a confrontation, we ended the meeting. I felt a sense of accomplishment that these civil war veterans and gang members had agreed to participate in the study, yet I remained uncertain how I would conduct the research.

Weeks later, Manuel called. "I can help you in whatever you need," he said. I thanked him. Having a long-time gang member offer to support my research was a big deal. Due to confrontations among youth gangs, and the increasing confrontations between youth gangs and the state, gang members tended not to talk to outsiders and to keep a tight lid on who gained access to gang controlled territories. However, the involvement of war veterans, my use of activist research, and gang members' own interest in a study about their peace efforts made Manuel's Mara Salvatrucha clica (group) enthusiastic about the research, which seemed to them to open a path for dialogue and exploration of a potential political alliance. It positioned me as an ally with whom gang members could have honest conversations about their family lives, the state violence they confronted, and their desires for a better future. To impress me, they shared stories about outfoxing the police. But they also communicated their patriarchal gender expectations.

During a conversation that occurred months into my fieldwork, a gang member told me he wanted a romantic relationship with me. Given the patriarchal principles that structure gang members' gender and political relations, the clear implication was that

accepting involvement with him was a prerequisite for continuing my fieldwork. This was a cost I was not willing to pay. I made the difficult decision to stop working in that neighborhood and with that particular clica. My longstanding academic relationship with the veterans and activist research approach gave me access to study youth gangs' peacemaking efforts, but at the same time, the very strength of activist research methodology with its call for horizontal dialogue and political alliance, made my gendered and sexualized body vulnerable to gendered violence.

Unlike the efforts of the ex-guerrillas, youth gangs' opposition to the government's punitive measures is not creating a movement to transform social relations. Instead, in a postwar context where patriarchy structures gender-political coexistence, youth in gangs use their identification with, and practices of, dominant masculinity to gain "respectability" (See Gordon 1997, Connell 2005 [1995]). For them, violence is a valid mechanism to demonstrate strength and the capacity to compete and solve conflicts. In their interactions with me, gang members with whom I worked viewed me not only as a politically engaged researcher but as a middle- class Salvadoran woman affiliated with a United States university. I enjoyed the privileges of my social-economic-political positionality—privileges the gang members did not have. At the same time, for these gang members my gender meant that I was subordinated to them.

My embodiment of activist research revealed the ways that multiple forms of oppression and power relations played out between a mestiza Salvadoran woman researcher and male participants of the research. For these men, there was no contradiction between participating in politically engaged research and imposing

patriarchal gender expectations. Women researchers could be accepted as political allies, but this alliance did not entail horizontal dialogues within a framework of gender equality. Even in the political domain, women were expected to fulfill the same domestic gender norms. This hyper-masculine social context highlighted a shortcoming of activist research. Attentiveness to the ways that multiple inequities (e.g. race, gender, class, sexuality) affect historically marginalized research participants has largely excluded a serious discussion of how these participants can reproduce oppressive power relations and impose them upon racialized women researchers.

Once I returned to the United States, I continued to reflect on the contradictions of my fieldwork experience. On one hand, getting to know long-time gang members, accessing gang controlled territories, and having permission to enter their domestic life would have been impossible without civil war veterans' intervention and gang members' investment in the research itself. At the same time, my access to the field resulted in a gendered dynamic that not only made me vulnerable, it also separated me from the female relatives of civil war veterans and youth gang members. I was conducting fieldwork on intergenerational practices of grassroots peacemaking, at meetings and political events where women were largely absent and/or where they did not have equal say. This was a complex experience, in which I was situated and interpolated as middle-class Salvadoran mestiza women, signaling a position of power and privilege, while at the same time I was constantly reminded of my subordinated position as a single, relatively young woman. Being a researcher affiliated with a United States university gave me status in El Salvador, but it did not erase the way that people differentially

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treated me in comparison to white male researchers who were conducting investigations at the same time I was in El Salvador.

Instead of retreating from this racialized hyper-masculine milieu, I changed my approach to encompass collaborative research that addressed the dilemma in which I found myself. I began working primarily with women relatives of civil war veterans and gang-members; I also accepted a position with a feminist organization working in gang-controlled territories. I positioned myself in a more complex political-gender alliance. In addition to seeking to understand the ways that gang members used their masculinity to engage in both violence and peacemaking efforts, I also sought to work with the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and girlfriends of civil war veterans and gang members who were engaged in grassroots peacemaking. These women, who live at the base of racialized, class, gender and sexual structures of power, were also affected by their relatives' experiences with war violence, gang violence and state violence. These experiences of militarized violence also affected the domestic sphere. This exploration led to a further set of methodological and ethical dilemmas. We could discuss the women's' views of youth gangs' grassroots peacemaking efforts and of state violence directed against their relatives in youth gangs. But talking about the forms of gender violence they experienced could have placed them and my family in El Salvador at risk. Feminist scholars have grappled with this dilemma— whether and how women who live in a violent context can safely speak of their experiences of gendered violence —for a very long time. It is a dilemma that I continue to grapple with in my work.

I observed that in El Salvador's post-war period, just as in the civil war, gendered forms of violence, with the exception of feminicide, tend to be invisibilized in the midst of a volatile social conflict. While the rates of violence against women in El Salvador has remained high, most of the state's attention and energy remains focused on the issues of youth gang violence.[5] The leftist Funes government, echoing previous rightwing governments, conducted special police and military operations in the poor barrios and working class neighborhoods, where entire areas were shut down. In 2015, to put pressure on the government to continue to support a gang truce, youth gangs organized a national bus strike and killed seven bus drivers who defied their orders. They also imposed a localized state of siege and curfew in gang controlled territories, where people had to be at home by 4:00pm. To ensure safety, the University of El Salvador (the only public university), private universities, NGOs, and several government agencies, among others, closed their operations at noon, sending students and workers home early. Although the government refused to recognize this confrontation between the government and youth gangs as social conflict, this event reminded me—and, I am sure, many others—of the civil war. Once again, the state's intense focus on gang violence eliminated serious discussion of the forms of ongoing gendered violence taking place within this social conflict and times of peace.

Based on my field experience, I argue that any politically engaged research should incorporate a discussion of gender power relations within the collaborative research process. Teaching activist research from a feminist perspective could entail

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[5] For information on violence against women visit:
http://observatoriodeviolencia.ormusa.org/violenciasexual.php

discussing potential scenarios where students could imagine situations where they have to

grapple with racialized and gendered forms of power relations. These scenarios could

help students to more closely anticipate what it is like to conduct fieldwork in the context

of uneven power relations between researcher and research participants. Though this

preparation would not guarantee an absence of vulnerabilities for brown and black

women, my hope is that it would encourage researchers to envision strategies to grapple

with gender power relations in "the field." At the same time, centering the complexities

of gender relations in times of "peace" and conflict ought to be part of feminist activist

research, what Berry et al have called *fugitive anthropology*:

> A fugitive anthropology is an anthropology that… centers embodied feminist
> analytics while working within the contested space of the academy. A fugitive
> anthropology engages the "demonic grounds" (e.g. McKittrick 2009) or
> alternative geographies of the spiritual and the ineffable. A fugitive anthropology
> is one in which we seek, as feminist activist-scholars, to contribute to radical
> collectives and build liberatory spaces of feminist ethos as sites of marronage (e.g.
> James 2013). Rather than solely grappling within masculinist projects of the
> political (the party, the nation state) that inevitably push women's agency, our
> bodies, and our sexualities to the margins of revolutionary change, fugitive
> anthropology directs attention to undervalued local feminist praxis. A fugitive
> anthropology cannot be tethered to preordained courses or predictable paths; it
> instead moves forward with an understanding that the path to reach spaces
> unknown is necessarily unpredictable (Vimalssery 2016).

Drawing on my life and fieldwork experience, my activist feminist approach

seeks to analyze how negative peace operates within peacemaking efforts in El Salvador,

and how women and men sustain and challenge the very patriarchal principles that appear

to be fundamental to that peace. I conducted fieldwork from September 2013 to August

2015 in the greater metropolitan area of San Salvador in El Salvador. I constantly

traveled from the lower middle class residential area where I lived to gang and non-gang

controlled areas, including poor barrios and working class neighborhoods, middle to upper class gated communities, private establishments and government offices. Most of my field work on gang controlled territories was conducted in Ciudad Delgado and El I.V.U, neighborhoods within San Salvador that are internally divided between areas controlled by Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 Revolución. I conducted fieldwork in municipios that the government of El Salvador had labeled as being of "concern," due to high levels of gang activity.

The mobility I had gave me access to diverse *municipios* (municipalities), enabling me to learn how Salvadorans in many different walks of life internalized and practiced their own understandings of security and peace. I also coordinated a gender violence prevention program, Talk to Me About Respect, sponsored by the *Asociación de Mujeres Salvadoreñas* (Association of Salvadoran Women), a feminist organization. This work expanded my understandings of local feminist practices and contemporary forms of gender violence. It helped me understand the limits of the NGOs' efforts to deal with and analyze the logics that sustain gender violence in times of conflict and peace. I made use of public and private spaces to conduct ethnographic research in a highly violent, volatile and hyper-masculine context, which resembled a permanent state of low intensity war.

My fieldwork methods included participant observation, over 50 semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and monitoring of media. I specifically sought to document veterans' and youth gangs' grassroots peacemaking practices and how their female relatives view those efforts. Participant observation enabled me to document the veterans; and gang members' intergenerational grassroots peacemaking efforts in their localities,

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conversations with their female relatives enabled me to understand the limitations of those efforts from a gendered perspective. I observed ex-combatants' and gang members' relations with one another, their families and the community; I also noted similarities and differences in veterans' and gang members' peacemaking practices. Practicing the methodology of participant observation enabled me to discern how notions of masculinity were deployed in relationship to the different roles that war veterans and gang members play: as members of the army, guerrilla, or gangs; as brothers, fathers, or husbands; and within peacemaking efforts. I interviewed civil war veterans, their female relatives, and youth gang members, local academics, current and former government officials and NGO representatives. I sought to understand and document the views of these differing constituencies on the legacies of the Peace Accords and the government's and gangs' measures to attain peace in the postwar setting. I interviewed gang members engaged in grassroots peacemaking to document what peacemaking meant for them, and to understand their notion of peace. I conducted six focus groups on the subjects of grassroots peacemaking and peace. They helped me to identify and document generally agreed-upon understandings of peace in relation to the issues of youth gangs, poverty, and social and gendered violence.

Dissertation Chapters

In Chapter One, I begin with a discussion of the events in my life history that shaped my academic intellectual trajectory and this ethnographic research, the theoretical framework of the dissertation, and the concepts I am drawing on to build my analysis. I then engage in reflection on activist research methodology in relationship to my gendered

field work experience. Finally, I briefly discuss the methods used to gather data for this work.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the formation of the Salvadoran nation-state from the eighteenth to the twentieth century to show how the initial racial positionality of the Salvadoran Criollo set the basis for the contemporary racialization that takes place within the political project of mestizaje. This racialization within mestizaje continues to structure the disjuncture between the nation and the state in which often "the state is against the nation" (Trouillot 1990). This, in turn, brings about a racialized nation-state that continues to construct itself on the political and civil exclusion of those it labels as others. I focus on the events relevant to Salvadoran society today because these socio-historical processes of mestizaje set the bases for contemporary peacemaking practices rooted in economic inequity and in the political and human rights exclusion of those labeled as "other."

In Chapter Three, I highlight the ways that postwar Salvadoran governments used the patriarchal principle of "protecting" the Salvadoran family, in particular, women, to politicize "citizen security," with the goal of implementing authoritarian measures to attain peace. The political establishment and the state's punitive approaches toward youth gangs seek to further develop a notion of the ideal Salvadoran identity. Against this identity, gang members emerge as the Other who needs to be eliminated in order to attain a healthy and productive El Salvador. This othering is only possible due to the process of racialization that operates within mestizaje. The political and economic elite constitutes itself within the ideology of mestizaje, and ensures its power by excluding from society

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the bodies that are not desired, while putting forward an ideal identity of what it means to be a Salvadoran. I argue that gendered security policies and the ideal image of the Salvadoran identity normalized state violence against those "others," specifically gang members, who were rendered inhuman and dispensable.

In Chapter Four, I explore the notion and practices of peace and peacemaking that emerged with the 1992 Peace Accords. I specifically investigate the logics that led the signatories of the Peace Accords to agree to the constitution of a negative peace, which I understand as the absence of armed conflict, accompanied by neoliberal economic policies, understood and defined as peacemaking mechanisms. I argue that in practice, the 1992 Peace Accords resulted in a negative notion of peace that is highly gendered.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the ways that youth gangs make the patriarchal gender norm of "protecting" a key motivation for engaging in national and localized grassroots practices of peacemaking in El Salvador. I also examine rival youth gangs' use of the 1992 Peace Accords as a model for ending the social conflict. The youth gangs' use of the Peace Accords revealed that like the state, they equate the absence of violence among rival youth gangs and between the youth gangs and the state to peace. I suggest that patriarchal gender norms structured the social conflict between youth gangs and the state, while enabling youth gangs to engage in peacemaking practices to attain peace for the country, their families and themselves. I argue that youth gangs reclaimed the patriarchal gender norm of "protecting" to assert their humanity and social belonging, and to position themselves as legitimate actors in a social conflict. In this process, they reproduce the state's patriarchal capitalist understanding and practices of peacemaking and peace.

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In Chapter Six, I discuss the perspectives of women, who are relatives of civil war veterans and gang members, towards the 1992 Peace Accords and towards the youth gangs' notion of peace and practices of peacemaking. Drawing on my work with women, I argue that peace is not limited to the absence of violence among male groups (e.g. youth gangs and the state security forces). Peace includes the substantial reduction of violence against women, while also grappling with the socio-economic root causes that brought about the conflicts in the first place.

In this dissertation, I demonstrate that the state, gang members, and civil war veterans share a pervasive patriarchal notion of masculinity that enables them to occupy the paradoxical space of being both "peacemakers" and perpetrators of gendered violence. Through their peacemaking practices, youth gangs question the structures of power that enable state violence, social discrimination and economic disenfranchisement. As a result, they have developed a sharp critique of the economic and political elites' notion of the ideal Salvadoran—a productive citizen who follows the rules of neoliberal capitalism. Rather than uncritically joining these "peacemaking efforts," women who are relatives of civil war veterans and gang members have characterized the 1992 Peace Accords as *una paz masculinista* (a masculinist peace). They have advanced a critique of what I call "the negative notion of peace," the idea that peace is limited to ending violence among groups in conflict, arguing that it tends to perpetuate violence against women and some men. Through their critiques, these women have reconstituted the very notion of peace to include gendered justice. I conclude, echoing the voices of women who were my informants, that it is necessary to grapple with the gender, economic and

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political inequities that are the root causes of suffering in order to build a lasting peace in

El Salvador.

Chapter 2:

Gendering and Racializing the Salvadoran Nation-State

As I wrote in Chapter One, my support from the civil war veterans sometimes opened doors with gang members and their immediate families. On one occasion in March 2015, Diego called me to say that he could arrange a meeting with a member of Pandilla 18 Revolución who was a mid-rank leader. Diego commented that his friend, Marta, who had been a guerrilla collaborator during the civil war, was hoping to send her son, Edwin, away from the neighborhood because he wanted to *calmarse* (retire from the gang). Marta had asked Diego to help find her son a job and *aconsejar* (mentor and give advice to) him. On the agreed-upon day, I met with Diego, who was in the company of Edwin and his sister, Angela, at Diego's home. Diego introduced me as a trusted friend and researcher doing a study on the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts. After introductions, Diego, Edwin, Angela, and I went out to have lunch. Over lunch, Diego and his sister talked about their days as urban guerrilla combatants, the rigidity of guerrilla discipline and the ways that they both had struggled through their transition into civilian life.

In turn, I shared with them how my work with civil war veterans had raised my awareness about how polarized the country was, as people either from the army or the guerrillas were suspicious of their coming together. I could imagine how difficult it was for them to be accepted into society and at the same time to have to try to make a life for

themselves in the postwar setting. In the past, I had been questioned by my own peers about conducting field research with civil war veterans, especially people from the army. The armed forces committed most of the human rights violations during the civil war and are considered as war criminals. I believe that after I talked about my work with the veterans and my efforts to understand their complex socio-political positioning in the postwar era, I began establishing rapport with Edwin.

After a long time of just listening and looking at everyone through the corner of his eyes, Edwin shared with us that he had gotten out of jail with palabra (i.e. gang leadership gave him the mid-rank status of sector leader), but that he had asked his gang for permission to retire from gang activity. When Edwin finished speaking, I asked if he would be open to giving me an interview about the gang truce, and he agreed. I wanted to learn about whether the gang truce was still operating, as after the 2014 elections clashes between the security apparatus of the state and youth gangs had dramatically increased.

On the next day, we met at Diego's house. After the habitual greetings, we began the interview. I asked, "Is the gang truce still alive?" Edwin replied, "You fight for it. The government does not support it, but nevertheless that thing [the gang truce] is still taking place. We are hoping that they would reconsider. How long this is going to be maintained nobody knows." I replied to Edwin, "But before this interview I heard you saying that despite the gang truce homicidal violence has continued?" Edwin answered,

> Killings are always taking place. There is always a war in certain way for which the environment is well suited, right? When you want to do something good, they [the state] punish you. It does not support you. There are always people who act out of whim. There are people who actually take out their pain, many things, [through killings]. Many times, there are people who do it on their own behalf and it is not because it is the decision of the *pandilla* [gang]. Many times, there are

things necessary to do. That's why I told you from the beginning that this is a process. It is very illogical to believe that in two years it will end. What progress has it made in two years?

Edwin's comment referred to the fact that homicidal killings had been dramatically

reduced in the two years of the gang truce. Then, he continued to explain,

> Everything is a process… You have a project, I speak to you about your personal case, not taking your life as a reference. You have a project and it is difficult for you, and you can get blocked one, two, three weeks; one month. So, that is how it goes, right?

"So," I asked him, "if the violence has continued, then what is the gang truce?"

Edwin replied,

> The truce is to respect what is not yours. Most times, the wars are due to lack of respect at any level. You mess with my wife, you meddle with my business. You meddle with my people. We respect. Your business is your business, your wife, your people are your people. We respect.

I responded with a question, "the gang truce does not go any further than the gangs?"

Edwin became a bit frustrated with my line of questioning about the gang truce, and

replied,

> The government has seized its portion of truce. Let me see, how do I tell you? How can I say how it is? It [The government] has profited from the truce. It has seen it and it has not supported it, and has seized everything that suits it as a result of its vision. The part that the government is doing is that this thing [violence] gets worse.

I then asked, "how could violence get worse?"

Edwin asserted,

> The way they are acting, right? Prosecutors imprison you for sentences [for crimes] that you have not done. They send your family to jail. The police, you are [hanging out] not doing anything, they mistreat you. They hit you. And, if they find you somewhere, where nobody sees them, they kill you. Then they say, he was stealing… They have declared themselves with the right to kill anyone and that no policeman has been tried, and everything is okay. What their bosses have

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communicated to them [police], when they give those declarations before the public media? Anyone can use his weapon. Nowadays, they [the government] give them [the police] their work weapon to take home. Then, you are a gang member, a policeman lives in your neighborhood, he dislikes you. He kills you. Then, he says they [gang members] wanted to rob him. And since they are the law, and the others are criminals, those [are] stigmatized… That's how the government is making things worse.

I further inquired, "but what do you say about the police officers and prosecutors who have been killed?"

Edwin answered,

How are they [gang members] not going to kill policemen? If they cannot stand it [the violence] anymore? In the neighborhood where I am from, a policeman arrives, and when he sees you, he always hits you. And you have your documents in order. You do not have drugs on you. You do not carry weapons. It is kind of like racism, so to speak. Like those times of whites against blacks. Uyyy, the Negro. Well, now that's the gang member.

I asked, "Why do you make that comparison?"

Edwin answered,

That is to say that it [violence] has reached such an extreme that you know that the police are killing you or hitting you [for being gang members].

During this interview, I was surprised to hear a gang member explicitly characterize the police repressive practices against gang members as "stigmatizing" or "like racism." Throughout my ethnographic fieldwork in El Salvador's capital city of San Salvador, I had observed that politicians, when discussing the issues of "social violence," made use of a metaphor for discussing youth gang violence; they characterized gang members as the "cancer" of society that needed to be eliminated. At the same time, I had heard many other Salvadoran members of civil society portray gang members as the

worthless *lacra* (scourge) of society. Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor* writes that when the metaphor of cancer is used in a political context it is inherently "genocidal."

When the Salvadoran political establishment uses the cancer metaphor in the post-peace accords context, they are designating a group as an evil that needs to be eradicated in order to protect the otherwise healthy society. In other words, youth gangs have become society's main problem, not the racialized economic inequalities and political exclusion that have characterized the nation-state of El Salvador since its inception and which continue today. Within this widely accepted narrative, Edwin's articulation of state violence against youth gangs as "racism" demonstrated his understanding of how government targeting of gang members conceals and normalizes other forms of violence in El Salvador. This chapter attempts to explain how racialized and gendered violence became essential to the project of mestizaje. The analysis lays a foundation for Chapter 3, in which I discuss how state violence against youth has masked structural forms of violence and has come to be seen as an essential peacemaking mechanism.

There is a widely held belief that El Salvador is a mestizo society without racial hierarchies, racialized interrelationships or racialized violence. The media and politicians have described previous social conflicts that killed large numbers of people in El Salvador as the outcome of class and political not racialized struggles. Two of the conflicts that are referred to in this way are the 1932 massacre, known as *la Matanza*, where the state killed over 10,000 largely indigenous Salvadorans, and the Salvadoran civil war that left over 75,000 people dead.

I draw on Brandt G. Peterson's understanding of *la Matanza* as a "moment of loss" (Peterson 2007: 60). But it is also as a moment that marks "the creation of the modern mestizo nation, and an imaginary of national unity that is in turn founded on a collective trauma, foundational violence and originary loss" (Peterson 2007: 60). Peterson draws our attention to how the dominant narrative of the massacre as it was disseminated in the mass media helped to perpetuate the myth of *mestizaje*. The media represented the massacre as a horrible event that nevertheless "made El Salvador a mestizo nation" (Peterson 2007: 60). By eliminating indigenous people, *la Matanza* created a nation unified by a shared "mestizo" identity. At the same time, the media portrayed the "disappearance of indigenous people" as a natural process in which people "ceased to exist or abandoned the kinds of difference (embodied in markers like dress and language) that distinguished them from an idealized and dominant national subject" (Peterson 2007: 60). Peterson directs our analytical gaze to understanding how the image of the "Indio" was transformed "by folding the figure of the savage into an expressly political notion of danger." The idealized image of the Indian, as the bearer of the Americas' culture, was displaced (Peterson 2007: 66). In its place arose the image of the "mestizo," representing the outcome of the mixing of Indians and Criollos to create a more advanced cultural identity. I suggest that this linking of state violence with a national narrative that interpreted the violence as part of an inevitable process of social and cultural development is fundamental to understanding Salvadoran national identity. Further, these foundational violence(s) that have structured and concealed racialized power relations in Salvadoran society continue to enable violence against those

considered as "dangerous others;" that is, those who, like the early 20th century Indio, do not embody what Peterson called the dominant ideal of Salvadoran identity.

Jeffrey Gould (2004, 397) explains *mestizaje* as the mythic national identity of El Salvador, a myth which was achieved through violence and the discursive invisibilization of indigenous and black people. Charles Hale (2004, 22) also argues that the Criollos' political culture drew on this invisibilization to build a national identity and inspire anti-imperialist struggles; he calls this "mestizo nationalism." In her analysis of the Honduran nation state Rocío Tábora (2004, 327) expands Gould and Hale's analysis. Though she agrees that *mestizaje* sought to erase the ethnic heterogeneity of the Central American countries, she also points out that the Honduran nation-state was built upon a specific patriarchal paradigm of masculinity, the "warrior hero," that subordinated and excluded women from the political domain. She contends,

> The patriarchal paradigm has a narrative structure that is expressed in different cultures and times… where the same actors are repeated [:] the winner, the defeated, the avenger, in a narrative frame of conflict and permanent antagonism, in a binary, exclusive model.

Tábora (2004, 358) argues that to create alternatives one has to question the existing political culture "centered on a patriarchal sex-gender system," that is differently reproduced by women and men in relation to their racialized and class position (e.g. mestizos, blacks). To achieve this goal, she suggests reading the history of the development of the Central American nation-states from the margins. I draw on Tábora's text and suggest that her analysis of interlocking power relations based in domination, use of force, and notions of racial, sexual, class and gender hierarchies can be applied to El Salvador.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that the Criollos' founding of the nation-state and political project of mestizaje led to masculinist and racialized notions of peace and peacemaking practices rooted in political exclusion and economic inequity. I do this by analyzing key moments in the development of the Salvadoran nation-state in order to examine how the racial and political positionality of the colonial Criollos set the basis for a contemporary racialized and militarized Salvadoran state that continues to construct itself upon the exclusion of those it labels as "Other" (e.g. criminal, see Chapter 4 and 5). Criollos are the descendants of the Spanish colonizers who were born in the Americas. Although the Criollos were instrumental in creating the project of mestizaje, or racial and cultural mixing, they themselves have tended not to mix with the indigenous or Black people of the Americas. I first examine how racial identity shaped the struggles for independence from Spanish colonial rule, and the role that assumptions about masculinity played in those struggles. Secondly, I study the role of the myths of mestizaje and heroic masculinity in the post-independent conflicts that further developed the nation-state of El Salvador. Finally, I study the rise of the military state in relation to the revolutionary struggles for political inclusion and economic equality and the twelve years of civil war that ended with the signing of the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords. These historical processes were instrumental in creating the dominant ideal of Salvadoran identity within a racialized project of mestizaje. I will also argue that the image of "warrior masculinity" as a key element in the protection of the nation-state became central to racialized Salvadoran mestizo identity as it was produced during these periods.

Legacies of the Founding of the Central American Federation

Every September 15, Salvadoran men and women march through the streets of the country celebrating the Independence Day of 1821 and the successful culmination of the war against Spanish colonial rule. I had observed this event many times growing up in El Salvador. In 2014, as usual, private and public school marching bands played their musical repertory, while cachiporristas danced in the streets. The National Civilian Police and the state armed forces also marched, displaying their military steps. Together, they paraded through the main streets of the city toward the Jorge "El Mágico" Gonzales stadium, where marching bands, cachiporristas, police and military members saluted the president. Right before the presidents' opening remarks, the national folkloric ballet in traditional indigenous clothing performed indigenous dances, as a way to honor the Indigenous people and culture that have largely disappeared.

During the 2015 celebration, the leftist FMLN president Salvador Sánchez Cerén joined previous presidents in calling on the nation to honor this hegemonic enactment of the nation's founding (Casa Presidencial de El Salvador, 2015). Sánchez Cerén, stated,

> Dear Salvadoran people. Dear Salvadoran youth. We meet today to celebrate and reflect on the meaning we must give to this 194th anniversary of our independence. How to learn from the road we have traveled until today as a nation, what we have achieved and what we must do yet.

He remarked on the heroic military achievement of the Criollos, which led to the "political emancipation of Central America." He emphasized the continuity between this foundational struggle and the post-civil war era, stating, "[this act] calls us today to work together to attain new and great achievements for El Salvador." Sánchez Cerén's

concluding remarks exalted the values of "hope, bravery, and … unity," calling upon

Salvadorans to continue the legacy of the Criollo heroes. He stated,

> I ask that we put the best of each one for the welfare of our people, as we have done with our struggle for independence, for the Peace Accords, now against crime, poverty and exclusion and inequality.

Sánchez Céren's discourse reinforces dominant "myths of mestizaje" about the

origins of the Salvadoran nation-state (Gould 2004: 397). In exalting the Criollo

forefathers as anti-colonial mestizo nationalists, the President discursively erased

indigenous and black people's struggles for liberation from Spanish colonization. By

centering the Criollo-led founding of the state as "a great act of emancipation," he framed

the work of contemporary El Salvador, including its struggles against "crime," as a

continuation of that project. Sánchez Céren's discursive understanding of Salvadorans

who are excluded was limited to those women and men who have a potential to embody

an ideal Salvadoran identity. At the same time, the gender dynamics operating in the

Independence Day celebration reveal how assumptions about warrior masculinity

continue to operate in Salvadoran society today. The President glorified military bravery,

a characteristic understood to be fundamental to masculinity, as the behavior that women

and men should embrace to move the country forward.

In this scene, the political project of mestizaje silences the full ethnic diversity of

the country, while rooting national identity in the trope of a heroic warrior society. This

scene offers scholars the opportunity to analyze how the foundation and formation of the

state, along with the building of mestizo national identity and the ideal of warrior

masculinity, shaped the post- colonial struggles of resistance and the contemporary

negative notion of peace in El Salvador.

While the Criollo forefathers' liberation of Central America from Spanish

colonial rule is a matter of national celebration in El Salvador, their motivations for

independence are not often discussed. According to Juliet Hooker (2010, 249), "The Acta

de la independencia of the Central American Federation, enacted in 1821, bluntly

explains that Criollos declared independence in order to preserve their economic,

political, and social dominance." Hooker cites the following passage from the Act,

> Independence from the Spanish government being the general will of the people
> of Guatemala… Mr. Political Chief should declare it in order to prevent the
> consequences which would be fearsome in the event that it was in fact proclaimed
> by the people themselves.

Hooker asserts that Criollos dominance was based on political and racial hierarchies

established during colonial times. I draw on and expand Hooker's argument to highlight

another invisibilized trait of the Criollo's founding of the Central American Federation:

the privileging of the warrior. I use Connell's (2005 [1995]) concept of "hegemonic

masculinity" which he defines as,

> the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy,
> which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the
> subordination of women [and other men].

I expand and qualify this concept by focusing on what I am calling "warrior

masculinity," the capacity to use military force and violence to lead, unite and defend the

nation against external and internal threats. The concept of warrior masculinity enables

me to investigate how the figure of the masculine heroic warrior, embodied by the Criollo

political and military leadership, became an essential characteristic of the Salvadoran nation-state's identity.

In El Salvador, the Criollos' incorporation of racialized and gendered politics as characteristics of the nation-state have to do with two interrelated processes: colonialism and the ideal of equality within European liberalism. Upon the Spanish colonial invasion of the Central American region, Peninsulares (those who were Spanish born) assumed that their successful subjugation of indigenous people was due to a "natural superiority" related to their culture, technology, values, and way of life. They used these logics to explain and justify the exploitation of the colonies, slavery, and genocide. Aníbal Quijano (2000) argued that the notion of race that emerged during the colonial invasion continues to operate in contemporary society because those colonial racial hierarchies continue to structure prevailing ideas of political exclusion and economic exploitation. Quijano calls this "coloniality of power:" the idea of race results in a classification system in which some exist in a 'natural' state of subjugation in relation to others who are 'dominant.' This classification system produced a racial hierarchy in Central America with Peninsular (Spanish born) at the top, followed by: Criollos; mestizos (European- indigenous); indigenous (brown) and Africans (Blacks) at the bottom. This idea of race became a core element structuring political power between social groups.

Many historians have discussed the way that racial hierarchies structured the region's economic and political relations (J. H. Erquicia & Cáceres, 2017; J. H. Erquicia & Herrera, 2017; López Bernal, 2011; Tilley, 2005; White, 2008). In the 1700's, the colonizing Peninsular groups were at the center of political-religious power. European

immigrant groups dominated economic production and trade of raw commodities (e.g. cacao, indigo). Criollos had some economic power but were largely outside the ranks of political and religious power; initially, only a few became officials in the colonial administrative and military apparatus. Spanish colonial rule coerced indigenous people to pay direct tribute (e.g. cacao, textiles) to the crown and local authorities, such as the church. In addition, Spanish colonial rule forced indigenous and black men to work in the haciendas, while indigenous women were required to produce textiles for the crown (J. H. Erquicia & Herrera, 2017). Meanwhile, another segment of the black population became part of the military. At the same time, the Catholic church advocated for indigenous people's rights to education and land, which secured limited ownership and use of communal land. Because of the racialized structuration of the political and economic spheres during the colonial times, the Criollos viewed independence not only as a way to sustain their power, but also to position themselves as the dominant group in the post-independence era.

In Spain, responding to the wave of European liberal revolutions that replaced established monarchies with republics, King Carlos III implemented far-reaching political-economic measures, the "Bourbonic Reforms." These reforms sought to increase the crown's income and political power in the Spanish colonies. They limited the Church to 10% percent of the tribute, imposed direct taxes on indigenous populations, and levied an indirect taxation on alcohol and tobacco. They created a Treasury Consulate and the Crown's Revenue Office to allow producers in the colonies to trade with Europe without local colonial control. The Bourbonic Reforms reorganized the territorial administration

of the kingdom of Guatemala into four central administrative entities, called

Intendancies: Chiapas, San Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. However, discontent

grew among Church and Criollo officials whose political power had been subsumed

under the crown's control. Thus, while the Bourbonic Reforms increased the Spanish

crown's revenues, they weakened Spanish rule by strengthening the opposition of the

most powerful colonial constituencies.

The Bourbonic Reforms occurred at a time when European liberal ideals were

gaining force in the colonies. In 1804, an anti-colonial revolution led by slaves resulted in

the successful formation of the first independent nation-state (Haiti). The Haitian

revolution inspired a series of revolts throughout Latin America. In the kingdom of

Guatemala, Father Jose Matias Delgado led a Criollo revolt against the colonial rule of

the San Salvadoran Intendancy in 1811, and indigenous people led a revolt against the

crown and its forced economic tribute in 1814. As subordinate groups challenged

colonial rule, the Criollos in the Guatemalan kingdom declared their own independence

in 1821 to preemptively stave off a popular revolution similar to what had occurred in

Haiti.

The Criollos, inspired by European liberal ideals, enacted the 1824 Central

American Constitution, in which they "specified that all inhabitants of the republic, white

and nonwhite alike, were nationals. Slavery was also abolished, and slave traders were

barred from citizenship" (Hooker 2010: 49). Citizenship was limited to those who had a

"useful profession;" for instance, the Constitution excluded those who "worked as

domestic servants" (Hooker 2010: 49). The Constitution also institutionalized racialized

and gendered stratification; as Hooker argues, Criollos "did not conceive all their fellow nationals as their fellow citizens." While Indigenous men were considered citizens, they could only run for a seat at the local governments in indigenous communities. Black men were simply excluded. Similarly, Criolla, mestiza, and indigenous women were considered citizens, but the law did not allow them to vote until the early 1930s. Women were excluded from the political sphere and continued to be subordinated in society. Initially the Criollos, like the colonial rulers they had overthrown, relegated women to reproductive labor and the care of the family and the home. They continued to subject indigenous and black women and men to economic, racialized and gendered exploitation and domination while representing their own aspirations as universal in the post-independence era.

Even though the Criollo independence movement appeared to espouse democracy and equality as founding principles of the Central American Federal Republic, it did not transform the racial, economic, political and gender inequities established during colonial rule. The aim of the Criollos' heroic act of independence was to place state power in the hands of their own political and military leadership. Criollos drew on the racialized dominant socio-political configurations of colonial society to position their European ancestry as the trait that made them the rightful heirs to political power in the newly created Central American Federation.

Along with deep-rooted assumptions about the relationships between race and class, Salvadoran understandings of masculinity were built into the founding of the nation and the state. The Criollo independence movement produced the figure of the heroic

warrior; this notion of heroism, an assumed masculine trait, became and continues to be, an integral part of Salvadoran national identity.

Formation of the Salvadoran Nation-State

The Salvadoran Criollos' racial positionality and struggles for political power structured the formation of the Salvadoran-nation state and frequently brought about wars. The Criollos engaged in anti-colonial struggles against the Spanish colonizers, but they also warred with other Central American countries and fought an internal battle to exclude the largely indigenous and numerically smaller black population from obtaining political power (Alvarenga, 2004). Despite their continued subjugation of indigenous and Black people, the Criollos' own interests in the formation of a national identity led to the recognition of the indigenous population as the "first inhabitants of the nation who possessed some of the secrets of the national identity" (Alvarenga 2004, 363). Indigenous people and culture became key symbols in the construction of the national identity—a status that was not extended to Blacks. In the midst of the Central American wars, Salvadoran Criollos began constructing a narrative about how the mixing the races and cultures of European and indigenous people produced a better race. This was partly in response to the way that European-born colonizers viewed Criollos who they believed inhabited a lower status because they were born in the Americas. In their developing narrative, the Criollos planted the seeds for the political project of mestizaje by representing the culture and bravery of both European and indigenous peoples as key traits of national identity. This enabled them to position themselves as equal to or even

better than Europeans, while paradoxically embracing European ideals and notions of modernity and development.

In 1825, Manuel José Arce, a Criollo who had opposed colonial rule, became the first president of the Central American Federal Republic, made up of the nation-states of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica (White 2008: 54). Although the Criollos sought political stability for the new Republic, the legacy of colonialism and their own internal struggles for political and economic power challenged its viability. As they departed, Spanish colonial officials took federal resources with them leaving a political and economic void that increased contraband trade (Lindo-Fuentes, 1990). Guatemalan Criollos, having been at the center of operations of colonial power, filled the void by taking control over federal resources, generating regional conflict and distrust (White 2008: 55). At the same time, Salvadoran indigo producers began trading directly with England, bypassing the traditional Guatemalan Criollo intermediaries. Guatemalan producers, in response, began cultivating indigo, El Salvador's main export product. Under the newly constituted Criollo political elite, revenues fell sharply, while competing political-economic interests developed. Criollos became divided between the liberals who supported the Federal Republic and the conservatives who saw separation from it as a political project that would most benefit the country's economic and political elites.

These opposing political projects and struggles for power brought about the 1826-1842 regional civil war. The war left a high death toll throughout the region: 2,546 dead in El Salvador, followed by 2,291 in Guatemala and 1,2013 in Nicaragua (Lindo-Fuentes

1990: 50). Despite warring with other Central American nation-states, Salvadoran *hacenderos* demanded that workers maintain high levels of production, punishing those who resisted. In response to the Criollos' repressive measures, Anastasio Aquino, indigenous leader and *hacienda* worker, led an indigenous uprising between 1832 and 1833. Many black military men participated in the revolt, which almost succeeded in overthrowing the Criollos (White 2008: 55). In 1838, the generalized political unrest led the Federal Republic to legislate that every state could organize itself as it thought best (López Bernal, 2011). The Criollos officially separated the Salvadoran nation-state from the Central American Republic in 1840.

After the failed experiment of the Central American Republic, Salvadoran Criollos began a process of incorporating indigenous people and culture into the discourse of national identity, while simultaneously celebrating the military bravery exhibited by Criollos in fighting wars against other nation-states. A movement of the intelligentsia emerged in El Salvador, which sought to create a national identity rooted in European and indigenous ancestry and culture (Gould 2004: 398). The intelligentsia's political project of national identity became so important that for a brief moment *nahuatl*, an indigenous language, was taught in the schools, and a group of historians persuaded the government to commission a statue of the indigenous cacique, *Atlacatl* as a representation of Salvadoran nationality (Gould 2004: 399).

While Salvadoran Criollos had begun articulating the political project of mestizaje — the mixing of European and indigenous races and culture — being a man with military background became a key trait of Criollo political leaders. Criollos who sought executive

power extolled their own bravery and military background as traits demonstrating capacity for political leadership. During a 30-year period (1841-1871), over 54 political and military leaders occupied the presidential seat, largely through military coups d'état (See Lopez Bernal 2011: 79; White 2008: 55-61). White notes that "between 1841 and 1890, El Salvador fought with Guatemala five times, with Honduras four times, and with Nicaragua once…" (White 2008: 57). These wars, in addition to exacerbating interstate relations, also escalated racial tensions as Criollos and mestizos fleeing war violence went to the countryside and stole indigenous land for their own subsistence, resulting in the short-lived indigenous uprisings of 1842 and 1854. The army became a key political actor for attaining internal political stability for the benefit of the Criollo (White 2008: 55, 61). While Criollo political leaders continued to base their development of the state in European notions of modernity, they often used the military to end internal uprisings and seize executive power (see López Bernal 2011: 81; White 2008: 55-61).

By the middle of the 19th century agro-business had become El Salvador's leading economic activity. The Criollos' economy was based in land ownership and commodity production for export, particularly coffee. The Criollo led state played a leading role in supporting agriculture and modernizing the nation through the development of civil and criminal codes. Liberal and conservative Criollo governments disagreed with one another about reforming the role of the church and education and membership in the Central American Federal Union, but they shared a common belief in the need for technological development of agriculture. For the Criollos the state power was necessary to provide an adequate workforce for the plantations and to suppress

potential uprisings. For them all of this required strong leadership consistent with the military values of the post-colonial era.

The Criollos' internal struggle for political power did not alter their dominant understanding of modernity and development. When the conservative Francisco Dueñas succeeded the liberal Gerardo Barrios in the presidential seat from 1863 to 1871, Dueñas, a coffee grower himself, supported the coffee industry through credits. By refraining from interstate conflicts Dueñas enabled the national coffee industry to meet demands for coffee coming from Europe and the U.S. Dueñas' government repressed indigenous-peasant uprisings against working conditions and members of the political opposition. During this period, the Criollos' Eurocentric notions of modernity and development, their perpetuation of racial political and economic hierarchies, and military approach to governance with its use of repressive violence became entrenched characteristics of the relations among political leaders and between the state and the nation.

To summarize: in the post-colonial era, the Salvadoran Criollos' anti-colonial struggles, fueled by their desire to position themselves as racially equal or superior to Europeans began to articulate the political project of *mestizaje*. The emerging ideology of mestizaje enabled Criollos to fight colonial power, while sustaining the racial and gendered hierarchies created under colonialism within the newly created nation-state. Now positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy, Criollos recognized the autonomy of indigenous people, but excluded them from access to national political power and, for the most part, from local political power. The large indigenous population had constitutionally recognized rights, but with the exception of a few local governments in

majority indigenous communities, could not exercise political power. Criollos viewed the

indigenous and black populations and poor mestizos as cheap labor for their haciendas.

The Criollos' liberal constitution excluded women from the right to vote, and indigenous

and black women continued to be subjected to economic and gender exploitation and

domination. The Criollo political and military elite developed a racialized Salvadoran

nation- state in which they equated their own economic, political and social wellbeing to

that of the entire nation. They assumed that the strength of the state apparatus rested in a

repressive government led by a strong man whose military training enabled him to fight

interstate wars and suppress intrastate conflicts. The racialized and militarized nation-

state developed by Salvadoran Criollos set the context for the rise of the oligarchy of El

Salvador and the genocidal violence that consolidated the political project of mestizaje.

The Rise of the Military State

>*It has been demonstrated, we are Indians. Of the five liters that we have, a glass of Spanish blood sings with us; the rest is American fiber (...). From the mix of Spain and America resulted a new race, to believe in this [Spanish] race was the error.*
>Miguel Ángel Espino, 1920s, cited in Gould (2004: 399)

Miguel Ángel Espino, considered one of the greatest Salvadoran literary writers,

argued that the mixing of the Spanish and indigenous people from the Americas produced

a better race. For him, the error had been to believe that Spanish "blood" on its own

would create a better nation-state. Gould (2004: 399) has pointed out that Espino's

commentary came at a time when Criollo and a few mestizo members of the intelligentsia

embraced *mestizaje,* with its recognition of indigenous roots, as a desirable characteristic

of the Salvadoran national identity. While Criollos and elite mestizos embraced

indigenous culture as part of the identity of the nation-state, state officials, landowning elite, and the intelligentsia agreed that progress and economic development of the country required dismantling the "'traditional' and 'backward' indigenous world" (Alvarenga 2004: 365).

Mestizaje gained further ground with the development of the commodity agro-industry (Gould 2004, Alvarenga 2004; Tilley 2005: 210). From 1871 to 1931, the period known as the liberal era, the coffee revolution changed the organization of political power and the distribution of land. Capitalist expansion in Europe and the Civil War in the United States created an increased demand for cotton and coffee. For a small class of privileged landholders this was an opportunity to raise their profits through increased production and exportation of valued commodities. To support the landholders' goals, the liberal political elite privatized indigenous communal land and enacted vagrancy laws, while the army ensured their implementation. Most Criollo presidents were themselves coffee growers, with familial connections to other Criollos in the leadership of the army. This concentration of economic, political and military power under the leadership of the Criollo reflected the crystallization of power relations rooted in colonialist racial-gender hierarchies and economic and political inequities.

As Criollos used the state apparatus to safeguard their status quo and interests, they continued to draw on the idea that a "strong man" and army were needed to maintain law and order in the country and to enhance the agro-industry agenda. Marshal Santiago Gonzales (1871 to 1874) ordered that all males between 18 and 50 join the military. By 1880, the military had grown to a force of 20,000 soldiers that reproduced El Salvador's

class inequalities "…in all its structures: top officers earned wages 13 times that of soldiers, and soldiers mostly came from the peasantry" (White 2008: 62). Rafael Zaldívar (1876-1885) implemented far-reaching policies that privatized communally held lands, called *ejidos*. This state-led privatization placed most of the country's land into the hands of a few wealthy families. For Zaldívar communal tenure "was an archaic and inefficient use of land" because "the existence of land under the property of the communities forestalls agricultural development, stands in the way of the flow of wealth and undermines familial relationships and independence of the individual," (UCA, 2015).[6] When indigenous people rose up against the Zaldívar government's policies, the state security forces crushed the resistance, with the backing of the landholding elite (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008: 53), and continued the privatization process.

The privatization of land and forced labor deepened racial-economic inequities, furthering tensions between the state-protected landholding elite and those who attempted to democratize politics and redistribute the land. By 1892, European and United States demands for coffee made that commodity production the dominant economic engine in El Salvador, displacing indigo and food production, with coffee making up 80% of total exports (White 2008: 67). By the 1910's, 2% of Criollos owned 60% of the productive land, harnessing the profits from the global market and exercising direct or indirect control over the key sectors of the coffee economy (Gould and Lauria-Santiago: 2008). When President Manuel Enrique Araujo, despite his Criollo origin and ties to the coffee

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[6] Rafael Zaldívar promulgó varias leyes destinadas a despojar a la población indígena salvadoreña de las tierras comunales y ejidales porque se consideraba que eran "un sistema arcaico e ineficaz en el uso de la tierra". Zaldívar manifestó que "la existencia de tierras bajo la propiedad de las comunidades impide el desarrollo agrícola, estorba la circulación de la riqueza y debilita los lazos familiares y la independencia del individuo".

industry, established the first workers protection laws in 1913, he was assassinated. The oligarchy's growing intolerance of any challenge to the status quo, including by other Criollos, furthered a tacit political-military accord and deepened their dependence on the army. Military leaders could become "president… as long as the interests of the concentrated wealthy elite were protected" (White 2008:76). Ensuing presidents (for instance, the Meléndez-Quiñonez dynasty of 1913-1927) would give lip service to democratization, appearing to promote the political participation of indigenous people and encouraging the development of workers' organizations (Alvarenga 2004, 366, Gould 2008, 34- 35). However, in practice, the government continued to use military force to control and direct the outcome of these emerging political and social movements. According to historians such as Patricia Alvarenga, Jeffrey Gould, Eric Ching and Virginia Tilley, this racialized political exclusion resulted in continuous confrontations among mestizos and indigenous people at the local levels, especially in the Western indigenous populated areas of El Salvador.

At the same time the global industrialization of the 1920's accelerated the proletarization of many sectors of Salvadoran society. The deepening economic crisis in Europe and the United States increased unemployment in El Salvador's predominant agricultural sector, driving many indigenous and poor mestizo peasants to seek factory work. Large numbers of the economically disenfranchised began to demand that the state and the oligarchy provide them with land to cultivate. Mounting economic and racialized political tensions between the state, Criollo oligarchy, indigenous and mestizo communities led to the genesis of a radicalized social movement that opposed the

oligarchy's monopoly on political and economic power and their deepening participation in an international capitalist economy.

Indigenous people and poor mestizos organized and pushed back against the Criollo's monopoly on economic and political power. Their growing militancy reveals the racial hierarchies inherent in the project of mestizaje, hierarchies that built political exclusion and economic inequality into the structure of Salvadoran economy and society. Between 1929 and 1931strongly self-identified indigenous people, in alliance with industrial workers, demonstrated 10 times to demand better wages, reduction of the working day to eight hours, and access to healthcare and education (Gould and Lauria-Santiago: 2008: 88). After the local mestizo elite stole the local elections of Izalco in 1931, indigenous and poor mestizo peasants demonstrated to oppose political corruption and exclusion, and government support for the Criollo-controlled commodity-based agricultural industry. Feliciano Ama, indigenous leader, stated that such political fraud "opens the path for the imposition of capitalism that would be fatal for all towns..." (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008: 87). The state, Criollo oligarchy, and local mestizo elite ignored the peasants' demands and sent the military to crush the protests.

Arturo Araujo won the presidency in a landslide in 1931, promoting "vitalism…the state's role in safeguarding everyone's right to the minimum necessities of life," as well as land reform and social welfare (White 2008: 74). The Criollos ousted Araujo from executive power that same year, claiming that his government had communist tendencies, and chose General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, a non-Criollo general, to become the next president. For the first time a non-Criollo was

allowed to openly assume control of the state apparatus. For the Criollos and elite

mestizos, Hernández Martínez' military status qualified him to enact the role of the

strong patriarchal protector of the state and the nation despite his Mestizo background.

In 1932, indigenous people and factory workers carried out a mass uprising.

General Hernández Martínez, with the support of the oligarchy, responded by

suppressing the rebellion, massacring over 10,000 mostly indigenous people (Gould &

Lauria-Santiago, 2008). This atrocity is widely known as La Matanza (the Massacre).

Hernández Martínez's military government not only targeted indigenous people, it

painted them as racialized second class citizens, incapable of independent action whose

resistance had been coerced by Communists. Hernández Martínez stated, "The

communists fooled the poor and ignorant indigenous to fight for a hopeless cause"

(Gould and Lauria-Santiago: 2008: 303). Hernández Martínez' identification with Criollo

definitions of development and the national project of mestizaje provided him with a

rationale that legitimized state-led repression and genocidal violence. By representing

indigenous people as being easily deceived, he positioned himself as the patriarch who

"punish[ed] the disobedient children," protected the nation from the Communist threat

and rewarded those who obeyed the law (Alvarenga 2004: 376). Hernández Martínez

continued the elite tradition of celebrating indigenous culture, while eliminating

indigenous people and those who threatened the oligarchy and military rule.

With the rise of Hernández Martínez to executive power, a new generation of

non-Criollo and non-elite mestizo military personnel began to play a key role in the

politics of the country. Although many of the new military leadership came from

indigenous or poor mestizo sectors of society, they continued the military philosophy that embraced a discourse of law and order as necessary to the country's modernization. As El Salvador integrated itself into the global capitalist economy, the oligarchic leadership increasingly labeled members of the indigenous and poor mestizo opposition movements as Communist. Hernández-Martínez represented indigenous people as incapable of organizing themselves to struggle against economic inequality and political exclusion, and claimed that they only began to do so because they had been influenced by Communists. Many indigenous people embraced the idea and practices of *mestizaje* as protection from state repression, and abandoned traditional clothing and cultural practices by which they could be recognized, in order to survive. Within the discourse of *mestizaje* indigenous people could be considered part of the nation as long as they rejected the evils of communism and accepted the definitions of the ideal Salvadoran identity, development and practices of governance enforced by the oligarchy and the military.

In summary, this epoch's practical outcomes were three-fold. The Criollos created an integrated system of economic and political power relations that enabled the formation of the Salvadoran oligarchy. This Criollo oligarchy, in turn, developed a tacit alliance with the military to protect their economic-political status quo and interests. However, by the 1930s, non-Criollos had risen up in the leadership of the army, and the Criollos and elite mestizos had to extend to them some of the political and economic privileges they had reserved for themselves. By 1931 the military had displaced the civilian oligarchy and had assumed control of the state apparatus. This integration of the military into state power further strengthened the idealized figure of the protector of the nation-state, a

figure that, I argue, represents "warrior masculinity" as an integral characteristic of Salvadoran national identity. The rise of non-Criollo military officers to state power helped to further the Criollos' post-colonial goal of "silencing race" (Rodríguez-Silva, 2012). The criminalization of poor mestizos' and indigenous people's resistance, characterized by the oligarchy as "communism" reinforced the notion that the ideal of Salvadoran identity was to be a non-communist mestizo who accepted racial and economic hierarchies within mestizaje as natural. This in turn furthered the elite's discourse of the Salvadoran nation-state as a mestizo society with the state serving as the patriarch protector of the nation.

The Military Dictatorship (1932-1981)

I was seating in a *pupusería* (shop selling, *pupusas*, stuffed tortillas) talking about the issue of youth gang violence with some civil war veterans with whom I had been working, when Roberto, the former Army captain, stated, "what we need is a leader who is not afraid to cut the hands of criminals." I understood this as a reference to General Hernández Martínez, who is said to have cut off the hands of thieves. This was not the only time, I heard Martínez mentioned in casual conversations. On a different day, I went to work out at a local gym in San Salvador. The T.V. was discussing a recent debate between the presidential candidates who had argued over whether a state of siege should be implemented in the poor barrios of San Salvador that are controlled by youth gangs. In the gym people spontaneously began to talk about General Martínez and how he waged war on criminals. I thought a lot about this assumption, that is widespread in El Salvador, that violence will solve the problem of youth gangs. When I discussed this with Roberto,

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he explained this generalized popular sentiment as the result of years of "*desconsuelo, desesperanza, miedo y agonía*" (of being disheartened, hopeless, fearful and in agony). He added, "We, Salvadorans, like violence. The image of Maximiliano Martínez is being invoked and it is what happens when the *pueblo* (the nation) cries. That's what hopelessness does."

Hernández Martínez initiated 60 years of infamous military dictatorship in El Salvador, at a time when the world was increasingly polarized in a Cold War between east and west. His government made the fight against the presumed internal threat of Communism into one of the most pressing issues facing the nation. Coming from a humble background, Hernández Martínez understood that his ability to remain in power stemmed from his capacity to repress the "internal security threat" of communism and alleviate poverty without transforming its root causes. The government's fight against "communism" further invisibilized racial and gender hierarchies. At the same time, it normalized Salvadoran governmental practices of racialized hegemonic masculinity, embodied by military men, who attributed their ability to solve issues of economic disenfranchisement and political exclusion to their military status.

During his presidency (1931-1944), Hernández Martínez governed through repression, but also through policies that sought to minimally benefit the poor and excluded (White 2008: 78). Under his administration women were given the right to vote in 1939.7 Martínez mobilized the fear of "internal threats" to implement state

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[7] In 1939 Hernández Martínez amended the 1886 constitution in order to be elected president for a third time for six years instead of four. The Salvadoran state also granted women the right to vote in 1939, although I have not found a direct connection between Hernández Martínez's amendments to the

surveillance and criminalize political dissidence. He required that all residents "carry a state-issued identification, known as a *cédula de vecindad* [neighborhood identification]" at all times, (White 2008, 78). He declared the Communist Party illegal and prohibited all literature considered dissident by the state, among other repressive measures (White 2008, 78). To protect the coffee agro-industry from the 1930s' economic depression, he declared a moratorium on debt for all medium and small producers, and created the Central Reserve Bank and the Mortgage Bank to protect vulnerable landowners from fluctuations in the economy. He also implemented land reforms through which some state-owned land was distributed to landless peasants. Hernández Martínez offered indigenous people protection from mestizos interference in the indigenous local governments (Alvarenga 2004, 377, Gould 2004, 386-387). His presidency initiated a model of governance in which the state ruled through protection and repression but also through economic reforms that minimally benefited non-elite sectors of society (Ching 2013). To this day, Salvadorans remember Martínez as a leader who "dejo el país sin deudas y sin criminals" (he left the country without debts or criminals).

While the Criollos welcomed Hernández Martínez's repressive approach to governance, they distrusted his "populist" measures. Hernández Martínez's populism, combined with his emphasis on state control over the economy mobilized the opposition of the Criollos, elite mestizos, and some sectors of the military who united against his rule. In 1944, a group of students in collaboration with disenchanted members of the

constitution and Salvadoran women's right to vote (most accounts of this period focus on the military dictatorship). I speculate that Hernández Martínez granted women the right to vote in order to mobilize the large population of indigenous women to vote in his favor.

Criollos, the military and other sectors of Salvadoran society ousted Hernández Martínez from power. Afterwards, another wave of military coups and counter coups took over the country. Despite a return to "periodic elections," each post-Hernández Martínez's administration reproduced his repressive and populist governance model that criminalized the non-elite opposition (Ching 2014: 437).

During this period, a group of young military officials emerged; considering themselves progressive, they called for the incorporation of civilians into government in order to quell the peoples' growing hostility towards the army. In 1948, they overthrew the presidency of General Salvador Castañeda Castro. Once in power, however, they resorted, as had their predecessors, to maintaining authority through state repression, creating the infamous civil-military death-squads, the Democratic Nationalist Organization (ORDEN), to control population in the rural areas. In my interviews with signatories to the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords from both sides of the conflict (see Chapter Four), I was told that, in looking back, it appeared that the one thing the civil war antagonists held in common was a belief that the state needed to be democratized, a process that required freeing itself from army control. Drawing on these interviews, I suggest that the Criollo oligarchy were threatened by the rise of socio-political organizations demanding political inclusion and economic justice. They continued their strategic alliance with the reactionary faction of the military in order to protect their economic and political interests.

1960s - 1970s Resistance and 1980 - 1992 Civil War

After the Matanza it took almost 30 years for the popular social movements, including peasants, workers, teachers and students, to regain their vibrancy and once again take over the streets to demand socio-economic justice and democratization of politics. The social movements re-emerged in the 1960's to challenge the military dictatorship, but the project of mestizaje, consolidated through the Matanza, appeared to have foreclosed demands rooted in a recognition of the centrality of indigenous identity. The social movement organized its demands for social- economic-political transformation on economic grounds, and in the process, ended up silencing the indigenous resistance and struggles that had been taking place since colonial times. The framework of the social movement's class-based struggles reproduced the dominant logic by portraying El Salvador as a mestizo nation united around the ideal of warrior masculinity. Within this context, the movements celebrated the heroism of the leaders of the resistance who were killed in the Matanza: Farabundo Marti, a mestizo, and Feliciano Ama, an indigenous leader. At the same time, they accepted the dominant narrative of mestizaje, in which the Matanza signals the end of indigenous culture and perspectives as integral characteristics of Salvadoran identity and politics. In the narrative developed by the social movements, Farabundo Martí came to represent the ideal of resistance, while Feliciano Ama dropped out of the dominant political discourse.

To counteract the growing militancy of these popular movements, paramilitary "social cleansing" groups, such as White Hand (MB), Armed Forces of Anti-communist Liberation (FALANGE), and White Warrior Union (UGB emerged. The paramilitary

groups included members of the state security apparatus, including the police and the

national guard and were financed by some members of the Criollos, the Mestizo elites

and the military (Castro Hernández 2002:110). Just as at the time of *La Matanza* in 1932,

these paramilitary organizations conducted raids and assassinations in the name of

ridding society of the "red plague" (Communism). In response to the increasing

repression, teachers from the Association for Salvadoran Education (ANDES), workers'

unions, and the general population took over the streets to once again publicly demand

better wages, land reform, access to education and healthcare. This mobilization of the

popular resistance revitalized the social movement struggles for economic justice and the

democratization of politics.

In the late 1960s' the government escalated state repression against the social

movements and anyone else suspected of aiding the resistance, Salvadorans migrated in

masses to the United States and to Honduras, where people sought refuge from the

political violence. These countries became a "demographic escape valve" (J. Villalobos,

2017). The migration to the United States would emerge as a critical issue in the post-

civil war era; among the refugees were thousands of youth who created the Mara

Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 gangs in Los Angeles. Many of the youth were later deported

back to El Salvador, bringing their gang affiliations with them. I discuss this phenomenon

in Chapter Three.

Many Salvadorans, who did not have opportunities for upward mobility or

safeguards from state repression joined the social movements, and many others took up

arms. Between 1970 and 1975, a group of university students, including some from the

oligarchy, along with some workers, founded the first guerrilla organizations. The People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and Popular Forces of Liberation Farabundo Martí (FPL) were formed first, followed by the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC) and National Resistance (RN). In 1975, armed self-defense groups began to accompany the social movement during their strikes. In 1979, in this volatile context a reformist faction of the armed forces, Military Youth, carried out a coup d'état, deposing president Carlos Humberto Romero and creating three provisional governments, which implemented socio-economic reforms such as the nationalization of the agro-industry and nationalization of banks. Nevertheless, the military remained in executive power and criminalization of the resistance, under the label of "Communism," continued.

In 1980, the different resistance movements united to form the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front-FMLN). The FMLN incorporated the social movements, the four guerrilla organizations and the Communist party, whose members had until then opposed an armed struggle. Eduardo Sancho, a guerrilla commander, told me in an interview that for him the FMLN was the first organization in the world to wage a war against the entire security apparatus of the state, including the intelligence apparatus and its torturers, as opposed to just the army. A considerable number of women joined and were at the forefront of the social movement and the FMLN where they served as combatants, leaders, and collaborators. The civil war between the FMLN and state security apparatus, including the armed forces, police, and death squads, began in earnest. From 1979 to 1982, El Salvador experienced some of the deadliest years of the armed conflict, with over 30,000 people killed.

Disappearances, assassinations, torture, and forced displacement were part of a hideous index of violence in El Salvador. On March 24, 1980Archbishop Oscar Romero spoke out publicly against the violence:

> I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army, and specifically to the ranks of the National Guard, the police and the military. Brothers, you came from our own people. You are killing your own brother peasants… In the name of God… I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression.

Romero was assassinated by a paramilitary group headed by Roberto d'Aubusson who went on to create the right-wing ARENA party, one of the two predominant political parties of the post-civil war era.

During the civil war assassinations and extrajudicial killings of noncombatants became part of everyday life. In response to this repression, on November 11th, 1989 the FMLN launched its second national offensive, Febe Elizabeth Velásquez Vive (Febe Elizabeth Velásquez Lives) or Hasta el Tope (To the End). During the offensive, the Salvadoran military's Atlacatl Battalion assassinated six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America: José Simeon Cañas. The national and international outcry over this brutal political assassination made it difficult for the U.S. government to continue to justify its military aid to the Salvadoran army. The subsequent reduction in U.S. aid, combined with the end of the Cold War and Salvadorans' fatigue with war violence, created the impetus for peace negotiations. To maintain the morale of their rank-and-file, the leadership of the army and the FMLN both adopted the slogan *Sin vencedores, ni vencidos* (Neither losers nor winners) (Villalobos 1999).

On the literal level *sin vencedores, ni vencidos* signified to the general population that neither side of the conflict had lost the war. This helped to set the framework for the delicate negotiations between former combatants. On the other hand, the language of the slogan, with its use of male gendered versions of "winner" and "loser" helped to perpetuate widely held assumptions about warrior masculinity. While women participated in substantial numbers in the social movements and the FMLN guerilla forces, it was the identity of male warriors as protectors of the nation or fighters against domination that the leadership evoked. Men who fought with the army and the FMLN did not have to feel that their identity as warriors was threatened or diminished by ending the armed conflict through peace agreements; rather it was enhanced by their participation in the war. Although women fought in the civil war and were present at the negotiating table, it was men who led the negotiations that produced the Peace Accords. The dominantly male leadership on both sides of the conflict sought to end the armed confrontation via political reforms. Their understanding of peace as the absence of armed violence produced the negative gendered notion of peace that continues to operate in the postwar era.

The 1992 Peace Accords

The signing of the Peace Accords marked a radical departure from El Salvador's history of economic exploitation and political exclusion supported by state repression. The accords committed the state to the protection of human rights, demilitarization of public security and subjugation of the state and its security apparatus to civilian authority

and national reconciliation. The government demobilized the ranks of the army from 63,175 to 31,000, and the FMLN turned over its weapons and became a political party. To attain national reconciliation, the Peace Accords committed the opposing factions to engage in a United Nations (UN)-backed Salvadoran Truth Commission (STC) and committed the state to privatize government-owned services. Given the history of impunity and socio-political polarization generated by state violence and the armed conflict, the Peace Accords tasked the STC with supporting the reunification of Salvadoran society by building trust in the peace process and respect for human rights. To achieve these goals the STC was given six months to investigate "serious acts of violence that have occurred since 1980 and whose impact on society urgently demands that the public should know the truth." The STC was also asked to provide recommendations about punitive measures (United Nations 1992: 29-31).

Leading up to the publication of the STC's report, the Salvadoran Congress — composed of deputies from political parties predating the Peace Accords — enacted the National Reconciliation Law on January 23, 1992. Article One of the Reconciliation Law granted amnesty to "…all persons who had participated as immediate perpetrators, mediators or accomplices" in political and common crimes during the war. Article 3 stated that "FMLN… who are members of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ in Spanish) and other sub-commissions shall enjoy the grace of amnesty." In contrast, Article 6 excluded from amnesty: "People who according to the Truth Commission have participated in serious acts of violence …regardless of the sector to which they belonged." By the time the STC published its report, titled, *De la locura a*

la esperanza (From Madness to Hope), on March 15, 1993, tensions between the STC and Salvadoran political establishment were running high.

The commission reported that it had received over 22,000 denunciations of human rights violations committed during the course of the civil war. Over 60% were extrajudicial executions, 25% were forced disappearances, and 20% concerned torture. The report also asserted that the armed forces were responsible for 95% of the violations and the FMLN was responsible for 5% (Martínez-Peñate 2007:159). In light of these findings, the commission's broad recommendations were to "punish those responsible" for human rights violations and provide "reparations for the victims and their relatives" (Martínez Peñate 2007: 280). The STC did outstanding work to document common practices of violence and reveal high-profile human rights violations. Their work laid out a starting point for social healing, reparations and justice. Nonetheless, the accountability they sought was limited and short-lived.

From the beginning, the Peace Accords established a hierarchical distinction between "serious and urgent" and "common" acts of violence within which the STC had to work. Primacy was given to finding the truth about "serious and urgent" acts of violence, such as the assassination of Archbishop Romero and of the Jesuit priests at the Central American University, along with their housekeeper and daughter. "Common" human rights violations that affected a majority of Salvadorans, such as torture, disappearances, and rape, became a lower priority. In addition, on March 20, 1993, five days after the STC published its findings, a newly elected Salvadoran Congress, in the name of maintaining peace, passed a farther-reaching amnesty law that made it

impossible to follow the STC recommendations (Ley de Amnistía 1993). This revised amnesty law stripped the STC of its power to achieve any semblance of substantive justice, leaving Salvadoran society with a fragile respect for human rights built on the basis of impunity (Popkin, 2000).

During the peace negotiations, then-President Alfredo Cristiani and his right-wing ARENA party pushed for privatization as a peacebuilding socio-economic measure, arguing that the reconciliation of Salvadoran society required economic and social development (United Nations 1992:82). The Peace Accords stated, "The policy of privatization shall increase society's share of ownership by affording workers access to ownership of privatized companies" (United Nations 1992:82). Although FMLN negotiators did not agree with the government's economic policy, they accepted the argument that economic and social development was necessary to move the country forward.[8] Even though privatization of state services, or structural adjustment, had no direct connection with the project of reunifying society, it became a key mechanism, built into the Peace Accords, to attain national reconciliation.

To ensure a lasting peace, the Peace Accords created the Forum for Economic and Social Consensus (the Forum) and tasked the state with strengthening existing social programs in order to alleviate the Cristiani government's structural adjustment economic policies. The accords assigned two main goals to the Forum: "to achieve a broader number of agreements…for the economic and social development of the country" and to analyze the situations marginal communities in order to develop solutions to problems

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[8] See The El Salvador's Peace Accords, Chapter v: 1. Preamble and 6. Measures to alleviate the social cost of structural adjustment programs

arising from the armed conflict (United Nations 1992: 83-84). The Forum was to be composed of representatives of the government, labor and business sectors, all of whom would have equal say. However, since the accords did not establish mechanisms for accountability, the economic elite and government did not participate in the Forum. The failure of the Forum to be effective left Salvadorans without a say in the implementation of socio-economic policies. Social programs became, by default, the peacebuilding mechanisms meant to ensure that Salvadorans' basic needs were met.

In short, the Peace Accords achieved a political reconciliation in El Salvador while at the same time failing to creating a context for reconciliation for the population that suffered the most (Popkin, 2000, 2004). The combination of limited accountability and broad amnesty laws made it impossible to attain any semblance of substantive justice, even for some high-profile cases. Moreover, the hierarchies established by the Peace Accords relegated the investigation of "common" human rights violations to a lower priority. Socially pressing questions, such as "where are the bodies of the disappeared," were left unanswered, and the rapes of women and men during the war were largely not investigated or documented.

Common acts of violence were normalized as spoils and casualties of war. This normalization and silencing has had dire consequences in the postwar social setting (see Chapter Four and Six). At the same time, the Peace Accords validated privatization as a peacebuilding measure, and in doing so, supported the government's economic policy to benefit a new emerging transnational economic elite. The Peace Accords established a negative notion of peace that is highly gendered, equating it to an absence of violence

between the state armed forces and the FMLN, enabled by a context of legalized

impunity and neoliberal capitalism.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that racial and gender hierarchies structured the foundation

and development of the nation-state. The Criollos declared the independence of the

country in 1821 in order to sustain their racialized political and economic privileges.

Mestizaje helped to shape the identity of the newly founded nation-state; it celebrated the

mixing of indigenous and Spanish populations that created a new race, while erasing

Black people's contributions to the building of the nation. The Criollos' idealized image

of warrior masculinity and the racialized hierarchy they espoused were also integral to

the formation of the nation-state. I have demonstrated that this racialized and masculinist

formation of the nation-state structured the 1992 Peace Accords that democratized

Salvadoran politics, and continues to operate today.

After the founding of the state Criollos extended privileges to non-Criollos who

held leadership positions in the army in order to maintain their racialized economic and

political privileges. Under the dictatorship of the army the ideology of *mestizaje*

continued to operate, obscuring its colonially rooted racial hierarchies. The majority of

the Salvadoran population, largely indigenous and poor mestizos, continued to be seen as

fair game to be exploited for the benefit of the elite. When resistance from different

sectors of society emerged against economic exploitation and political exclusion, the

military criminalized the resistance as "Communist," portraying indigenous people as

incapable of mobilizing on behalf of their own interests. The military state viewed

repression as essential to eliminating the "internal threat" in order to uphold their status quo and that of the Criollos. Meanwhile, the Criollos and the military elite could continue celebrating warrior masculinity as a necessary characteristic of national identity and national leadership.

The mounting resistance of the social and guerrilla movement, and war against the Criollo oligarchy and the military threatened to fundamentally change the balance of power; the Criollo oligarchy needed the military as a shield to protect their threatened social status and political and economic interests. The rise of the social movements in the 1960s and the guerrilla army in the 1970s, which the elites characterized as communist, led the military and the Criollos to continue their strategic alliance. However, when the military dictatorship nationalized the agro-industry, one of the economic backbones of the Criollos, the Criollos sought to take back control of the state. The social and guerrilla movements' struggles to democratize politics and the Criollo oligarchy's desire to push the military out of executive power became key motives for the negotiations of the 1992 Peace Accords (see Chapter Four).

During the Peace Accords, negotiators for the state and the guerrillas left intact the racialized and gendered politics that undergird and continue to structure mestizaje. They mythologized the image of war combatants as heroic warriors on both sides of the conflict -- neither winners nor losers -- who now sought peace and the democratization of politics. But they left unexamined the roles of women who had participated in the struggle, or who had suffered as victims of human rights abuses.

The narrative of a united mestizo nation, promulgated by the Criollo and military elite, virtually concealed El Salvador's racial hierarchies. The problematic of gender equality remained unresolved within the revolutionary movements, as a masculinist understanding of liberation and social change continued to assume that women's equality would be a byproduct of men's liberation. The masculinist image of warrior masculinity continues to structure Salvadoran society today. Masculinist principles—bravery, heroism, caring for the family— structure the terms through which political transformation is sought and notions of peace are imagined.

In the following chapters, we will see how this context works to set the conditions for social and political acceptance of state-led repressive measures against youth gangs. While youth gangs as they exist today first arose 12 years after the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords, the reproduction of the figure of the internal enemy who is criminalized and annihilated if necessary, is a familiar one in Salvadoran history. In the postwar era, the figures of criminal and internal enemies (i.e., gang members) emerge again to consolidate the political power of the elite that the Peace Accords created. Most Salvadorans believe that because the Peace Accords democratized electoral politics, the conflict between the state and the youth gangs must be social and not political. The state labeled young gangs as inherently criminals and denied the status of political actors who are seeking inclusion in Salvadoran society. Instead the political establishment defined youth gangs as an evil which must be eradicated to safeguard the health of the nation. In this crisis, the paradigm of warrior masculinity continues to shape the role of the state as the patriarchal protector of the nation.

Chapter 3:

State's Postwar Peacemaking: In the name of Women and Security

"Only united will this country attain peace." President and former Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front guerrilla commandant, Salvador Sánchez Cerén made this remark at El Salvador del Mundo (the Savior of the World) plaza in San Salvador in March 2015, at the official ceremony of the March for Life, Peace and Justice. The National Council for Citizen Security[9] and Coexistence had organized the march and its ceremony at the plaza, and it was sponsored by both the executive and congressional branches of the state. Sánchez Cerén promised to protect the citizenry, stating, "there will not be a crime that will remain in impunity." He called for the recuperation of society's civic and moral values in order to create a postwar Salvadoran identity that would enable the country to develop. Referring to the 2012 youth gangs-led peacemaking effort, Sánchez Cerén stated that his government was open to dialogue, but not with criminals.

Even though President Sánchez Cerén's speech called for unity and dialogue, he left out other demands to end violence. For instance, a few feminist organizations had assembled in another plaza located a few blocks away on an overpass over Constitution Avenue. They hung banners demanding that Council officials remove a right-wing

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[9] For a brief genealogy of the concept of Citizen Security see:
http://www.cidh.oas.org/countryrep/Seguridad.eng/CitizenSecurity.II.htm

politician who had been caught beating his romantic partner. This demand was not mentioned at the official ceremony.

This vignette brings to light the way that different actors in Salvadoran society are positioned. Through his speech, Sánchez Cerén defined the boundaries of society; although he stated that peace would be attained by unifying all sectors of society, demands for justice by feminist organizations and youth gangs' peacemaking efforts were excluded. Instead, Sánchez Cerén sought to affirm the path to security and peace by being tough on "criminality." The FMLN sought to differentiate itself from the postwar rightwing ARENA governments and achieved some success in implementing social policies. For instance, FMLN governments provided free meals in schools and instituted free health consultations across the nation. At the same time the FMLN continued ARENA's policy of holding youth gangs responsible for hindering the economic development of the country, and they continued to implement repressive measures against the youth gangs.

Sánchez Cerén's remarks, and the security policies his administration developed to attain peace were a response to the critiques of the preceding leftist Funes government's support of the youth gangs' peacemaking effort: a truce among rival gangs. The responses of many Salvadorans, politicians, United States government officials, and the news media to the Funes government's support of the rival gangs' truce included critiques of the government's involvement and inquiries about what the state had negotiated with the youth gangs. Many right- wing Salvadoran politicians called for the

Funes government to return to the punitive measures of *Mano Dura* (Iron Fist) to end

social violence and attain peace.

The leadership of the rival Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 gangs, in a March

2012 memo that circulated over the internet, responded to the ElFaro.net online news and

the political establishment:

> We have not negotiated with the government, we also have not asked to do so.
> We are fed up with corrupt and lying politicians because we have been
> disappointed before… they have been using and asking us for our families' votes
> and at the end they have not fulfilled the agreements. Instead they have hardened
> their measures… [and] have exacerbated the situation… [We] mainly [thank] the
> army bishop, Monsignor Fabio Colindres and writer [ex-FMLN commandant]
> Raul Mijango who ... have been able to facilitate a common agreement between
> the two rival gangs.

They then asked politicians,

> Not to rasgarse las vestiduras (act) with ethical and moral positions, saying it is
> bad to talk to us, as we remind them that on several occasions… [they] offered us
> money and made other offers in exchange for support of their electoral campaign
> and to cease our activities.

Because the political establishment was suspicious, the leadership of the rival gangs

confirmed the veracity of the gang truce and their memo at a press conference in the

company of Raul Mijango and Monsignor Fabio Colindres. At the press conference the

gang leadership asked civil society to support the gang truce and told politicians not to

block the process. The truce had dramatically reduced the national homicide rate from

14.5 to 5.5 per day. Nevertheless, the right- wing political establishment characterized

Funes' involvement in the youth gang truce as a violation of the constitution which

forbids the state to negotiate with criminals. In the midst of the political criticism,

President Funes remained silent, while Salvador Sanchez Cerén, then his Vice-President

and a future FMLN presidential candidate, distanced himself from the gang truce. The gang truce became a political mistake that could have cost the FMLN party the 2014 presidential elections. Yet despite the critique, most critics welcomed the reduction of homicidal violence. In the post-truce context, President Sánchez Cerén sought to achieve both: avoiding the criticisms made against the Funes government by refusing to enter into a dialogue with the youth gangs, and calling for a united society to support tough measures to protect the citizenry from criminality.

This chapter highlights the ways that various postwar Salvadoran governments politicized the patriarchal gendered principle of "protecting" the family and women to put forward authoritarian measures to attain peace. The right-wing Flores and Saca ARENA governments, as Mo Hume (2007:747) has pointed out, positioned gang members as the 'other' within a 'dehumanizing logic,' representing them as barbaric people and mobilizing fear to generate consent for authoritarian measures in the nascent democracy of El Salvador. These right-wing governments used the metaphor of "protection" of the citizenry to criminalize youth gangs.

As the leftist 2009 Funes and 2014 Sanchez Cerén governments won state power, they attempted to move away from authoritarian approaches to governance. The Funes government consulted professional sectors of society to create a five year governance plan which included a gender equality policy for the first time in history. The Sanchez Cerén government continued this participatory approach by also including working-class and poor sectors of society in the consultation, albeit without transforming the economic, social, and gender inequalities. Charles Hale (2006) calls this process of inclusion of

historically marginalized sectors of society, "neoliberal multiculturalism governance." The process of inclusion does not change the structure of inequality, but "intentionally and preemptively" offsets more radical, collective demands that could be made to the state. Despite the Funes and Sanchez Cerén governments' efforts to move away from authoritarianism, their war against "criminality," understood as a democratic measure to attain and live in peace, reproduced the authoritarian approaches to governance characteristic of the right-wing administrations that preceded them.

Many scholars have theorized how the rightwing ARENA party governments used "social fear" and "panic" to continue implementing authoritarian approaches to governance within the nascent democracy of El Salvador (Hume 2007, Moodie 2010). For instance, Mo Hume (2007:747) argues that the rightwing Flores and Saca governments constructed gang members as the internal enemy, using a binary 'dehumanizing logic.' She states, "this binary logic, whereby the 'other' becomes an enemy of the state, has been used to justify historic patterns of coercion… as a necessary tool of the 'good citizen' against those whom he/she considers the 'scum' (lacra social) of society" (2007:746). Thus, Hume contends, the Flores and Saca governments' representations of gang members as barbarians mobilized fear and panic in order to legitimize violence and generate consent for authoritarian governance in postwar El Salvador. Hume's analysis of the government's dehumanizing logic is of critical importance. I draw on and expand her analysis to explain how both the rightwing and leftwing governments have politicized patriarchal norms and renewed the image of the ideal Salvadoran in order to further a neoliberal economic agenda. For the Criollo and

non-Criollo economic and political elites, postwar peace means the absence of violence among groups of men engaged in a conflict under the model of a neoliberal economy.

The leftist governments first rose to power with the Funes-FMLN alliance, with the 2009 Funes government, and then with the 2014 FMLN Sanchez Cerén government. These leftist governments brought together seemingly separate governance projects. On one hand, they further developed what Paul Amar (2013: location 552) calls a "human security state." Amar identifies the human security state as characterized by "parahumanization," "hypervisibilization," "and "securitization," and argues that sexuality is necessarily implicated in its functioning:

> In the universe of human security, sexuality is implicated in modes of governance that blend parahumanization (the creation of [a] politically disable[d] "victim" that must, essentially, be protected or rescued by enforcement interventions regardless of their consent or will to be rescued), hypervisibilization (the spotlighting of certain identities and bodies as sources of radical insecurity and moral panic in ways that actually render invisible the real nature of power and social control), and securitization (the reconfiguration of the political debates and claims around social justice, political participation, or resource distribution into technical assessments of danger, operations of enforcement, and targeting of risk populations).

The leftist Funes government began a process in which the government attempted to transform authoritarian governance into a more participatory and humane model. Under the *Secure Change* plan, the Funes government recognized women's rights to a life without violence and to gender equality, while cementing the idea that violence against women was violence against the nation. He accompanied this policy of "parahumanization" with a juridical framework and law enforcement that sought to protect and rescue women, and thus the nation. At the same time, the Funes government continued the process of "hypervisualization" begun by ARENA governments,

spotlighting youth gangs as the main source of social violence and violence against women, and masking the effects of neoliberal capitalism on the majority of the population and the ways that economic and political elites benefited. The coming together of these processes furthered the idea that youth gangs are the main obstacle to development and social peace in Salvadoran society, while inscribing the state as the patriarchal protector of society.

The FMLN Sanchez Cerén government also combined the human security state with what Charles Hale (2002) calls "neoliberal multicultural" governance, which he defines as a governance whose "...message entails recognition of cultural difference…the now ubiquitous official affirmations that, 'we are a multi-ethnic, pluri-lingual society'." Hale notes the "stark" contrast between the declarations of multi-culturalism and "the previous inclination toward outward erasure." He writes,

> Recognition alone can open space and spark political repercussions well beyond its own stated intentions. Yet such affirmations are filled with ambiguity regarding the specific collective rights that follow from recognition, the mechanism required to guarantee full enjoyment of these rights, and the relationship between individual and collective rights.

The Sanchez Cerén government continued the social and security policies of the Funes government, portraying violence against women as violence against the nation and using the notion of ideal Salvadoran identity as the basis for granting rights to historically marginalized groups of people (e.g. indigenous, women). The Sanchez Cerén government's granting of rights came from a historic commitment to the people who fought state repression and political exclusion during the civil war and to those who support FMLN political party. Nevertheless, this leftist government's recognition of

historically marginalized people has served to preempt more radical collective demands to transform the neoliberal economic system. By highlighting the humanity of some historically marginalized communities as worth rescuing and protecting, the Sanchez Cerén government further dehumanized youth gangs, who continued to be represented as worthless criminals.

In El Salvador, the criminalization of youth gangs veiled the social-economic inequities and political exclusion experienced by poor youth within an ideological discourse about the ideal Salvadoran citizen—a person engaged in neoliberal capitalist production—whose political and human rights needed to be protected. Additionally, the government's incorporation of some of the demands of historically marginalized groups helps to explain the lack of radical demands to the postwar governments. I suggest that the state's war on gangs centers patriarchal gender norms as the principles that structure its authoritarian measures to attain peace. I will show that the gendered security policies and the ideal notion of citizenry normalized state violence against those whom they rendered expendable.

I began with an account of the political establishment's reaction to the youth gangs' national peacemaking efforts that took place in March 2012. Then, I explore the political establishment's politicization of the patriarchal principle of "protection" of citizenry, especially women, in order to criminalize youth gangs. This criminalization of youth gangs, in turn, veiled the advance of neoliberal capitalism, socio-economic inequalities and political exclusion. Subsequently, I locate Salvadoran security policies in the larger context of transnational securitization processes. I discuss how this

transnational securitization made it very difficult for the youth gangs' peacemaking

efforts to succeed, despite the support received by the Funes government and the

Organization of American States. Finally, I examine the way that Salvadoran society has

united with the government in the goal of "protecting" the citizenry, demanding the

annihilation of those who are described as criminals, a term which has become a

euphemism for youth gangs. I conclude by pointing out the way that racialization of the

"other" within the project of mestizaje, operates in the postwar era in relationship to

youth gangs.

The Humanitarian Patriarchal State

Photo credit: R. Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada 2015

At a press conference on July 23, 2003, eight months before the March 2004 presidential

elections, in an effort to gain electoral support for his Nationalist Republic Alliance

(ARENA) party, the Flores government presented the first Mano Dura (Iron Fist) security

policy in barrio Dina in San Salvador. The next day, an article titled, Barrerán con las

maras ("They will sweep the gangs"), published in the right-wing El Diario de Hoy

(EDH) newspaper, contained this quote from his speech:

> The phenomenon of gangs in El Salvador creates feelings of impotence and
> insecurity in the citizenry that does not allow normal development of productive,
> cultural, recreational activities, confining citizens to small spaces for fear…

According to Alvarenga and González, Flores vividly described the crisis of criminality

that his administration intended to resolve:

> At the moment when at least 100 people die a month at the hands of gangsters and
> these crimes have reached barbaric levels, where those people rape, dismember
> and decapitate alive their victims.[10]

Flores accompanied his Iron Fist security policy with the use of the "state of exception"

an Anti-Gang Law that created a "special and temporary regimen" to combat youth gangs

(El Salvador's Legislative Assembly 2003). Flores referred to use of the "state of

exception" as a temporal suspension of constitutional guarantees in the poor barrios

affected by youth gangs in order to capture gang members and regain control over the

territories (Alvarenga and González 2003). The Anti-Gang law represented gangs as

"illicit association[s]," defined as groups of people who met regularly, were tattooed,

marked territories as their own, and/or altered the public order and good customs of

Salvadoran society (Legislative Assembly 2003). The Anti- Gang Law enlisted the

involvement of the army in domestic law enforcement for the first time since the signing

of the Peace Accords and created a special tribunal for dealing with youth accused of

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[10] I first read this quote in Mo Hume (2007). Mano Dura: El Salvador responds to gangs article. I retrieved
the news article on Sun, August 27 2017, see:
http://archivo.elsalvador.com/noticias/2003/07/24/nacional/nacio12.html.

gang activity. Although the Salvadoran Supreme Court eventually declared the Anti-

Gang Law unconstitutional, under its auspices, joint military-police patrols arrested close

to 20,000 youths who were either, or suspected of, being gang members (Hume 2007;

Wolf 2017).

The arrests created an illusion that the government was developing a secure social

context for economic development. The Flores government war on youth gangs sought to

overshadow the social movement protests against the privatization of the healthcare

system in 2001 and the signing of the Central American Free Trade Agreements in 2004.

Flores' rhetoric politicized the feelings of fear and economic instability experienced by

the average Salvadoran, creating an internal enemy to blame for socio-economic

disparities. At the same time, the neoliberalization of the Salvadoran economy reduced

the state's social and economic responsibilities in relationship to its population. As

Agamben (1998 [1995]:9) notes, this requires the state to find another way to establish its

sovereignty:

> When its [the state] borders begin to be blurred, the bare life that dwelt there frees
> itself in the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflict of the
> political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and
> emancipation from it.

His focus on the gangs as the source of social problems veiled the advances and negative

effects of neoliberal capitalism while legitimizing the remilitarization of domestic law

enforcement. Flores centered the state as the sovereign power by characterizing youth

gangs as the source of social violence and creating punitive measures to end that

violence.

At the same time, Flores' declaration of war on youth gangs articulated an ideal type of Salvadoran citizenry, rooted in its participation in economically productive socio-cultural relations and contrasted that ideal type to the presumed reality of gang members. The Flores government characterized gang members as the "other," the barbaric ones, whose violence instilled fear and inhibited development in the country. The right-wing media amplified the Flores government's 'othering' of gang members, positioning the state as the protector of the citizenry via the implementation of "special and temporary regimen" and use of the "state of exception" (See Alvarenga and González 2003). Agamben (2005) has theorized the state of exception as a moment of crisis in which a government claims the power of the sovereign—the monopoly of the use of violence—to increase its own power, while diminishing, superseding and rejecting constitutional rights for a sector of the population in the name of the public good. Instead of being a "temporal and special regimen" this approach can become normalized as part of the everyday life. Flores redirected the electoral debate from socio-economic inequities to youth gang violence as the main obstacle to El Salvador's development and citizen security. In this process, Flores made the war against youth gangs "the subject" and "object" of the Salvadoran political order and of the political struggle for state power.

The strategies of the Flores government were a continuation of electoral tactics utilized by his right-wing ARENA party during the civil war. In 1989 ARENA won executive power for the first time with the candidacy of the Criollo, Alfredo Cristiani. ARENA successfully capitalized on the hatred of traditional right-wing Criollo political and economic elites, the military elite, and sectors of the middle-working class for the

rojos (Communists) to win the elections. Their slogan, "Homeland Yes! communism No! … El Salvador will be the graveyard where the red will die," was proudly sang by ARENA party members at public events, and in radio and T.V. ads to underscores the party's principles (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista de El Salvador). ARENA party members represented their political party as the solution to an imminent threat: Marxist-Leninist FMLN guerrillas taking over state power via armed struggle.

Once in power, Cristiani negotiated the 1992 Peace Accords against the wishes of some groups within the Criollo and the military elite who favored the elimination of the FMLN guerrillas via armed confrontation. With the implementation of the Peace Accords, the ARENA and FMLN parties emerged as the main opposing sides of the political spectrum in the electoral struggle for state power. For many Salvadorans Cristiani's power move was a continuation of the war through electoral politics. Under the auspices of the Peace Accords, Cristiani's government implemented the first wave of neoliberal economic reforms, or structural adjustment policies, which increased state revenue via the privatization of state services (e.g. Banks). ARENA party members proselytized Cristiani's presidency as the government that brought peace and economic growth to the country. ARENA won the presidential elections in 1994 with the Criollo Calderon Sol and again in 1999 with the non-Criollo Francisco Flores Perez. Nevertheless, by 2003 the very privatization that ensured those electoral victories rang hollow for its non-elite supporters (Tojeira, 2003). The ARENA governments' far-reaching privatization policies had increased the rank of the economically disenfranchised, widening socioeconomic inequities in the country.

Despite losing electoral support, the non-Criollo President Francisco Flores continued ARENA's neoliberal economic reforms. He signed the Central American Free Trade Agreements (CAFTA-DR) with the United States and dollarized the Salvadoran economy. Despite the lack of evidence, the Flores government blamed youth gang violence for El Salvador's lack of socio- economic progress and used their campaign against the youth gangs to block the political ascendancy of the FMLN (See Hume 2007; Wolf 2017).

In March 2004, ARENA's Elías Antonio Saca, a non-Criollo, won the presidential elections, promising to continue the Flores government's war on gangs. Saca's *País Seguro* (Secure Country) governance plan asserted that ARENA had achieved its historical project to bring peace and modernization to El Salvador (Gobierno de El Salvador, 2004). His government would focus on "perfecting" that state of development and peace (Gobierno de El Salvador, 2004). Saca's government expanded state-run social programs under the *Red Solidaria* (Solidarity Network) policy, implemented the U.S.-CAFTA-DR free trade agreement and attempted to privatize public water services. In reaction to massive protests against water privatization, Saca's government enacted the Anti-terrorist Law which criminalized social protest, and tried to persecute 14 water protesters as terrorists (See Foundation for Studies of the Application of the Law [FESPAD] 2015; Pollack 2006).[11] On August 30, 2004, in a continuation of the security policies of the previous ARENA administrations, Saca presented his "integral" security policy to attain peace. In a press conference in the poor Tutunichapa barrio, considered

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[11] Saca's Anti-terrorists law was inspired by the U.S. Patriot Act. The U.S. Government also extended the Temporal Work Program for Salvadorans in the US and increased aid for security policies in the region.

by the government to be one of the most dangerous shantytowns in the city of San

Salvador. Saca announced:

> The Super Mano Dura [Super Iron Fist] security policy will fight to rehabilitate
> and to reinsert into society all those youths who are willing to do it… This
> government, your government, thinks to the future, and a future free from gangs is
> what our children need…To the delinquents and thieves, with much certainty and
> determination I tell you: the party is over… (Kemp, 2008 [2006]).[12]

Saca's government hired close to 17,000 more police officers (bringing the total

to approximately 40,000), expanded military participation in domestic law enforcement,

and created anti-gang special units. To appease human rights organizations that had

opposed the earlier anti-gang law, this Super Mano Dura added reinsertion and

rehabilitation programs, called Mano Amiga, (Friendly Hand). Mano Amiga

predominantly consisted of apprenticeships in Salvadoran enterprises, such as bakeries,

which were supposed to prepare participants to create their businesses. Within two weeks

of the unveiling of the security policy, Saca argued that the Salvadoran families would no

longer have to suffer the loss of love ones because of gang violence. His rhetoric

reinforced the notion a "good" person (i.e., economically productive within the

framework of neoliberal capitalist development) versus "bad" person (i.e., criminal) was

a matter of personal choice. His policies concealed the economic and political elites'

disregard for the wellbeing of the population, while simplifying the complex

positionalities of underprivileged youth. Saca's policies ignored the broader context of

needs, including the needs of gang members, who tended to live at the social-economic

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[12] "El Plan Súper Mano Dura, lucharemos para rehabilitar e reinsertar a la sociedad a todos aquellos
jóvenes que estén dispuestos a hacerlo…Este gobierno, su gobierno piensa a futuro, y un futuro libre de
maras es lo que nuestros hijos necesitan…a los delincuentes y malacates con mucha seguridad y
determinación les digo que se les acabó la fiesta a los malacates"

margins of society. They made youth gangs the sacrificial lamb through which the patriarchal, protective state was re-consecrated, even as El Salvador was becoming one of the most violent countries in Latin America (Lemus 2013).

By 2009 both the FMLN and ARENA parties had embraced this vision of the humanitarian patriarchal state. In 2009 Funes won the presidential election in political alliance with the FMLN party; this was widely celebrated for being the first FMLN-associated government to occupy executive power. In contrast to the ARENA governments, Funes's *Cambio Seguro* (Safe Change) governance plan proposed to transition the country from authoritarian governance to democracy, implement a nationally oriented socio-economic model, and attain peace and security for women and men (Gobierno de El Salvador, 2010).[13] As a step towards establishing democratic governance the Funes government consulted academics and NGO representatives. To alleviate poverty, it eliminated public healthcare fees, provided free shoes, meals and uniforms to school children, gave financial support to medium and small businesses and promoted entrepreneurship. For the first time in the country's history the Funes government enacted a gender policy that aimed to reduce violence against women and to attain gender inequality.

Like the previous two ARENA governments, the Funes government emphasized "human security" as a key goal, and, sought to "consolidate social peace," and create a "common vision" among Salvadorans and private and public institutions (Gobierno de El

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[13] In this plan, the Funes' government noted it had received a nearly bankrupt state and an impoverished country with high number of youth at risk, who sought youth gangs or migration to the United States as a path for a better life, a result of the ARENA's governments' socio-economic model (See FMLN: 23).

Salvador, 2010). In pursuit of that goal Funes continued the government's tough measures against gang violence. During his first year as president, his government sent 2,500 additional army troops to conduct domestic law enforcement tasks. (Ayala, 2009). However, Funes' support for the 2012 gang truce and publicly expressed concern for women's safety. signaled a rupture with those punitive measures. In a national address in the government's Women's Secretariat institution, he characterized El Salvador as a "violent country" and argued, "Nobody can ignore…that the violence is in the heart of our society." He warned of the ongoing threat of violence, stating, "We can feel better because homicides have decreased significantly…but we cannot deceive ourselves and think that we are no longer a violent country." Funes stressed the relationship between domestic violence and other forms of social violence, arguing that,

> This widespread violence has an origin: it begins at home, when a father hits a mother, and when children are raised observing that to hit a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter is a common occurrence, which happens every day.

He continued:

> Violence originates in violence against women… in the home. This cruel phenomenon we want to banish is born there. Let us begin by banishing violence against women… A few months ago, the President of Colombia initiated a campaign for this same cause… he said: 'whoever attacks a woman assaults the country… I make those words mine.'

The Funes government implemented an impressive policy for women's rights to live without violence and promoted women's equality. It created Ciudad Mujer (City of Women), a center that provides attention to women victims of gender violence and workshops for economic autonomy as well as Women Police Units to support women victims of gender violence. Acknowledging that the phenomenon of social violence,

specifically youth gang violence, is multi-causal, Funes highlighted violence against women as a key issue to reduce social violence and he explicitly equated violence against women with violence against the nation. The Funes government policies did not make distinctions between groups of women but assumed "woman" as a universal identity and therefore invisibilized how women are differently positioned and oppressed in relationship to class, sexuality and race (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 2009 [1990]; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; The Combahee River, 2014).

The Funes government's goal was to create a common vision in Salvadoran society as a foundation from which to fight youth gangs' violence. Its campaign against gender violence became a tool to wield against the gangs, and a measurement of gang members' inhumanity rather than a policy aimed at changing the logics that sustain gender violence against women and men. This gender policy in turn left intact the dominant notion of an ideal citizenry rooted in individual productivity and patriarchal values, further cementing the ideology of the protective patriarchal state.

After mounting criticism of the Funes government's support of the gang truce, the state retreated to confronting youth gang violence with the punitive measures of the previous right- wing governments. During the elections of 2014, the presidential candidates argued that the elimination of youth gangs was synonymous with peace and security. Referring to youth gangs, Norman Quijano, the presidential candidate for the ARENA party, advocated the implementation of a sectoral state of exception in poor barrios as mechanisms for getting rid of social "cancer." Quijano was arguing for the use of state violence in poor barrios where most gang members live. Seeking a second term,

ex-president Saca campaigned for internal security measures: coercion, rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members to attain peace. Salvador Sanchez Cerén also campaigned for an internal security policy without specifying the methods that would be used. None of the candidates discussed the gang truce or offered a dialogue with the youth gangs since electoral struggles for state power had made any alternative approach to grappling with the issue of youth gangs' violence, including formal dialogue, a political liability. Instead, all the candidates campaigned on the platform that, under their governance, the state would continue the work of protecting the citizenry and attaining peace through security measures.

In March 2014, the FMLN candidate won executive power in the second round of elections. President Salvador Sánchez Cerén's El Salvador: productive, educated and secured government plan put forward the Buen Vivir (good living) concept as a governance framework. Sánchez Cerén explained,

> Good living is a way to see life, to live in community…that promises us a better life. It tells us that it is possible to have a life in society and freedom and, if possible, a relationship between human being and nature in harmony (Gobierno de El Salvador, 2015:22).

Sánchez Cerén's definition of good living comes across as an effort to revamp Salvadorans' hopes for justice and build confidence in the FMLN's ability to attain it. His government celebrated indigenous cultures and concepts in order to include indigenous people as full members of Salvadoran society, able to embody the ideal Salvadoran identity. This further isolated youth gangs as the internal enemy. Among Sánchez Cerén's key goals within this framework were "human development" through education, technological integration into the economy, and human rights and "rights to peace and

citizen security" through law enforcement and creation of a culture of peace (FMLN

2014: 27). To achieve human development, Sánchez Cerén's government expanded the

social programs to include one computer per child in the schools. Within the framework

of human rights his government recognized the rights of indigenous people, women

(gender equality) and LGBT people. While Sanchez Cerén expanded the population of

Salvadorans who needed and deserved human rights protections to include historically

marginalized people, his government also reinforced the neoliberal idea that human rights

should be protected only for those who engaged in productive economic and social

relationships. Social belonging, recognized through the assignments of rights, was rooted

in the categories of productive (non-criminal) and non-productive (criminal) members of

society, a framework which specifically targeted gang members and justified their

exclusion.

On August 24, 2016, the Salvadoran Supreme Court declared the rival Mara

Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 gangs to be terrorists, stating, "The gangs known as Mara

Salvatrucha or MS-13 and Gang 18 or Mara 18 are terrorist groups" and establishing the

following criteria:

> Any other gang or criminal organization that seeks to claim the exercise of power
> belonging to the domain of state sovereignty [or] territorial control, as well as the
> monopoly of the legitimate exercise of force…affecting systematically and
> indiscriminately the fundamental rights of the entire population or part of it.
> Consequently, its leaders, members, collaborators, apologists and financiers are
> considered terrorists... (Rauda Zablah, 2015).

Parallel to the state's security measures, paramilitary social cleansing groups linked to

state security forces increasingly engaged in extrajudicial executions of gang members.

The right- wing Salvadoran media supported the war on youth gangs and the Facebook

page, *Héroe Azul* and mainstream *Diario de Hoy* posted photos of gang members who died "in combat."

In short, the political parties' struggle for state power made the gang truce, or any other political overture with youth gangs, too costly in political terms. The dominant parties found the criminalization of youth gangs more expedient for gaining electoral votes, while invisibilizing the social, economic and political root causes of the phenomenon of youth gangs and gang violence. This in turn has allowed Salvadoran governments on both sides of the political spectrum to frame their war on youth gangs as a war on criminality rather than a manifestation of a broader social conflict. In this war, the state emerges as the patriarch, the protector of vulnerable citizenry, the family and women.

The right-wing Flores and Saca governments' hyper-focus on "social violence" (the euphemism used to refer to youth gangs' violence) as a citizen security issue overshadowed critical debates about the neoliberal socio-economic model. With the media's help these rightwing governments successfully redirected the electorate's attention towards youth gangs' violence, which became one of the key social issues in Salvadoran society. Even as the right-wing governments successfully criminalized youth gangs, they also attempted to criminalize social movement resistance to privatization. The attention to youth gangs violence created by the state and the media cleared the path for neoliberal economic expansion. The governments' rhetoric further inscribed a neoliberal capitalist notion of the ideal Salvadoran national identity, characterized by people's participation as workers or consumers in the service oriented Salvadoran

economy. Within this revamped understanding of Salvadoran identity, youth gangs became the "Other" whose humanity had been lost due to their descent into barbarism. This barbarism, characterized by homicidal and gender forms of violence, justified the model of the patriarchal protective state.

The leftist Funes-FMLN government embraced this revamped understanding of Salvadoran national identity and the patriarchal principles of protection of the citizenry. Like the ARENA right-wing governments, Funes pointed to the issue of social violence as a key impediment to progress, social peace and security. Although the Funes government recognized that the phenomenon of violence is multicausal, it highlighted the idea that one root cause of social violence was the social acceptance of violence against women. While one can agree that ending violence against women is an extremely important social-political goal, the issue here is that the FMLN government defined violence against women as violence against the state. In championing the importance of gender equality and women's right to live without violence, this leftist government continued to assert the inhumanity of gang members and institutionalized the state as a benevolent patriarch protecting vulnerable families and women.

The Funes government's gender policy simultaneously recognized the claims of one historically marginalized group of people—women—while preemptively deflating the potential for more radical collective demands from that same group, strategy that Hale describes as neoliberal multiculturalist logic (see Hale 2002). The Sánchez Cerén government continued to build on the logic of neoliberal multiculturalism, granting minorities, such as LGBTQ and indigenous people, human rights. At the same time,

Sánchez Cerén's government ended lingering support for the truce within months of winning the elections, stating, "this government would not negotiate with criminals." Instead, the government returned gang leadership to high security prisons, increased punitive measures against youth gangs and created three special forces anti-gang battalions which conducted special operations in poor barrios in San Salvador. The leftist Funes and Sanchez Cerén administrations recognized some historically marginalized groups, while intentionally and preemptively invalidating the demands and needs of another historically marginalized group of people, underprivileged youth, specifically youth gangs.

The practical outcome of the Salvadoran neoliberal multicultural regime was that it divided society between those worth protecting and those who should be annihilated. The right and left wing governments' characterizations of youth gangs members as criminals excluded them from being considered legitimate political actors within a recognized social conflict. It enabled the state to eliminate the gangs' peacemaking efforts from serious consideration.

Youth Gangs Disarm: Political Actors in Dialogue

Photo credit: El Diario de Hoy re-printed in 2015

On July 13, 2012, the rival Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 gangs enacted a symbolic disarmament ceremony to further demonstrate the "good faith" of their national peacemaking efforts. This ceremony took place at the Plaza General Gerardo Barrios, which is located across from the city's Cathedral and a few blocks away from the National Civilian Police (PNC) headquarters in the heart of downtown San Salvador. The ceremony was the youth gangs' and Funes government's response to the rightwing Salvadoran political establishment and to the local media, which had begun to assert that the gangs' peacemaking efforts were merely attempts to re-group and gain time and strength before state-led punitive measures were reenacted against them. Diego and Beto invited me to attend this event which they would join solely as observers.

As I made my way through the crowded streets, I noticed PNC police officers had formed a human chain on the sidewalks that surrounded the plaza. In the plaza, secret police in civilian uniforms and suited private security for the international officials

attending had formed a cordon from the streets to the presiding table, making the scene look like something out of a Hollywood action movie. Across from the presiding table, canopies covered the seats for the invited guests and provided a human and material barrier between gang members and attending officials. Behind the canopies, several buses carrying gang members were parked. Vendors, bystanders, media reporters and many others had gathered in the outskirts of the plaza to observe the ceremony. Diego, Roberto, Beto, Beto's friends and other civil war veterans, gang members and their partners were among the observers when I joined them. We were close enough to witness the event, but at a significant distance from the securitized operatives. I interpreted the distancing of the people I stood with as a sign of both, the social-political tensions permeating Salvadoran society and invisible boundaries among Salvadorans.

It was almost noon when José Miguel Insulza, General Secretary of the Organization of American States (OAS), Adam Blackwell, OAS Secretary of Multidimensional (Human Security, and truce mediators Raul Mijango and the army's Monsignor Fabio Colindres arrived at the plaza. Mari Carmen Aponte, then U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, attended the event as a guest but, interestingly, no Salvadoran politicians were present. After the formal opening of the ceremony, lines of gang members from the rival youth gangs wearing bandanas that covered their faces, came out of the buses and placed over seventy weapons in front of the presiding table. Monsignor Colindres blessed the participants, and the ceremony ended with brief speeches from the officials who were formally attending. This event was the first time that any high-level official had met with gang members in a formal ceremony of national

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and international relevance. At a later press conference, the leadership of the rival youth gangs, in the company of Insulza, reiterated their desire to continue with their peacemaking efforts. Insulza's visit and support for the youth gangs challenged the dominant political establishment's characterization of youth gangs as merely criminals to be combatted with predominantly punitive measures.

Many representatives of the political establishment, NGOs, the religious sectors and much of Salvadoran society criticized Insulza's support for the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts, arguing that it transformed youth gangs into "belligerents."[14] They argued that support for the youth gangs elevated them to the status of political actors in a social conflict, a status which, for the dominant politicians and right-wing media, was intolerable due to their "criminal nature" and violent practices. Their criticisms brought to the surface a hidden debate about the measures needed to deal with youth gangs' violence. A police official from Mejicanos told me, "Ahora resulta que criminales tiene derechos humanos. ¿cómo vamos hacer nuestro trabajo?" (Now it turns out that criminals have human rights. How are we going to do our work?). The Salvadoran political elite and members of the state security apparatus view human rights as one of the greatest obstacles to violent repression or annihilation, the measures seen as necessary to cure the social disease represented by youth gangs. Insulza's dialogue with and support for the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts crossed an invisible boundary the political establishment had created with its narrative of us vs. them (Salvadorans vs. criminals) that enables violence against racialized Others.

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[14] Belligerents, defined as "a nation or person engaged in war or conflict, as recognized by international law."

For youth gangs to achieve the status of political actors would challenge the political elite's and state security apparatus' usual practice of protecting some groups while harshly pursuing and punishing "criminals," (i.e., those who do not fit the ideal image of Salvadoran identity). The state would have to consider youth gangs as part of the population that also needs to be protected and find ways to integrate them into Salvadoran society. As the leadership of the rival Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 youth gangs stated in their 2012 memo, the government would have to examine youth gangs as political actors that emerged from a social phenomenon with "roots" in the Salvadoran civil war, socioeconomic inequalities, "family disintegration," and "immigration of our parents and ourselves to other countries" (MSX3 y Pandilla 18, 2012). The Funes government and OAS support for the youth gangs' peacemaking was an incipient effort to oppose the ways that youth gangs have been understood and treated by Salvadoran political elite and governments. It could have offered a path for dialogue to begin to engage with the complexities that grappling with the issue of youth gangs requires.

"The Gringos Sent this Modernization:" Youth Gangs

The rightwing political establishment critiques of Inzulsa's international support for the youth gangs' peacemaking effort and the government's refusal to recognize them as political actors reminded me about the first conversation I had with Beto in 2011 about international actors. He had pointed to the government of the United State as the invisibilized political actor that has been shaping the phenomenon of youth gang in the post-civil war era, stating, los gringos mandaron esta modernización, va, que son las

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pandillas (the gringos sent this modernization), right, that is the gangs." Beto's observation reveals gang members awareness about the role the United States' government has played in creating the conditions for the phenomenon of youth gangs to develop as it is post-civil war El Salvador.

During the civil war thousands of Salvadoran youth and their families fled the country's repression and became refugees in the United States. In the 1980's Salvadoran immigrant youth in the city of Los Angeles formed the Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18 gangs as a response to street violence by other gangs. As these gangs proliferated throughout the United States, government officials characterized them as sources of violence and criminal activity, and therefore, as security threats (Seelke 2010). In the mid-1990's, deporting Salvadorans back to their homeland was seen as a reasonable solution to the security problem posed by the gangs. In 1996, the US government enacted the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) which provided additional tools for ridding the country of those who were deemed to be security threats. IIRIRA gave the government additional leeway to deport people for "offenses that are neither 'aggravated felonies' nor 'felonies' under criminal law" but which could be held to "constitute 'aggravated felonies' within immigration law" (Zilberg 2011:40). In 1998 alone, this new policy resulted in the deportations of 5,348 Salvadorans, including members of Mara Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18. Between February 2005 and September 2009 "US officials arrested some 2,572 alleged members of the above-mentioned youth gangs in cities across the United States, many of whom were subsequently deported" (Seelke, 2010). The United States' policy of deporting

"criminals" made it seem as if the thousands of Salvadoran immigrants in the country were the problem, obscuring the government's political and economic support of a civil war that had forced many into exile.

Once back in El Salvador, deported gang members joined the ranks of the economically disenfranchised, while also being discriminated against for their appearance (e.g. tattoos) and for being gang members. They found themselves among a large youth population without access to upward mobility in El Salvador's neoliberal economy (Zilberg, 2011). U.S. gang culture rapidly took hold of the local youth gangs in El Salvador (Zilberg 2007, 2011; Wolf 2011). Youth gangs marked the walls of the territories they controlled, and if members of rival youth gangs entered those territories they would often be killed. Youth gangs increased the already existing fights over territorial control and homicidal violence that resulted from drug dealing operations. In order to make a living, youth gangs *rentaron* (informally taxed) small businesses, street vendors, middle to low income Salvadorans and local drug dealers. Gang members enforced their taxation practices with harassment and physical violence, even killing those who did not comply. In the postwar era, seeking to escape violence, lack of jobs and gang and organized violence, many Salvadoran families, including unaccompanied minors migrated to the United States, and the proliferation of youth gang in the Northern Triangle became an issue of transnational concern.

Under the Bush and Obama administrations, United States policy emphasized the supposed linkages between migration, organized crime and drug trafficking. From 2006 to 2011 the government allocated over $361 million to reduce migration and combat

organized crime and drug trafficking in Central America. In 2008, the Bush government used the slogan "Shared responsibilities" to justify $60 million for the Central American portion of the Merida Initiative, which later became the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). In 2008, the United States government also committed funds to the Central American Northern Triangle for the war on youth gangs through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, P.L. 110-161 which included an additional $7.9 million for the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) program, to fight against gang violence in Central America (Seelke 2010:14). These initiatives provided resources for the development of anti-gang task forces, an FBI office in El Salvador, a fingerprint database shared by the United States and Northern Triangle, and social programs such as community policing and entrepreneurship training to help in the war on youth gangs and the reduction of poverty in Central America. Within the United States the Obama administration through the U.S. Department of Treasury (USDT), targeted Mara Salvatrucha under the 2012 National Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2012). The United States' transnational security policy provided economic support to the Northern Triangle governments, while its development of a transnational securitization system, placed increased pressure on the youth gangs.

Youth gangs have been represented as cancers, as the national and international enemy, and as organizations of inhuman "terrorists." The terrifying images of youth gangs, with their inherent criminality and violence have been internalized by mainstream Salvadoran society, enabling Salvadoran and United States governments to create an

entire security apparatus to fight a war on the gangs and to militarize public law enforcement. In El Salvador, the militarization of public law enforcement and the expansion of the security apparatus have become major sources of employment, further polarizing society between those who can claim to be part of the Salvadoran identity and those who are not. U.S. support for El Salvador's political establishment's war on youth gangs and use of punitive security measures also fundamentally threatens the achievements of the Salvadoran Peace accords, especially the demilitarization of the state apparatus and domestic law enforcement, and protections for human rights. Nevertheless, because U.S. security policy for El Salvador reinforces the logics that sustain the humanitarian patriarchal state, none of the politicians of the rightwing ARENA party or the leftwing FMLN have critiqued United State role in creating the conditions that enable the flourishing of the phenomenon of youth gangs in the postwar era.

"Not only the Marero, but the Entire Family"

During the two years that I conducted fieldwork research in El Salvador, there was not a single day in which youth gangs' violence, extortion or peacemaking efforts, were not prominently and negatively featured in the media. The media's hyper-focus on youth gangs spiked during the five months leading to the February 2014 presidential elections. The outspoken support offered by politicians on the right for the implementation of a "state of exception" in gang controlled neighborhoods and left inaction to oppose it eroded support for the fragile gang truce. Reacting to the politicians' call for a state of exception, youth gangs steadily increased homicidal violence in order to

send a message to politicians: youth gangs had the capacity to lower or increase

homicidal violence, as well as the capacity to sway electoral votes towards one or another

political party in their local areas.

Michael Taussig (1999) has written about "public secrets;" that is, things that are

generally known in society but for one reason or another cannot be easily articulated. In

2014, it was a public secret that political parties often negotiated electoral votes with

youth gangs. As youth gangs have become an important sector of the electorate,

ARENA's and the FMLN's presidential candidates omitted mentioning the enacting of a

state of exception as part of the solutions to the issue of youth gang violence. However,

the negative representations and actual violence of youth gang violence against people in

the lower middle class, working class and poor barrios increased the numbers of

Salvadorans who viewed annihilation of youth gangs as the solution to the issues of

social violence.

At the same time, given the political candidates and their parties continued with

their struggle for power without offering a solution to the actual social conflict and

widespread uncertainty about where and to what extent violence might be escalated,

Salvadorans did what they could to protect themselves and their families. Many moved

from upper middle class neighborhoods to poorer communities that were considered

safer. The neighborhood in which I lived was located in the surrounding areas of the

Miralvalle neighborhood which is considered one of the safest lower middle class places

to live in the capital city because of its low levels of criminal and gang activity. Many

Salvadoran families came to live in neighborhoods like mine. Seeking safety, both new

and old residents created an entire security infrastructure. They installed iron gates and security cameras, closed streets, built speed bumps, and hired private security companies to offset the real and perceived threat of violence.

One night while I was at home, Luz, Dinora, and Maria rang the bell of my house, told my brother and me that they had been talking to neighbors about hiring a private security company, and invited us to the neighborhood meetings. These meetings usually took place at night at the garage of a neighbor, as no one wanted to open their home to "strangers," especially at night. In one of those meetings, Dinora proposed, "We should hire a private security company that can give us 24-hour surveillance." After agreeing to do so, another neighbor said, "It would be good to close off street entrances and exits with iron gates, and each car could have a sticker that signals they live here." The neighborhood continued to meet to discuss which streets might be closed and which ones would be used as entrances and exits. Then one night a woman walked with her daughter through the neighborhood streets, shouting over a megaphone,

> Neighbors, I am a representative of the residential advisory. We invite you to participate in our meetings. They take place on Saturday nights in the Pañuelo park. We have to recover our parks and gate the residences. We talked with the mayor of San Salvador mayor and we have his support.

The neighbors in the street where I lived sent my brother as representative to this meeting, but the coordination between the residential advisory and the organized neighbors on my street did not flourish. Another group of neighbors invited my brother to another meeting which took place on a rainy night in one of the small hidden parks within our residential area. I attended this meeting as well. In addition to the regular participants of the community, a few retired military officials and an FMLN congressman attended

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the meeting. After a long debate about whether or not to close the streets, one of the

retired army officials pointed to the working-class neighborhood and poor barrios next

door saying,

> I do not agree to close off the other side of the residential area because at this end
> we live next door to El Paraiso and on the other side of the creek there are the
> Zacamil apartment buildings [both working class/poor barrios in San Salvador]. If
> thieves or mareros cross over to this side, we are trapped--unless we ask the
> mayor to build us a wall here.

He then offered an alternative security strategy: "I am willing to patrol the streets at night

along with others. We could rotate the watch."

One morning shortly after the meeting when I was leaving the house, the vigilante

(private security guard), Mario greeted me:

> Good morning, *niña* Elizabeth, last night it rained heavily. I got wet because I
> don't have a shed, but I know the people of this street are good people and I will
> get a shed at some point. I hide in that corner, behind those trees. They protect me
> from the rain and I can also roll over for protection, in case I have to shoot at
> *maliantes* (criminals)....

Mario continued:

> It would be helpful to be in communication with the other vigilantes, for when
> *maliantes* come. You see other Security Companies give their guards nice pistols,
> like 38 millimeters, and radios, so that they can be in communication… And, me
> here with this machete, what I am going to do if *maliantes* show up, I can't even
> alert the other vigilantes or alert the neighborhood committee.

Anyone who has traveled to El Salvador is used to seeing poor barrios and working class

neighborhoods located next door to middle and upper class neighborhoods. Visitors

would not be surprised to see that wealthy neighborhoods have gated entrances, guards

armed with shotguns and security cameras. What is new is that working and middle class

Salvadorans are closing the entrances to their passageways, streets or neighborhoods. In

the name of defending their families and material well-being, they have hired 24-hour guards with machetes or guns. Often, the very safety and protection they seek has attracted common crimes like theft. Nevertheless, the people living in these neighborhoods feel secure that they have built an infrastructure and social life that will keep youth gangs at bay and prevent them from marking those neighborhoods as their territory--even if the guards have to kill them. Like the political establishment, many Salvadorans have come to equate the absence of youth gangs, not only with the elimination of common crimes, but with security and peace.

I was sitting at home one afternoon, when I overheard my neighbors saying,

> You have to kill all the gang members, not only the *marero* (gangster), but also the entire family. The way that *mareros* are operating now is by saying that they want to be reinserted into society, but they are a *lacra* (social plague).

My neighbor continued,

> They had not allowed Alpine (purified private water service) to enter there in Soyapango [a working-class municipality] because they had water filters and had the whole community buying from them. They put up a bakery and made everyone buy from them.

Living in secured enclaves and killing gang members became socially accepted ways to contain the "plague" represented by the youth gangs and their violent and illicit activities. Many Salvadorans created their own mechanisms for protecting their families and providing a sense of security in their social interactions and mobility. Beyond the usual crowds walking on the streets, the packed buses, sounds of cars honking in jammed traffic and heavy air pollution, the increasing sense of insecurity that permeated the environment had further changed social behavior and the layout of the city. Walking around outside my own neighborhood, I observed that Salvadoran workers, students, and

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users of public transportation walked rapidly and sought crowded bus stops on the streets. Many of the people who lived in gang-controlled poor barrios and working class neighborhoods rushed to catch early buses to arrive home safely. They squeezed themselves into overcrowded buses, loading them beyond capacity so that they tipped to one side as they moved through the streets. Other people carpooled with their neighbors to get home at a safe hour, usually no later than 9 pm. The gating of neighborhoods has reduced "public" mobility to a few main streets, while the real and perceived fear of youth gang violence has resulted in the privatization and securitization of communal spaces, malls, and recreational facilities. Private spaces have become the new public spaces. The patriarchal principle of "protecting" the family in its everyday activities has become the main goal of many Salvadoran families.

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada 2015

From the most populated working class communities to the wealthiest neighborhoods, the effect of the perceived and real threat of youth gangs has been to accentuate existing class and social divisions, further fragmenting and individualizing Salvadoran society. As youth gangs are stigmatized as the "plague" that needs to be contained and, if necessary, eliminated, better-off Salvadorans, often those with access to formal jobs or permanent income, represent themselves as ideal Salvadoran citizens. Their actions to privatize and securitize their neighborhoods reveal how they have internalized the politicians' and United States government's discourse of insecurity. In their desperate desire to protect themselves and their family from the widespread violence, many Salvadorans have endorsed the remilitarization of the state, with its patriarchal gender norms, as a code for coexisting and living safely in the postwar era. These dominant understandings of peace and security continue to hide, rather than grapple with, social conflict, and with the class, race and gender hierarchies that made annihilating violence and gender violence acceptable in Salvadoran society.

Conclusion:

By 2003 the ARENA governments' far-reaching neoliberal economic policies rang hollow as increasing numbers of Salvadorans, including youth, joined the ranks of the country's economically disenfranchised. To stop the political ascendance of the FMLN and protests against privatization, the rightwing Flores government politicized the phenomenon of youth gangs, characterizing them as a cancer which the government needed to eradicate to protect women and families. At the same time, Flores' ARENA government extolled a neoliberal ideal of Salvadoran identity and values, characterized

by hard work, acceptance of privatization and individuation of social responsibility. It was these characteristics of the ideal citizen, in contrast to the violent criminality of youth gangs, which would lead the country to economic development, modernization and peace.

Antonio Saca, ARENA's presidential candidate, won the elections in 2004 by championing the government's war on gangs. Saca implemented a revised version of Flores' Iron Fist security policy called, Super Iron Fist; a second policy, the Friendly Hand, included some minimal social programs. Despite the Friendly Hand policy, Saca's government continued to demonize youth gangs, and represent the state as the protector of those citizens who fit the ideal of Salvadoran identity.

Both the rightwing and leftwing postwar governments and their state security policies stripped youth gangs of their political rights, leaving them as "bare life," that is to say, bodies possessing merely biological life (Agamben, 1998 [1995]:8). The governance models developed by both the ARENA and FMLN parties positioned youth gangs as those whose humanity is not socially, culturally or politically redeemable. For the economic and political elites and increasingly, for less privileged sectors of society, youth gangs and gang members are the embodiment of everything that the ideal postwar Salvadoran identity is not. Youth gangs are represented as the obstacle to modernity and development, lacking the social-political values to fight and defend the nation-state. The common denominator between rightwing and leftwing post-war governments has been adherence to security policies that define gang members juridically as "criminal" and youth gangs as "terrorist organizations." The juridical framework developed in the post-

war era has served to normalize state violence through the implementation of a localized state of exception as acceptable security measures against a sector of the population who are not capable of contributing to the public good — "who may be killed and yet not sacrificed" (Agamben, 1998 [1995]). The post-war governments made the issue of youth gangs the impetus for the organization of electoral politics and state power.

At the same time the post-war governments invisibilized the ways that power operates in Salvadoran society to sustain hierarchies and inequities based on class, race, gender, and sexuality. Instead, they have put forward a notion of capitalist patriarchal peace that makes gangs the target of security policy and their eradication the object of that policy. In the process of attaining democracy and social peace for the country, they naturalized authoritarian measures as a necessary defense of the state's sovereignty over people and territory.

These governments and the state apparatus intentionally drew a line between citizens whose human rights needed to be protected and criminals (i.e., youth gangs). In this formulation possessing human rights becomes the marker for social belonging and citizenship in contrast to the violent bodies that threaten society and therefore are not entitled to those rights. Youth gangs were *othered,* characterized as savages who raped women and economically exploited the population. Youth gangs' descent into social, specifically gender, violence became the political establishment's tool to assert their lack of humanity. The political establishment's hyper-focus on this one sector of society hides other factors that produce much of the social violence affecting Salvadoran society, including common crimes like theft, as well as drug dealing and human trafficking. This

hyper-focus erases the root causes of the social conflict: a far-reaching neoliberal economic model that has widened already existing socioeconomic inequities, while creating new forms of political and social exclusion and normalizing state violence in poor barrios. Gang members are inextricably linked to, and thereby complicit in, murders, rapes, and other heinous crimes. However, this reality should not blind researchers or the broader society, to gang members' hopes for personal transformation and collective efforts to become part of Salvadoran society through peacemaking. Youth gangs embraced the patriarchal rhetoric and practice of the state to demonstrate that they are capable of violence, but they are also using it to show their capacity to protect the country, their families and themselves. Youth gangs, by reclaiming these patriarchal principles, both demonstrate their humanity and render visible the operating grammar of power.

Chapter 4:

"There is No Difference":

Left-wing and Right-wing Democratic Peacemaking

January 16, 1992 will always be remembered by Salvadoran society as the date the Peace Accords were signed, ending twelve years of declared Civil War and over 20 years of armed conflict. On that date, despite the latent and widespread fear of armed violence, my mother took my brother and me to the Iglesia San Antonio (church) in Soyapango, where we lived. People from different parts of the country gathered there before proceeding to the celebration of the signing of the Peace Accords at the Plaza Gerardo Barrios across from the Cathedral in San Salvador. I remember the electrifying feeling of hope for a renewed future in peace that accompanied the celebration of the Peace Accords.

This sentiment, however, did not last. A few years later disillusionment began to shatter hope. I witnessed how telecommunication workers began to organize and to demonstrate on the street against privatization. I also met many youth who had come from other Salvadoran cities and from the countryside to study at the University of El Salvador, as well as people who had been deported from the United States to El Salvador who dreamed of studying or finding a job that would enable them to attain upward mobility. As time passed I witnessed how the implementation of the Peace Accords shattered those dreams for them. The privatization of state services left many without

jobs and for many, further reduced the opportunity for upward mobility. In addition to working with civil war veterans and youth gangs, these experiences raised the following questions: What motivated the signatories to enter into negotiations? What notion of peace emerged with the Accords and their implementation? Today, how do peace negotiators view the Accords and their effects, especially in relationship to youth gang violence?

In this chapter I analyze some of the fundamental assumptions that structured the 1992 Peace Accords negotiations. Specifically, I demonstrate that the peacemaking practices that emerged with the Peace Accords were structured by a negative notion of peace that is highly gendered and grounded in a neoliberal economic model. The postwar right-wing ARENA and left-wing Funes and FMLN governments have each pointed to the consolidation of the peace initiated by the 1992 Accords as a top priority. Not only have the assumptions that structured the Peace Accords continued to frame the political establishment's approaches to peacemaking and security in the post-civil war era, they have also shaped the approach to peace taken by youth gangs. The youth gangs not only reproduced the state's understanding of peace, they also symbolically mimicked the disarmament of the Peace Accords in order to unveil their gang truce and publicize their commitment to social peace (as discussed in Chapter Three).

Drawing on my previous work with civil war veterans (see Velásquez Estrada 2015), I interviewed the accords' signatories in order to understand how they viewed the phenomenon of youth gangs, the strengths and shortcomings of the Peace Accords in relationship to gang violence, and the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts. I examine the

peace negotiators' reflections on the gains and failures of the Accords in relationship to economic inequality, democracy building and post-war violence. I contend that the 1992 Peace Accords, in practice, enacted a resolution of the conflict that enable the emerging political right-wing and left-wing elites to consolidate power even while implementing democratic reforms. I demonstrate that the outcome produced a negative peace; i.e., peace as the absence of interpersonal violence between males in conflict, with neoliberal economic policies as a critical peacemaking mechanism.

Peace Accords Negotiators and Signatories

What motivated the Peace Accords' negotiators to adopt a neoliberal negative notion of peace and of peace-building, and how has this affected the social conflict with youth gangs in postwar El Salvador? To find answers to these questions I solicited interviews with the following Peace Accords negotiators and signatories: Mauricio Ernesto Vargas, Alfredo Cristiani, and David Escobar Galindo who represented the state at the negotiation table; and Eduardo Sancho, Roberto Cañas, Nidia Díaz and Roberto Jovel, who represented the FMLN guerrilla army. They are all key figures in Salvadorans' collective memory of the armed conflict as well as key actors in the postwar political establishment.[15]

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[15] I regret that I wasn't able to interview every signatory. For instance, due to scheduling issues, I was not able to interview Nidia Díaz one of three women who participated in the peace negotiations. I believe that her perspective on the peace negotiations, and the effects of the notion of peace established with the Peace Accords would have substantively enriched this chapter. In all I interviewed seven of the more than 15 signatories. Four interviews are discussed in this chapter.

Mauricio Ernesto Vargas, Former Army General

Photo credit: Miguel Interiano, San Salvador 2015

In March 2015, I drove of government buildings, popularly known as Centro de Gobierno (Government Center). As usual, the streets were filled with informal vendors, state employees, and people on their way to process government documents. At the iron gated main entrance of the congressional building, I informed the National Civilian police (in Spanish PNC) about my appointment with Congressman and former army General Ernesto Vargas. The PNC agents, who were wearing their traditional dark blue uniforms and dark glasses, looked us over, then opened the door to signal the receptionist. We identified ourselves and received visitor's passes in exchange for our personal identification cards. We were headed for a set of offices inside the building which are occupied by ARENA. When we arrived, I informed another receptionist about my appointment with Vargas. Minutes later, a congressional aid invited us into the party's offices. After passing by small cubicles, at the end of a short corridor, we reached

Vargas' office. Sitting at his desk, Vargas, now in his early 70's, welcomed us. He was

dressed in a suit without a tie, his silver hair, tired eyes and aged dark skin showing his

age, while his sturdy physical posture and commanding demeanor revealed his military

background. To begin the interview, I asked Vargas to introduce himself. He replied,

> I am Mauricio Ernesto Vargas, Army General in process of retirement and currently a member of congress, as deputy of the Nationalist Republican Alliance party.

I asked Vargas: what were the goals of the Peace Accords?

> The goal of the accords was to reform the political system… there was perceived democracy, if you will, but not a real democracy. At the table, we said, if we want society to work, it has to work within the framework of democracy. Democracy gives freedom to… elect my rulers, but that election is related to their programs and my needs as a social group… Via democracy, society must generate its economic political and social change…

Vargas proudly represented the armed forces as willing participants in the peace

negotiations, arguing that they supported ending the war to create "real democracy." For

Vargas this revamped democracy, enacted through electoral politics, was the system

through which Salvadoran society should operate and elect an authority to enact social

and economic changes. However, I was trouble by his problematic depiction of the army

as a willing participant in the peace process, which erased history: From 1931 to 1991 El

Salvador endured one of the longest military dictatorships in Latin America. By late

1980s, the army's human rights violations led the United States government to reverse its

earlier strategies of providing military aid for the Salvadoran government.[16] Tired of the

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[16] United States democratic senator, John Moakley led an investigation in 1989 on the assassination of the Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the UCA the same year. The Moakley Commission's report implicated high-ranking Salvadoran military official in this grave human right violation, contributing to the ending of U.S. military aid to El Salvador.

war, the Salvadoran *Criollo* and mestizo economic elite voiced their desire for a civilian

government. The FMLN guerrillas also demanded an end to the war and offered to turn in

their weapons in order to become a legitimate political party.

Vargas had told me that democracy would be the way to generate needed

economic and political change. Attempting to follow his logic, I asked him, "What

happened with those economic and political changes?" He answered,

> I am traumatized as a Peace Accords signatory because that is a parameter
> through which we should see the change of society… What produced that
> milestone? What I see, which is what I didn't want to see, it's that [the] Peace
> Accords brought more polarization than consensus because there are two models
> [that] confronted [each other] … there is no way to reach national agreements.

Seeking a moment to intervene, I interrupted? "How does political polarization affect the

state's capacity for policymaking?" He replied, "When we do not find common ground in

the handling of the debt, fiscal deficit. If we fail to understand that [social programs of

giving away] shoes, glass of milk, uniforms, notebooks…" Vargas was in the middle of

this statement when a military marching tune rang out. Stopping for a moment to screen a

cell phone call, he continued,

> I know they [referring to social programs] are social anti-crisis elements… but
> they do not attack the structural problem… I am attacking the crisis so I do not
> burst, ok [so that things do not blow up] but if that's what you're going to keep
> me [doing] permanently…with deficit and debt, where is it going to end up?

I asked: "What differences exist between the social programs of the governments of

Alfredo Cristiani, Antonio Saca, Mauricio Funes and Salvador Sánchez Cerén? Vargas

asserted,

> The problem…is that ARENA's governments did not consolidate a program… in
> 20 years, they should have… Cristiani was practically the economic axis of the
> economic uplift of the country, from where it grew to the point of 9%. From

there… everyone took away what one or the other did… In social policy, we have not been able to consistently build a national project.

As a non Criollo ex-army general and peace negotiator who became part of the political elite, Vargas argued that postwar partisan polarization is undermining the democratic achievements of the Peace Accords. For him, ideologically based partisan polarization has created two conflicting models of governability based on economic interests that do not allow for agreements on pressing national issues (e.g. debt). He then went on to tell me that to solve national problems would require "de-ideologization" and "depoliticization" of policy making decisions. As I discussed in Chapter Three, the Peace Accords had committed the state to a neoliberal model of development as part of the process of national reconciliation. So, I continued to question him, asking, "That economic model of neoliberalism has been implemented all these years, right?" He replied,

> There lies the problem. There is confrontation between the two models and there are as many orthodox in the right-wing in the liberalism, as in the social populist model… they don't want to move forward as we did in the Peace Accords. We did not reach consensus, but reached accords… how do you conceive the FMLN has not been able to deal with the problem of violence? … because they have ideological factors; I sustain theory of chaos.

Although Vargas tried to appear even-handed in his criticisms, he continuously aimed his critique at the FMLN, thus performing the very partisan polarization he argued against. He also equated the specific branch of liberalism that upholds individual freedom and the market economy to ARENA's own ideology, incorrectly presenting it as the universal strand of liberalism. From that ideological position, Vargas argued that the FMLN depends on populism and social chaos (i.e. violence) to raise itself into, and remain in,

state power. He pejoratively described the FMLN's party and government as "social populist." He contended that the leftist government sustained welfare programs at the cost of debt in order to control "the crisis," instead of transforming the structural causes of poverty and violence. This accusation of not transforming the structural causes of poverty is similar to the one raised by many Salvadorans, the social movements and the FMLN political party against the four ARENA governments that immediately followed the Peace Accords (1989-2009). Conveniently, Vargas did not mention that the accords tasked Cristiani's government with bolstering social programs to make its own structural adjustment policies less severe (United Nations 1992:83).

Vargas told me that socialists gain state power by creating chaos which, in turn, incites violence. Using the Peace Accords as a model, he argued that dealing with gang violence from a non-ideological perspective would enable the opposing political parties to reach an agreement. Without directly stating it, he implied that the discussion should not include a debate about the root causes of the phenomenon of youth gangs or the context that enabled gang violence. When I pointed out to Vargas that gang violence existed under ARENA's governments as well, he replied, "Yes, but the problem is if I know how to administer it or not." I asked him, "What effect has the gang truce had in the management of violence?" He replied,

> *There can't be a truce with the criminal violence*. There can be concessions…
> conversations that are far below, and are a means to an end. For example, a
> violence renunciation program, [with]… certain characteristics: it has to be
> collective. Before negotiating, we said we don't negotiate with individual
> factions, it was with the five [guerrilla factions that made up the FMLN] or
> none… [and it] was within the constitutional framework…

I asked: "How do you see the current security policy?" Vargas replied, "[The FMLN's] theory of security is structured in function of thought and ideologies… Why? They are interested in the stories of the great crisis, the theory of chaos." This discussion of partisan polarization conflates ideas about social and economic inequality and peacebuilding measures in order to veil ARENA's ideologically driven policymaking, its contribution to the national deficit and its investment in security to realize electoral gains.[17] In Vargas' testimony, the key debate about economic and social policies is obscured by his critique of the FMLN-initiated efforts to attain peace in the country. For example, when I asked him about the National Council of Security and Coexistence, an organization created by the Funes government, Vargas harshly questioned the capacity of its members to implement security.

> Those efforts are like a tea party celebration… it is a Security Council of 70 people, and those who participate look more like a convent or for nymphs… there are more university rectors and priests than other babosada (silly things). What do they know about security?

> It is not that… the method is not the right one, it's the way it's been conducted. In the law exists a defense and security committee… Why not use it? Because [of] their ideologies or their famous inclusivity, but it does not help me much at all, if you don't do anything…

Vargas then turned to the use of "community police," which he described as "a philosophy of behavior of the individual…not an operative strategy."

> They have been numbing us with community police…how are you going to place community police in an infected bolado (thing)… Fuck, if there is Sodom and Gomorrah and gangs exercise the control… [Police] have been killed in their post… What did they do to stop the Ebola in Africa? They zoned, prepared all the equipment, all the personnel arrived, but what did they do? A specific legislation,

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[17] See Góchez et al 2006: 283 for more information on the ARENA movements structural adjustment policies.

they isolated…pa pa pa, until they controlled the Ebola… infected areas exist, cure them.

In *Illness as Metaphor,* Susan Sontag (1989: 81) writes of the ways that political movements have compared social phenomena to "diseases that are loathsome and fatal. Such diseases are not to be managed or treated; they are to be attacked." Vargas argued that the gang-controlled territories are "infected areas" to be isolated and cured. He continued:

> The constitution, Article 212 says, "The president may exceptionally deploy the armed forces for the maintenance of internal peace in accordance with the provisions of this constitution." What is exceptionality? …According to the constitution… if ordinary means have been exhausted for the maintenance of peace, tranquility and public safety.

Looking at me, Vargas asked, "have ordinary means been exhausted?" Answering his own question, he continued:

> They [the FMLN government] are violating the constitution and the armed forces are being poorly used… If they are given the mission, they should be free and politicians who sent them in should assume the cost, not like what happened to us. They gave us [the army during the civil war] the order, we fulfilled a constitutional order: defended a perceived democracy. Today, we are murderers, what a deal.

Vargas' comments on the army's role during the civil war reflect his positionality as a retired army general and currently, a congressman with the ARENA party. In the 1980s, the Salvadoran army fought a brutal war against the FMLN and supposed FMLN sympathizers, which included targeted assassinations, torture and kidnappings. The state justified these actions as necessary to protect itself and the nation from internal enemies. In the post-civil war era, at least one member of the army leadership has been extradited to Spain and many others are facing prosecution for war crimes. Vargas, then, is asserting

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that the army should be allowed to fight the current internal enemy, youth gangs, in order to provide security and attain peace. Drawing on recent history, Vargas is also arguing that the state, not the army leadership, should be made responsible for the army's actions because it is acting on behalf of and under the direction of the state.

Attaining peace in the postwar era has become a key issue for most Salvadorans. For this reason, the political party that attains a reduction in violence tends to gain electoral support. Vargas viewed the current Sanchez Cerén's FMLN government's set of punitive security measures as the "right one," but without the correct leadership. Vargas represented the members of the National Security Council as men who embody a feminized masculinity. He described them as "nymphs" who have made the council meetings a "tea party celebration" instead of a decision-making body. Pointing to what he believes are the correct methods and leadership, Vargas made an analogy between the methods used to cure Ebola in Africa and the methods that should be utilized to "cure" youth gang violence in El Salvador. Vargas repeatedly used the phrase "curing the disease," which has become a commonly used code phrase for advocating the extermination of gang members. Through the analogy, Vargas argued that military men have been trained in the use of violence and have the capacity to follow orders to term, making them experts on security, with the capacity to implement tough policies. This supports the dominant thinking of many Salvadorans that gang members are criminals, without civil, political or human rights.

I asked Vargas, "How do you visualize social peace in the country today?"

He asserted,

> Social peace is nothing more and nothing less than concrete elements of education, health, housing, work…the basic or physiological needs satisfied within… each strata of society will lead us…to a social peace. Call it justice…

Although Vargas' answer equated social peace with providing "concrete elements" of education, health and other fundamental conditions of life, it also assumed continued social stratification as the norm. Vargas' assertion that "basic" needs should be satisfied "within each strata of society" obscured a set of ideological positions that assert fundamental differences in peoples' needs, according to their socio-economic status. For Vargas, the well-being of the nation, or "justice" will be determined by the ability of the government to differentially provide services. The logical outcome of this argument is that the well-being of the nation is measured by its ability to satisfy peoples' needs while maintaining socio-economic hierarchies.

When we finished the interview, I thanked Congressman and former General Vargas for the interview and walked out of his office with a key observation: Vargas had answered my questions, but had done so within the army's and his political party's accepted frameworks for public political debate. He had criticized the non-Criollo led governments of the ARENA party for not consolidating the economic and social policies initiated by former President Cristiani while critiquing the FMLN's populist approaches to governance. Vargas exemplifies the political establishment's dominant thinking and double discourse with regard to youth gangs, which asserts the need to save those who can become productive members of society, while the rest must be purged. This discourse of security normalizes social cleansing as a valid measure to attain peace, instead of grappling with the root causes of postwar social violence.

Alfredo Cristiani, Former President

Photo credit: Tomás Andréu, San Salvador 2015

"Cristiani could meet with you tomorrow. Do you still want the interview?" read the text I got from an acquaintance. "Yes," I replied, elated he was able to broker the interview; Cristiani had not given interviews to Salvadoran newspapers or media in the last few years. In 1989, then president Cristiani represented the rising new leadership of the right-wing ARENA party and the sector of the Criollo economic elite seeking peace. With the support of these local elites, and despite opposition from groups in the military, economic and political hierarchy, his 1989-1994 government negotiated the Peace Accords. Today, Cristiani is a polarizing figure. For many members of the oligarchy, he symbolizes the country's uplifting "economic axis," as Vargas characterized him. However, for a majority of Salvadorans, Cristiani signifies impunity. He is remembered for obstructing the investigation of the assassination of six Jesuit Priests, their housekeeper and her daughter by the right-wing Atlacatl Battalion at the Central

American University. He currently faces charges at the Spanish International Criminal Court for this role.[18]

In July 2015, I drove to Cristiani's compound with the interview broker. At the entrance, a private security guard in his early 20s requested our identification cards. The guard appeared reluctant to admit us; it was obvious to me that our car and our demeanor and clothing did not fit the usual profile of visitors to this upper-class complex. Then, another guard in his mid-40s came over, looked at the cards and at us, and ordered, "Let them in." We drove off, and arrived at Cristiani's private security kiosk where another guard was waiting; he politely walked us into the house.

Minutes later, Cristiani showed up, wearing a sport jacket, and matching trousers. Tall and light-skinned, with silver colored hair, he looked to be in his late 60's. With a friendly demeanor, he courteously welcomed us and led us to a large formal table in the open living room, facing his backyard. I began by explaining the format of the interview and by requesting permission to record the conversation. I then asked Cristiani to introduce himself,

> I have always been an agricultural businessman, mainly, and for life coincidences or things I did not seek out, I spent some time in the country's politics, holding the presidential seat from '89 to '94.

I asked: "Do you think the Peace Accords' objectives were achieved, and to what extent were they transformative for the country?" Cristiani replied:

> I definitely believe they achieved their objective… regardless of whether the accords were the best ones or the most complete. In my opinion, that is secondary because what was sought was that the FMLN, which desired political power

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[18] For further information visit: http://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/perpetrators/

through armed struggle, did so, like any other political party, within the electoral process, without violence, without arms… The other perspective if one wants to see it this way, in my opinion, the Peace Accords became the beginning of the strengthening of institutional democracy. It does not mean the accords were perfect and we stop there and [that] now we live in Wonderland.

Right at the beginning of the interview, Cristiani positioned himself, first, as, "an agricultural businessman," and second, as a person who "spent some time in the country's politics." Although he spoke modestly, these statements identified his membership in the Criollo economic and political elite and his authority to speak about the objectives of his government and his class. For the sector of Salvadoran society that Cristiani represents, the Accords' chief objectives were twofold: to ensure that the FMLN's struggle for state power was enacted via electoral politics rather than warfare, and to strengthen "institutional democracy." Cristian went on to explain that strengthening democracy entailed making the armed forces "obedient to civil power." For the first time in El Salvador's history, it became illegal for an active army member to occupy a state position. These reforms enabled the leftist FMLN to transform itself into a political party and vie for state power via electoral politics.

I attempted to shift the focus of the discussion to the impact of the economic measures introduced by Cristiani's government. I asked him, "Many signatories to the Peace Accords have said that the economic topic was left out of the negotiations. However, many Salvadorans argue that your government's neoliberal economic policies were included in the Accords and that they exacerbated existing economic inequalities. What would you say to these arguments?" Cristiani responded:

I don't know what is the neoliberal system… our economic philosophy is social market economy—the one West Germany implemented a long time ago. What

happened in the country back then was that the macro-economy was totally out of balance. We had [a] high fiscal deficit, inflation above 30% annually, four exchange rates. We had nationalized the financial and the agro-export systems…

Cristiani went on to refute the claims that his government had increased inequity and poverty, explaining that the privatization of banks, tax reform, introduction of IVA (the value- added tax), and liberalization of exchange rates "were made before '92, [and the] cessation of hostilities" to encourage people to invest in the country. He pointed out that these measures resulted in 7% growth and increased wages. He stated, "There is inequality in the distribution of wealth, it is true, there is no point in denying it." Citing research by Manuel Enrique Hinds that plotted a scale of inequality in Latin American nations, he argued, "El Salvador is in the better half." He continued:

> They are right in that the economic and social topic was circumvented on the accords, almost deliberately. Why? Because in the topic of institutional politics there is no difference between democratic left-wing and democratic right-wing. All seek institutional democratization, but in economic and social matters the differences are important. Entering into a negotiation of an economic nature, [debating] what to do with the economy or social programs would have practically made it impossible to achieve accords in these areas... It must be remembered that… the FMLN, two out of five, were Communist Parties…

While Cristiani's acknowledgement that economic and social issues were "circumvented in the accords" is important, his statement that "there is no difference between democratic left-wing and democratic right-wing" was far more revealing. With that statement, Cristiani brought to light the deep sentiment of distrust that the political and economic sectors of the Criollo and mestizo elites and the FMLN peace negotiators had about the army's entrenchment in the state apparatus. Just as in the past, the political and economic sectors of the Criollos in the post-war period sought to gain control over the state apparatus. But in contrast, 60 years of military dictatorship and the guerrilla war for the

democratization of politics, and economic and social justice had forced the Criollos and the mestizo elite enter into dialogue and negotiate a path for the democratization of the state apparatus. For the sectors that Cristiani represents, "institutional democratization" provided a common political objective for the elite and the popular sectors of society that had organized in the guerrilla movement. This objective in turn provided a space for historically opposed sectors of society to reach an agreement: to reform the constitution to ensure that the state apparatus should remain under civilian control, forcing the army to relinquish control of the state apparatus. This constitutional reform democratized electoral politics for the first time in Salvadoran history, opening the door for poor mestizos and other sectors of society such as the FMLN to attain state power.

The signatories of the Peace Accords left the project of grappling with the social and economic inequalities that had been root causes of the civil war for later. The debate about social and economic programs was seen as an impediment to attaining peace, understood as the absence of armed violence. The Accords created the Forum for Social and Economic Consultation, which was tasked with bringing different sectors of society to create and implement social programs and economic policies. Cristiani pointed out:

> A clause…said the government would make a tripartite effort with unions, the business sector, and government post-accords…and in these meetings those issues were going to be discussed… [but] there came a time when some or the other did not assist, and got behind, without continuity…

As the interview progressed, Cristiani continued to assert that his government's structural adjustment policies, including privatization, free trade agreements such as DR-CAFTA, and fiscal reforms, together with the end of the armed conflict, had resulted in

the growth of the macro-economy and reduction of poverty.[19] While it is true that macro-economic growth did occur under Cristiani's administrations, the benefits given to wealthy classes in El Salvador did not "trickle down" or result in new gains for less privileged classes in society. In the 1990s, under the auspices of the Peace Accords and ARENA governments, a wave of privatization of state services, including telecommunications and bank systems took place. These privatization policies largely benefited the Criollo and mestizo economic elite and upper class families who had the purchasing power to buy up segments of the economic infrastructure as they were privatized. Many of the government's former holdings were later re-sold by their private Salvadoran owners to international companies. The privatization of government industries resulted in massive layoffs of state employees, increased the ranks of the economically disenfranchised and contributed to a growing gap between rich and poor.

By refusing to acknowledge these negative economic impacts, Cristiani divorced the effects of his government's economic policies from the rise of post-war social violence. I attempted to make this connection, asking:

> One of the Peace Accords' objectives was to demilitarize public security and put the army back in the barracks. Many Salvadorans currently say that since the ARENA party's Flores government (1999-2004), public security has been militarized to end postwar gang violence. Others argue that this violence comes from your government because it left the socio-economic areas unattended. How do you view the remilitarization of the Salvadoran society?

Letting a soft giggle escape, Cristiani replied:

> One of the mistakes that begins with President Flores is to move the issue of citizen security to the political electoral field. It is one thing to have a hard-hitting policy and it is another thing to announce it with drums; and, after that, the Super

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[19] Dominican Republic and Central American Free Trade Agreements with the United States.

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Iron Fist of Saca… It is a subject that affects us all and we should all be part of the solution and not make it a polarizing aspect. For example, ARENA says Iron Fist, I say dialogue with the gangs…

Giggling, he paused and then continued:

This government [Sanchez Cerén government], it began timid, to the extent that [gang violence] has been increasing. They do not have other alternatives than to be more [of an] iron fist. What I see it is that there is no great…inconsistency in how to approach the issue...

Cristiani's demeanor became more serious as he discussed the Sanchez Cerén FMLN government's approach to the issue of youth gangs violence. I interpreted his giggling as his way to point to the shortsightedness of previous governments' political strategies regarding youth gangs. During my fieldwork, I observed that Sanchez Cerén's government had tried to keep a low media profile about its punitive measures against youth gangs. Cristiani prized and respected this quiet approach. However, he also pointed to what he considered the weakness of the FMLN government's security policies, stating:

They have formed a broad commission, but I say…what does a bishop have to do with public safety? What is his expertise in that subject matter? It is a commission in order to say that all sectors are participating. Experts should be called on the matter…

I asked, "Who would be experts in the subject matter?" Cristiani, responded, by praising the city of Los Angeles for "recovering" territories from gangs. He pointed to Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City, as someone who offered a better model for dealing with youth gangs. He pointed to the accomplishment of the Peace Accords, which placed the armed forces under civilian control, thereby making them "obedient to civilian power" and "taking away [their] control over the national police." Like Vargas, he argued that the post-war constitution empowered the state to use the army against the gangs:

The armed forces, as it is the one called to defend [the] sovereignty and we are already losing territory, we must go out to recover territory. The constitution says that when… the situations exceed the PNC's capabilities, yes, you can make use of the army... it could be said, it can be used.

Cristiani contended that the armed forces should be leading the security measures against youth gangs, as the country is losing "territory" to them. He pointed out that the armed forces are tasked by the constitution with defending national territory and "sovereignty," making military intervention a necessary strategy to not only attain citizen security but defend the nation against attack. Hidden in both Cristiani's and Vargas' discussion of partisan polarization in relationship to the issue of security is their desire to participate in the shaping of the FMLNs security policy. This is the opposite to the ARENA governments' policymaking approach during the Peace Accords negotiations and afterwards, in which they refused to negotiate their social, economic or security policies with the opposition.

Desiring to re-direct the conversation in order to focus on Salvadorans' sentiments about the issue of violence, I noted, "Salvadorans are fatigued with violence in general." Cristiani replied:

I tell you… any plan has to be integral. It has to have a big dose of repression, but also a considerable dose of preventive programs. Unfortunately, the preventive ones are more medium and long term… Because people are tired and want [solutions] right now, that's why you have to have a big dose. We said to Funes that it appeared to us the armed forces are more capable due to their formation… to identify where is the enemy… Then, set up an operation to try to grab the enemy… Those apprehended, it delivers them to the PNC, which takes them to the judges, etc., etc.

Eager to have Cristiani expand on his ideas about plans that are "integral," I asked, "What do you think about the gang truce? Cristiani answered:

"It is terrible… I don't compare that with the FMLN [during the Peace Accords negotiations] because the FMLN had political motivation to seize arms…These ones no, they are for pisto (money), for power, I don't know, for vices, drugs. They aren't equal motivations, one can't respect these types… it is like saying the government is going to negotiate with organized crime. It is not possible. Also, they never stopped extorting. They stopped killing each other, that's why the numbers went down…"

I asked, "Do you think that a reconciliation process, such as the South African one, without a criminal court, could take place in El Salvador?"

It is not to remove amnesty… I don't think it is needed at this point to avoid polarization. It can be a "mea culpa" and practically everyone did it. I … repeat, modify attitudes and re- synchronize towards that end. Hey, it's not that easy.

Finally, I asked, "For you, when would there be social peace in El Salvador?" Cristiani replied, "When we all learn to respect the rights of others, there will be social peace."

To sum up, Cristiani continues to support a negative notion of peace, as the condition for governability, stability, and economic growth. This notion of peace in relation to the political parties' focus on youth gangs' violence obscures one of the problems of El Salvador's nascent democracy: how to achieve social and economic justice for most Salvadorans without resorting to authoritarian measures.

Eduardo Sancho, Commander of the RN - FMLN

Photo credit: Miguel Interiano, San Salvador 2015

The Divine Savior of the World Monument, popularly known as El Salvador del Mundo, consists of a giant cross with is a huge concrete globe above it and a statue of Jesus Christ mounted on its top. To the south of El Salvador del Mundo and to the north of Alameda Franklin Roosevelt Avenue is the Francisco Gavidia University in San Salvador. In July 2015, my research assistant and I went to the Francisco Gavidia university to interview Eduardo Sancho, a founding member of the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (Peoples' Revolutionary Army, or ERP) and the Resistencia Nacional (National Resistance, or RN). In the 1970s, the ERP and RN were two of the five factions that formed the FMLN guerrilla movement.[20] In 1980 Sancho became a member of the FMLN's General Command, and later, a signatory to the 1992 Peace Accords.

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[20] Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front).

We identified ourselves to the private security guards who are stationed at the university's main entrances. Sancho met us at the university's Research Institute where he now works. Before starting the interview, Sancho asked me: "Do you know why we meet here?" Answering his own question, he said: "Because we are going to have an academic conversation. I am no longer interested in discussing military strategies."

Then, he asked: "What about your university affiliation?" I replied, "I am a Ph.D. student at University of Texas at Austin." "So, you know United States military bases are in Texas and your university uses military money?" With this comment, Sancho reminded me of the geopolitical power relations underlying our conversation, especially the long history of U.S. intervention in El Salvador. Sancho then began a historical account of the founding of the guerilla movement:

> The founding groups of the guerrillas in the country are the FPL (Fuerzas Populares de Liberación or Popular Liberation Forces) and EPR... the group had a great idea of creating guerrilla warfare as armed struggle along with diplomacy... it took 20 years to develop... This guerrilla had initiatives and correlations worldwide and it led United Nations to be an observer in the negotiations, for that reason, not because United Nations wanted it, [saying] 'we will help because we are humanitarian,' no. To understand the negotiations that is your topic... it is not only military correlation. In the military correlation, there was a tide... diplomacy was a great force that created balance.

Sancho began by stressing the dual strategies of the FMLN: to achieve its objectives via "armed struggle, along with diplomacy." He pointed to the international connections established by the FMLN which resulted in the United Nations supporting and serving as observers at the peace negotiations. He described the military initiatives as "a tide," noting that "diplomacy was a great force that created balance." When I observed that the

diplomacy that took place during the peace negotiations "seems lost in the postwar era,"

Sancho replied:

> The two sides… once in power don't want to reconcile… My thesis, as statesman… I name myself statist, because I constructed the state. Bad or good, I say regular and bad, because the Peace Accords are already inoperative, they are exhausted.

I asked him to define the main objectives of the Peace Accords. He replied:

> The main objective was to end the war. That was achieved one hundred percent. But, the negotiations tried to make state reforms… They had to be done in the 1950s [in the past] but weren't.

Having positioned himself as a founder of the guerilla movement, Sancho went on to describe himself as a "statesman" who helped to guide the FMLN towards international diplomatic ties and peace negotiations. Sancho agreed that the Peace Accords' chief objective— ending the armed conflict—had been achieved. However, twenty-three years later, he argued that in addition to the armed struggle for political justice, the guerrilla's international diplomatic relationships had been a decisive factor that made the depth of democratic reforms possible. For Sancho, Criollos were not interested in democratizing politics, per se; their main interest was to regain control of the executive power by expelling the army leadership from the state. It was the FMLN's armed struggle for democracy and development of an international diplomatic apparatus that forced the Criollos to agree to reforms that included the democratization of politics by ensuring the left had access to state power via elections.

I was surprised that Sancho had not mentioned economic motives and asked him, "Wasn't the war because of poverty? He disagreed, emphasizing:

> The Peace Accords are political reforms... that we did because [the] war was waged. If not, they aren't done.

> The Peace Accords are already agotados (worn out) by a fault: The Social Economic Forum… was left to the Salvadorans' free will (without mechanism to ensure its viability because) … there was no vision of state development. The development problem of peripheral countries is that today the middle layer grows, but they are managers, employees, those who are in the formal economy. [But] power has also been opened to the informal sector, lumpen sector, narco sector… the informal economy has grown…

Sancho went on to characterize El Salvador as a nation with "four economies:" a formal economy; an economy based on remittances earned abroad; an informal economy; and a welfare economy." He described this precarious and uneven structure as the result of the incapacity of the state to develop a vision of development or control over its own territory and people. The absence of vision and control, in turn, opened the door to the rise of the gangs, "the poor against the poor." He further explained:

> When the state was born, it established sovereignty… territorial and population control… [but]some [territories] remain empty, like during the war: disputed zones, guerrilla controlled zones, state controlled zones... there is a zone of dispute or a zone of nobody.

> The fundamental problem is that you integrate the population into a project of development… After the Peace Accords… the most advanced approach…is to give employment. Then, any kind of employment is correct, yes? … But, that is not development.

> The Peace Accords were *salida emergente* (emergency exit) for a country with… half sovereignty… We haven't fully developed a state vision because we had coups, tyrannies, dictatorships… The war destroyed thousands of schools, lives lost, they all went there [to the United States], we destroyed families… Presently, it is not the oligarchy killing the driver [but] the one who is extorting… It is poor against the poor… it is [a] mafia, economic survival, it became a social stratum.

Throughout our conversation, Sancho emphasized that the issue of El Salvador's "half sovereignty" had to do with the United States history of intervention in the region. He

contended that treaties, such as the Brayan-Chamorro treaty, had left the Central American countries without territorial sovereignty. This treaty granted the Unites States the right to build a naval base in the Gulf of Fonseca, parts of which are claimed by El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. The U.S. kept Nicaragua from building a route that would have competed with the Panama Canal (Walker & Wade, 2011). Sancho also argued that a history of "coups, tyrannies [and] dictatorships" re-enforced this "half sovereignty" because it created a political "inertia," a lack of political will to construct a vision of economic development for a fully independent nation. I understood Sancho's argument as a description of how internal colonialism has operated in Salvadoran society, and how it has shaped the political imagination of Salvadoran leadership.

In the postwar era, Sancho explained that internal colonialism has created new forms of political exclusion. Just as the armed struggle was waged to attain "political reforms," many Salvadorans have accepted the use of violence as a mechanism to demand reforms from the government and to solve conflicts and navigate social relations with other Salvadorans. Sancho asserted that without a vision of development for the country, "We [Salvadorans] are fighting power for [the sake of] power," a situation in which "democracy is being misused because partisan fights for position polarize the country… no accord is reached, one is needed" to attain peace. Sancho argued that, following the political reforms made through the peace accords, El Salvador now requires cultural reform, stating, "Salvadorans have to transform themselves, we have to make a new state, we must make a new culture, a new society… This is the future's challenge, we can't work with patches."

I asked Sancho, "What do you think about the effects of the gang truce?" He

responded that the truce was necessary to curb the spread of the gangs, to create

"accords" with the state, and to defeat the "social mutation" represented by the gangs.

Without the gang truce, there would be no agreements about what constituted criminal

behavior and no ability on the part of the state to punish it.

> The dialogue and truce are necessary…in the metropolitan area… where the
> biggest *deformación* (deviance) of the social condition is located… 35% of the
> population, which is in the barrios… the truce is worth [it] because they are
> expanding to the west and north of the country.
>
> A truce is important because you can reach accords. They are going to say
> extortions are not negotiable, but it is stated in the accords: the one who is proved
> [to have] committed extortion goes to jail. The law applies there… in everything
> that is illegal, criminal…
>
> If there is no truce, it leads us to the confrontation of them with the state… they
> are facing the state as a guerrilla, it is a much stronger guerrilla, more anarchic
> without political and military direction… It is a federation of about 30 thousand
> clicas [gang cells] that can operate in a visible form, can burn buses with people
> inside… it is a social mutation.

Returning to his core theme, Sancho argued that although the problem of social violence

is one that needs an immediate response, El Salvador's central issue is: "how to do state

policies." Asserting that neither the right-wing nor left-wing governments have enacted

effective state policies, he continued:

> Because the cancer exists in the tissue, it is in our body, I believe in…an integral
> development solution, integration of the territory. Resources exist… I am
> separating poverty from social condition[s]. Social conditions make you mistreat
> women; they punched her, killed the son, burned the women due to a passion
> issue, *normal*...

Sancho's point is that state-led territorial economic development would provide

Salvadorans a way to make a living, but a cultural change would still be needed to solve

the issue of social violence. Like other political leaders of the right and left, Sancho used

the metaphor of "cancer…in the tissue" to characterize the "social conditions" that in his

view lead to violence. However, unlike other leaders, Sancho located the cancer not in

the gangs but in the culture of the social body. This led to my next question, "What do

you think about the remilitarization of society to reduce violence?"

> People don't only want militarism, but extermination. It is beyond
> militarization… Everyone is armed… A gunman can show up in front of you
> because you stole his woman… He can kill you for a parking space… The
> condition of social violence doesn't need to be militarized anymore.

Sancho laughed and continued, "Private security agencies are ten times larger than the

police… the gangs are already armed… the country is already militarized."

Throughout the interview, Sancho continued to insist that culture, not poverty,

creates the problem of violence, stating, "It is not poverty that conditions that, because

poverty conditions to be honest people…"

I did not ask Sancho to explain his understanding of peace. However, the notion

of peacemaking that emerged from the interview seems to be tied to his argument for the

"national territorial development project" that he is urging both left-wing and right-wing

governments to adopt:

> The gangs are saying: '*I am part of the problem'*… they are right. You believe
> they would not enter into a national territorial development project? They would
> have to enter. Mobsters can stay because the mafia will always exist, but as it is a
> social movement, having long term development reduces the mafia…

Sancho argued that ARENA's proposal for a national accord on security will not

be enough to reduce social violence. For him, the reduction of violence requires the

transformation of Salvadoran culture. It requires a fundamental shift in national identity,

in what it means to be Salvadoran in a democratic society. It requires the state to conduct itself as "sovereign" with respect to national and international economic and political relations. Sancho argued that this shift required a new cultural accord.

While putting forward an appealing idea of economic development and cultural change in the interests of reducing structural and social violence, Sancho appears to suggest that uneven population growth and "deviance" are the problem. The unequal distribution of wealth and resources in El Salvador's deeply stratified society is not seen as the central challenge to El Salvador's nascent democracy.

Roberto Cañas, Former Commander of the FPL – FMLN

Photo credit: Miguel Interiano, San Salvador 2015

The private Technological University of El Salvador, popularly known as *La Tecnológica*, is located at one of the busiest areas of the capital city, south of the national Rosales Hospital. Its campus is composed of several white and burgundy buildings

divided by public streets and other privately owned buildings, among them a Mister

Donut and a fast food cafeteria style restaurant. All the buildings, including the

restaurants, are protected by private security guards carrying shotguns. Roberto Cañas,

former FMLN-FPL commander and Peace Accords signatory, met with me and my

research assistant at the Mister Donut. Now in his '70's, Cañas is tall and white-haired

with cinnamon brown skin and a serious demeanor. After briefly introducing my

research, I asked Cañas to introduce himself.

> My name is Roberto Cañas. I spent 22 years in the armed struggle that began in
> the early 70's [and] ended with…the signing of the Peace Accords… I am from
> the first guerrilla generation… I participated until the signing of the Peace
> Accords… In midst of that I obtained my economic degree, and once the war was
> over, I studied [for] a postgraduate degree in education. I am a university
> professor and consultant, and have a political practice, but… I am not an activist
> in any political party… conflict resolution is one of my [areas of] expertise.

I asked him, "What were the objectives of the Peace Accords?" Cañas was clearly

annoyed by my question, exclaiming "The objectives! They are right there—you can find

them in the document!" Nevertheless, he answered:

> The first objective was to end the armed conflict by peaceful means in the shortest
> possible time. The second objective was to reunite the country; the third, to
> democratize it, and fourth, the strict respect for human rights...

> It was outside of the negotiation's framework [to decide] the transformation
> of…the economic system. Because there were two dynamics that ran parallel in
> '89 [when] ARENA won the presidential elections; they began implementing a
> neoliberal model in the country and [they also entered into] the peace
> negotiations.

After a brief cellphone interruption, Cañas returned to the interview:

> When there is a military tie there is no correlation of forces to demand changes in
> the economic area… A consensus was reached with the United Nations that the
> modification to the model, not to say of the system, could be done when the

FMLN wins the government… What happens is that six years have passed [with the FMLN in executive power] and it has not been modified, the model is intact.

Laughing, Cañas continued, "Legally, [it was mentioned in the Accords] that Cristiani's government had an economic plan and that they say, 'it is not negotiable'… adjustment programs would not be modified."

Instead Canãs pointed out that deliberations on a final economic plan were delegated to the Foro para la Concertación Económica y Social (Forum for Economic and Social Consultation), popularly known as "the Forum," an entity which, he noted, "Cristiani's government and the business sector later aborted because the '94 elections were coming."

> They said, "let's not continue with the Forum now because it's going to be politicized. Let's retake it after elections." [But] after elections, nothing was done… the socioeconomic topic is the least worked issue of the Accords and [of] the little of what was agreed upon, it is the least fulfilled.

Former FMLN commander Roberto Cañas positioned himself as first generation guerrilla fighter. He was one of the four *frente* commanders who negotiated the Geneva accords, the guiding accords for the rest of the peace negotiations. Cañas agreed with the other Peace Accords' signatories I interviewed that economics was the least discussed topic in the peace negotiations. Like Sancho and unlike Cristiani and Vargas, Cañas argued that Cristiani's government and the business sector consciously chose not to continue participating in the Forum. Although he does not state it directly, Cañas implies that the ARENA government's and business sector's reluctance to participate in the Forum led to a near failure of the limited number of social and economic measures included in the Peace Accords.

The defunct Forum was the Peace Accords' only post-civil war mechanism that gave equal say to the government, business sector, and unions and tasked them to reach agreements on social and economic policies to develop the country. But Cañas pointed out that the FMLN did not transform the neoliberal economic model implemented by ARENA's governments despite holding key political positions for the past six years, including the Vice-Presidential seat during Funes' government and currently, the presidential seat.

Cañas pointed to what he perceived as the limited gains of the Accords, explaining that the Truth Commission exposed some of the most serious human rights violations of the war. But, he added "There hasn't been material or moral reparations to the victims. Cases exist where it isn't known where they are yet." He also pointed to modest forms of land distribution that took place after the Peace Accords were signed, as fighters from both sides of the conflict "became owners of three manzanas (two hectares)" … although he described them as having "almost completely failed" due to the unbalanced structure of trade agreements:

> [As] a result of free trade agreements, the production of basic grains… became expensive due to import… of rice from Vietnam, corn from the United States, and beans from Nicaragua…Those who had lands sold them. Some remained as a cooperative, but the land-distribution effort has almost completely failed.

My interpretation is that, unlike Cristiani, Cañas was implying that ARENA and the FMLN have had a tacit agreement to maintain the neoliberal economic model which has largely benefited the local economic elite. Accordingly, I asked him: "For you, is there a relationship between the historic inequality and the phenomenon of violence today? If so, what is it?" He replied, "The context that makes possible the current conflict we live in

has structural and conjectural causes, such as family disintegration [and] lack of a culture

of peace." He continued:

> Family disintegration…that primary agent of socialization that establishes …
> what is right, wrong, socially suitable or not in social life has been lost. Because
> children are with the mother, the older sister, the aunt or the grandmother… The
> normal thing here is family disintegration.

> The national average of education is six years… But, then, with a society in which
> there is family disintegration, [and]very low schooling levels, there are problems
> of lack of employment and recreational spaces. Education fails to fill the gap of
> inculcation of values, as [the] second agent of education after the home… These
> intervening factors generate risk of formation of criminal groups... not only youth
> gangs... Here, there are youth gangs, drug trafficking, organized crime…

Cañas argued that the "lack of a culture of peace" is caused by the disintegration of the

family. Cañas links this disintegration to the normalization of a culture of violence as part

of everyday life in post-war El Salvador.

> If you are Salvadoran you must have suffered. When your mother called you:
> "Ruth Elizabeth, come," then said it a second time: "Ruth Elizabeth please come,"
> then a third time, you knew the conflict your mother had with you for something
> you did was not going to be solved in a peaceful way. Violence is present in all
> areas of Salvadoran social life… It is that culture, understood as beliefs,
> traditions, [and] customs that, additionally to poverty, inequality and exclusion,
> generate crime…It is an authoritarian culture of imposition of the strongest over
> the weakest.

Cañas continued to stress the role and responsibility of women to create a culture of

peace.

> Mothers are fundamental because the element here is a total matriarchy…around
> the mother orbits the family's head, they are the majority… of disintegrated
> families… They are the primary agent of socialization that reproduces the same
> machismo… Mother says, "Son, do not cry, that is a woman's thing" ... It was
> taught to me as well.

I commented, "But that is a problem because in a society..." Cañas interrupted me,

saying, "They reproduce machismo." Trying to finish my statement, I asserted, "But in

practice the responsibility falls upon women." Cañas, agreeing with me, said, "Yes, men are irresponsible, [they] leave, causing women to become the head of the family."

This exchange highlights how, in Cañas' view, the culture of peace has to include a transformation of the cultural issues that sustain inequality and violence in post-war El Salvador. To attain this culture of peace in a context of family disintegration and machismo, women become responsible for transforming society by providing children with models of behavior that are not based in violence or in patriarchal gender roles. Cañas asserts that family disintegration is the result of the machista practices of many Salvadoran men who abandon their families, leaving children and the household under the sole care of mothers. But he also asserts that women perpetuate those gendered roles.[21] Because most children do not complete their formal education beyond sixth grade, the school system does not have the opportunity to inculcate the values that would lead to peaceful social practices. This, in turn, further confers more responsibility on women to teach civic values. Cañas rationalizes that because Salvadoran society socializes women and men to believe that domestic roles such as childrearing, housekeeping, and serving men are women's tasks, women are reproducing patriarchy. To attain a culture of peace, Cañas holds mothers and other women responsible not only for caring for their families but also for planting the values needed to construct a culture of peace.

Cañas' comments obscure how a patriarchal society sustains itself and subordinates women economically and socially (for instance, paying lower wages, or

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[21] Cañas' gendered assertions point to a topic that needs to be further discussed: the extent to which women reproduce patriarchy. I hope to address this issue in future work.

excluding women from participation in policy decisions). His assumptions about the roles

of women in El Salvador run the risk of reproducing the increasingly dominant narrative

within Salvadoran society that blames working class women for the reproduction of

violence. In Chapter Six, I discuss how women protect and defend their relatives who are

youth gang members, even while they also critique youth gang violence and gendered

forms of violence. Although Cañas would agree on the need for economic reform to

create more equality between women and men and between classes, his emphasis on the

family and the role of women avoids an examination of the patriarchal logics that sustain

violence in everyday life. Finally, he obscures the ways that women, before, during and

after the Civil War, created and continue to create their own mechanisms for dealing with

the violence of the war, youth gang violence, and gendered violence.

Because Cañas continued to link family disintegration to the culture of violence, I

asked, "What do you think about the gang truce…and How do you view various

governments' strategies to address gang violence?" He responded:

> The truce was President Funes' resource to present something that was working
> … But the cost of that was to give youth gangs belligerence… Extortions,
> robberies continued… they reduced homicides, but disappearances increased.
> Clandestine cemeteries were later discovered…Since Flores, Saca increased the
> armed forces' intervention… and now it's even more! *The constant has been the
> armed forces' presence in public safety activities.*

I asked Cañas to elaborate on the significance of the armed forces' involvement in

"public safety," asking, "What does this remilitarization mean for you as Peace Accords'

negotiator?"

> The main achievement of the Peace Accords was separating the armed forces
> from security functions. The constitution was modified… The army only has two
> functions: to defend the territory's integrity and [to defend] national sovereignty.

It can't participate in public security functions. Today, they [the FMLN government] speak of three counter-insurgency battalions, immediate reaction battalions, with [the] same names, like during the war… "social cleansing battalions." What is really happening?

He continued,

The constitution says: "Yes, exceptionally the President of the republic can temporarily place the army in public security functions." But how many years have we had that temporality? It became permanent… I feel offended because the main achievement of the Accords, in the letter and in spirit is no longer being fulfilled.

Cañas clarified later that the use of police intelligence would be a better alternative to the military. But, he added, it would not necessarily be an easier project for dealing with "a monster of a thousand heads," as he characterized youth gangs. He argued that postwar security policies have been "one-dimensional," collapsing the problems of social violence into "just gangsters, delinquents, crimes" to be dealt with "only [by] repression."

Like Sancho, Cañas questioned the overemphasis that different post-war governments have given to the issue of youth gang violence and the security policies they have developed in response. For him, these governments' security policies have been one-dimensional, focusing on youth gangs as criminal groups and on homicides as the only crime. Cañas suggests that this policy is not realistic in a social context where other criminal organizations and drug trafficking also exist. For Cañas, El Salvador needs a multidimensional security policy in order to grapple with the issue of social violence. I, therefore, asked him, "In this context of social violence, there are increasing numbers of Salvadorans who say that new accords for social peace are needed. What do you think?"

I believe that gang members are excluded from that accord, right, criminal groups… what there could be is a national accord for security, where all actors within the law can implement a set of immediate, short and medium term

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measures to solve this social problem. [This] supposes a public policy that has several aspects.

I was interested in hearing him elaborate on his answer, so I asked him, "What would be the elements and concept for a social peace?"

> Social peace is made possible to the extent that …un estado de bienestar (a state of well- being) … is generated: everyone has education, a decent job, culture of respect, tolerance... For me, social peace is a state of harmony in society, where there is a culture… in compliance with the law as well… Why the law? They are norms that regulate coexistence. Respect for the law has to exist because if you don't respect the law, the rule of law doesn't work. Since democracy has never been here, we must educate for coexistence, for peace, for the culture of peace.

Cañas agreed with Sancho that, parallel to a multidimensional security policy, the country needs to envision a productive system that allows Salvadorans to attain un estado de bienestar (good living) and socio-culturally transform Salvadoran society. He moved beyond Sancho's position to urge the creation of a culture of peace. Cañas still views youth gangs as criminals, not political actors, and therefore, as a threat that needs to be grappled with.

Conclusion

This chapter calls for a critical understanding of peace, peacemaking, and peacebuilding in El Salvador. In their interviews, FMLN peace negotiators revealed that time pressures and the intransigence of the ARENA party led them to accept neoliberal capitalism as a model for economic development. Cristiani's interview acknowledges that Criollos accepted the democratization of politics because they had reached a conclusion that it was the only way to construct a rule of law to prevent the army from intervening in civil affairs either through politics or by force.

However, the elite notion that a capitalist economy and cessation of military hostilities would bring peace has been challenged in the postwar setting. As former FMLN commanders have discussed, peace is not only the absence of armed violence, but the transformation of an economic system that was historically structured to meet the needs of the elite, and of socio- cultural practices that normalized domination and the use of violence against sectors of the population. Peacemaking and peacebuilding mechanisms must address short-term needs as well as the long-term transformations needed to attain a socially just peace in Salvadoran society.

I have demonstrated in this chapter that the peacebuilding mechanisms of the 1992 Peace Accords left intact the logics that made violence acceptable in the first place, assuming that reinsertion into a neoliberal peace would erase El Salvador's violent past and construct a peaceful future. In Chapter Five, I will show how, in response to this capitalist and negative notion of peace, youth gangs are drawing on civil war veterans' experiences with war violence, the peace process, post-war economic survival and the traumas of war to model their own understandings of peace negotiations with the government. But instead of challenging the dominant notions of peace, youth gangs instead seek to bargain for a more safety for their families and a better economic outcome for themselves.

Chapter 5:

Youth Gangs' Peacemaking:

"For the Country, Our Families and Ourselves"

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2015

In summer 2012, I took a taxi to a coffee shop located in one upper class mall at the Zona Rosa in San Salvador. I entered the mall, passing by private security guards armed with shotguns. Inside the coffee shop, customers were drinking coffee and eating breakfast while piano music played in the background. They seemed to be enjoying the weekend. I was there to meet with Diego, who had invited me to talk with him and Beto, his nephew, an active Mara Salvatrucha gang member for approximately 20 years. Diego and Beto were seated in the coffee shop's patio wearing short-sleeved shirts and dress pants. I formally greeted them, and they introduced me to Luis and Cangrejo, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, another Mara Salvatrucha gang member whom they had invited to

join the meeting. Neither, Beto nor Cangrejo have visible Mara Salvatrucha gang tattoos,

and so the meeting seemed like a group of regular people having breakfast in a coffee

shop often used for business meetings and recreation. Diego explained to Cangrejo:

> This is Elizabeth, the friend I told you had done a study about ex-enemy civil war combatants' postwar coexistence practices. I invited her to talk to us so that she can learn more about the truce.

I shook hands with Cangrejo and began the interview by asking him whether he

supported the gang truce, and how it worked for him. He replied:

> Before I did not think like this [to support the gang truce] but I now have a child, a baby girl. I want to give her the life I did not have. It is difficult. You go out, the police can arrest you, kill you. You look for a job, and they see that you have been a gangster. No one wants to employ you, it shows up on my record… They make it seem like they want peace, but then they close themselves.

In reference to the 1992 Peace Accords Diego responded, "Yeah, one feels manipulated."

This chapter discusses the ways that youth gangs made the patriarchal gender

norm of "protecting" a key motivation for engaging in national and localized grassroots

practices of peacemaking in El Salvador. Contrary to the dominant belief that youth

gangs can only produce violence and crime, youth gangs have engaged in different

practices of grassroots peacemaking using the 1992 Peace Accords as a model. The

gangs' identification and embracing of patriarchal principles signaled that they have

analyzed the rhetoric through which the different postwar ARENA and FMLN

governments and the state have criminalized them and robbed them of their humanity.

The rival youth gangs' use of the 1992 Peace Accords as a peacemaking model for

ending the social conflict reveals that youth gangs, similar to the state, have equated the

absence of violence among gangs, and between the youth gangs and the state, to peace. I

suggest that Veena Das' (2007) argument that foundational events become absorbed in everyday life and continue to inflict suffering in society in their aftermath holds true for understanding the negative notion of peace in postwar El Salvador.

Veena Das (2007) has studied how "the foundational violence" that took place during the founding of the Indian nation-state continues to inflict social suffering in the everyday life. Das argues that the social contract in which the nation-state is rooted invisibilizes the ways that certain intimate and familial practices of violence are sustained. The social contract arbitrarily assigns men to the political community and women to the domestic one. Based on this social contract, men and women give the state control over population and territory. They also give the state a monopoly on the use of violence. Men go to war, sacrificing their lives for the well-being of the community. In exchange, the sovereignty of the state ends at the door of the home, where the rule of men begins. Referencing Severance (2000), Das states that women engage in a sexual contract in which they accept the rule of the father in exchange for protection from other families and men, and reduction of violence directed against them by the male head of the family. Das (2008) calls this social contract "the foundational violence," and critiques the assumption that it brings peace to society and to the home.

Normatively inter-state violence, such as a civil war, is understood as a parenthetical framework in time during which armed confrontation among groups of people (dominantly conformed by men) and different practices of violence take place against men and women. This can include disappearances, torture, and sexual violence. It is further understood that these forms of violence considerably diminish as people come

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to live together again at the end of the conflict. However, even while violence against women became inscribed into national discourses as violence against the nation, the very violence against women (e.g. rape) that inspires people to defend women and the nation becomes women's source of suffering in everyday life. For Das, belonging to a community does not necessarily provide individuals with security and the absence of violence. Das (2013: 15-16; 205) urges us to understand "how violence is produced and lived with" and to seek out "who continues to inhabit the same space" of violence. She also urges us to understand the way that social agreements about what constitutes human and non-human, structure what life and living mean for people who continue to inhabit spaces of violence (2013: 15-16). In this chapter, I use her concept of "life and worlds" to analyze how gang members used the 1992 Peace Accords as a framework and model for their peacemaking efforts. I further analyze how this modeling has normalized gender violence as part of peace.

In El Salvador, the 1992 Peace Accords became the social contract that ended violence and set the context for the building of peace. However, after the Peace Accords, El Salvador became one of the world's most "peacetime" violent countries. Since 2003 various governments have built the protection of the family and of women into their rhetoric of security and peacemaking (See Chapter three). At the same time, these governments and their state security policies have characterized the war on youth gangs as non-political conflict. In reaction, youth gangs have reclaimed the patriarchal norm of "protection" of the family and women as their own impetus for dialogue and/or violent confrontation with the state (see Chapter One). I suggest that patriarchal norms structured

the social conflict between youth gangs and the state while also enabling youth gangs to engage in peacemaking practices to attain social peace for the country, their families and themselves.

In this chapter, I discuss gang members' view of the Peace Accords as I learned about them while carrying out fieldwork on civil war veterans. I then present two ethnographic vignettes and interview excerpts that address the perspectives of mid-rank, rival MS-13 and Pandilla 18 gang members on the gang truce with the Funes government. I provide a combined analysis that shows the striking similarities of those perspectives. Finally, I offer both, an analysis of the youth gangs peacemaking, which is highly gendered and my own positionality and entrance to gang members' perspectives and family lives. I demonstrate that youth gangs reclaimed the gendered patriarchal norm of "protecting" to assert their humanity and social belonging, and to position themselves as actors in a social conflict. I further show that in this process they reproduce the state's understandings of peace and its practices of peacemaking.

Gang Members' View of the Peace Accords

It was a hot afternoon in the capital city of San Salvador in 2011. I had convened a focus group with the civil war veterans whose practices of postwar grassroots peacemaking I was studying at the house of a former guerrilla collaborator. This was the same research meeting in which Beto told me that Mara Salvatrucha was exploring a gang truce with rival gangs (see Chapter One). Diego, Beto's uncle and an ex-FAL-FMLN mid-rank guerrilla, and Roberto, an ex-Atlacatl Battalion Army Captain, were among other civil war veterans present at the meeting. These civil war veterans were

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active in the fighting until the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords. In the post-war era,

they engaged in practices of coexistence due to political exclusion and economic

disenfranchisement (See Velásquez Estrada 2015). They also worked together to mentor

their relatives who are gang members in order to support the gangs' peacemaking efforts.

After a lengthy discussion about the post-civil war grassroots peacemaking

practices, I asked Beto: "Do you think there is a relationship between the Peace Accords

and the social conflict affecting society today?" Beto answered, stating:

> They demobilized and everything, but [the leadership] thought it was just an agreement to sign, and everything was peace. They left them abandoned. I know several soldiers and some guerrillas who joined the new violence, many whom are now dead… they incorporated themselves into the new violence that the United States sent.

I further asked: "So, if there is no peace in El Salvador, is the country at war?" Beto

replied, "They [civil war veterans] taught us to do things against civilians… So, here we

are at war, but it is another type of war. It is a war between ourselves, society, and the

state…" He added:

> This society, this system, the state tells us *bichos* [youth] "Keep fucking around because you are not going to survive. And besides, we [politicians] are not thinking about solving anybody's problem, we are thinking about being politicians, how to fill our pockets…"

> They [the state security forces] started to chase and kill us, so … [the youth gangs] started to kill soldiers. It was becoming like… a small war, right? So, they [the state security forces] began to calm down because what they were doing was to catch *bichos* [gang members] and kill them, as during the [civil] war. They were lying on the streets… we said, "No, those are lies" that the others [the rival gang] did it [killed them] because it [executions] is the culture that the military has inculcated to the new soldiers... they are 20-year-old soldiers, young people. It is not like they lived the war... [Thus] the state is the one that has pushed delinquency to generate violence in another way...

> Violence does not bring anything, like the repression that the state has placed on the gangs… Before I thought differently… listening to conversations of the old ones. However, *torpes* (awkward) they may seem to young people, they always have something to teach you.

Beto went back to the conversation about his gang's exploration of a gang truce, saying, "The state should push forward a gang truce, but we have to put it into practice." But Diego rejected the comment, stating, "I think differently… It is our obligation to reconcile. The state does not care."

Beto's statement that, army and guerrilla combatants joined youth gangs and taught gang members violent techniques of war, raises a number of questions. To what extent did civil war veterans join youth gangs and teach gang members war techniques? How did youth gangs recognize the state security forces violence from their own? I want to call attention to the way that Beto began answering my questions about the relationship between the Peace Accords and the phenomenon of youth gangs. He emphasized that the Peace Accords, along with the leadership of the army and the leadership of the FMLN, left civil war veterans on their own. Despite this outcome, he believed the state needed to support youth gangs' peacemaking efforts.

The gang leaders and many gang members agree with Salvadoran governments and the broader Salvadoran society that they are part of the problem of widespread violence in the country. They do not fight the state's characterization of them as criminals. Following U.S. gang culture, the rival Salvadoran youth gangs began marking streets and entire neighborhoods as their own and under their control. To maintain social and territorial control, youth gangs frequently killed rival gang members who entered "their territory" and have instituted a policy of *ver, oir, y callar* (see, hear, and say

nothing). To make a living, youth gangs began imposing "rent" (informal taxation) on other Salvadorans living in poor barrios and working class areas. However, for gang members, these practices do not erase the fact that the phenomenon of youth gangs emerges from intersecting historical processes. On one hand, the postwar governments' invisibilization of, and inaction towards, the needs of a growing youth population increased the number of youth disillusioned with a social-economic-political system and the politicians in a country that offered neither opportunities for upward mobility nor a better life. On the other hand, according to Beto, the Salvadoran youth gangs' culture was the outcome of both, "the new violence that the United States send" and the incorporation of war veterans into youth gangs. Additionally, for Beto's the state's punitive approaches, "to chase and kill" gang members forced gang members to engaged in organized increased levels of violence against the state's security forces. Youth gangs hold the United States deportation policy and the postwar political establishment and the state responsible for the Salvadoran youth gang phenomenon. Specifically, gang members hold the Salvadoran political establishment and the state responsible for the development of youth gang violence as is and for the war on gangs that has defined human rights as an obstacle to ending youth gang violence.

Youth gangs have developed a sharp critique of politicians viewing them as people who only thought about themselves and "how to fill their pockets," as Beto stated. According to Beto, they also began a process of reflection about the violence that youth gangs exercise against one another at the localized level in their *clicas* (loosely formed groups). When Beto told me, "those are lies, that the other [the rival gang] did it because

it is the culture that the military has inculcated in the new soldiers," he brought to light

that, despite the war among rival gangs, gang members could still recognize that it was

the state who was killing them. This recognition of state violence against youth gangs

opened a door for gang members to view members of enemy gangs as people who had

grown up in the same neighborhood with similar socio-economic conditions. This

recognition of state violence also appears to have inspired reflection about the ways that

violence brings about more violence and positioned peacemaking as an alternative path

for attaining peace in the post-war era. In a context where youth gangs are fighting a war

among themselves and against the state and civil society, youth gangs analyzed the peace

negotiations and civil war veterans' experience with the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords

as lessons for their own peacemaking process with the state.

Youth gangs view the Peace Accords as a model that would enable them to

negotiate an end to the confrontation with the state security apparatus and civil society.

They also view the Peace Accords model as a vehicle for reinsertion into society and as a

way to establish new parameters regarding human rights in relation to criminalized

sectors of society in El Salvador. Drawing on the experiences of civil war veterans with

the Peace Accords, gang members wanted to negotiate a peace that did not set them aside

the way veterans had been, requesting social and economic programs that would allow

them to survive in a neoliberal society that viewed them as a social plague. The model of

the Peace Accords seems feasible for youth gangs for two reasons: first, the social

contract that structures it, which arbitrarily assigns men to the political community and

women to the domestic one, provides gang members with a patriarchal logic for

positioning themselves as protectors of "the country, the family and themselves;" and second, youth gangs' peacemaking does not aim to transform the neoliberal model embedded in the Accords.

A Mara Salvatrucha Mid-Rank Gang Leader's Perspective on the Gang Truce

In 2012, after Diego had introduced me to Cangrejo at the coffee shop, we began to talk about the truce among the rival youth gangs and between the youth gangs and the state. In the middle of the conversation, a white woman researcher affiliated with the U.S. Open Society Foundation tipped off by Luis, a friend of Diego's, showed up apologizing for parachuting the meeting. Luis introduced Beto, saying, "Beto is a Mara Salvatrucha *palabrero* (gang sector leader)." Luis then introduced me as someone connected to the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA), a U.S. based, well respected human rights organization with a record of long standing work in El Salvador and with the U.S. Congress. Surprised, the researcher asked me, "You are with WOLA?" I replied, "I did an academic summer placement with them, as part of a program between my university and WOLA, but am now here for my own dissertation research." I wanted to acknowledge that I had held a research position with WOLA, but make it clear that I was now conducting my own research.

This clarification was important for me because the idea that I might have been hired by a U.S. organization to do a study about the gang truce would have meant I had access to vast economic support, and thus, would have created an expectation of monetary compensation. At the same time, any affiliation to a U.S. organization could

have become a triple-edged sword in a post-war socio-politically divided society, where the United States government's history of intervention and involvement continues to carry heavy weight. It could have opened some doors and closed others among people within NGOs, academic institutions, and state officials.

Diego, Beto, Luis, Cangrejo and I made room for the OSF researcher. She explained she was doing research about how the truce took place and the challenges it faced within the communities. She also noted that arranging meetings with Funes government officials had been challenging. No one wanted to give her an interview about the gang truce. Beto interjected saying, "Of course, politicians are only interested in themselves." Diego commented:

> We are talking about the same topic with Elizabeth. There are at least three [youth gang] practices of peacemaking. There is the one… among the gang leadership, who have been connected to the churches and to the ex-FMLN commander, who organized an effort for the truce among the rival youth gangs. There is the propaganda truce…and if you ask different sectors of society they tell you they do not believe in that truce [with the government] but wishfully say they hope it does happen.

A waitress came by offering coffee. Beto and Cangrejo limited themselves to watching everyone. Diego continued:

> There are the truces that they [*clicas*] have done with NGOs, local government, churches, and with the people in their own communities… Emotionally some muchachos (youth, in this case he refers to gang members) want to demobilize, but they want to do it with dignity and they are saying we want this and this, but that proposal the local governments or NGOs are not engaging with… They [local governments and NGOs'] tell youth: you have to do this and that…

Cangrejo, commented, "*Pues sí* (of course) one wants to demobilize."

Pointing to his nephew, Diego said, "Beto has 20 years doing that, so it is a way of life. Now how do you make their life more just? Because next to them, there are relatives,

their mothers, it is a large social fabric." Diego took the conversation back to the

discussion of youth gangs' practices of peacemaking, saying, "We [veterans] are betting

on the truce the *muchachos* have been doing and are proposing in the barrios." Beto

explained:

> They [politicians] believe that if this [peace] is over, then they will not win. What
> they have done with this issue is to balance it for those who are in power to keep
> it and present themselves as doing well, but when the other election comes, who
> knows. Here will be *Sodoma y Gomorra*, a disorder, because I do not know how
> long they can keep this going…

Beto then pointed at me,

> As I told them, it is not because there is a work of conscience, an honest social
> work on their [the gangs'] part, it is because there has been a situation in the
> prisons that the prisoners themselves cannot endure, then they [the government]
> have taken advantage of, and manipulated, the situation.

Referring to the reduction of homicides, Beto stated:

> There has been a reduction in homicide because there has been a willingness on
> the part of the gangs. But it is *voluntad cortante* (forced willingness) and it is not
> an honest and conscious thing. It is because they [homies] say, well let's do this
> so that my *cheros* (friends) at least will not be beaten [in jail], but what is going to
> happen when they [gang members outside of prison] get bored with babysitting.
> Everything will return because it is not the same... … if I want to change, I would
> like to do it not because someone else is demanding it from me."

For this Mara Salvatrucha gang leader, the Funes government's support of the

gang truce and gang peacemaking efforts has been the outcome of two distinct interests.

On one hand, the politicians' desire to stay in state power led them to support the gang

truce and present it as part of a political campaign that celebrated attaining peace in

postwar El Salvador. On the other hand, the leadership of the rival youth gangs, Mara

Salvatrucha and Pandilla 18, was tired of the state's punitive measures as well as living

conditions inside the prisons. These experiences led them to organize a gang truce and

negotiate a reduction of homicidal violence with the state. The coming together of these two different interests that led to a gang led, government-supported, peacemaking effort brought about a context in which many gang members viewed the opportunity to demobilize and leave the gang.

A Pandilla 18 Revolución Mid-Rank Leader's Perspective on the Gang Truce

I met Edwin through Diego the ex-guerrilla combatant who was mentoring him about peacemaking practices. During our first conversation Edwin agreed to participate in my study of the youth gangs' grassroots peacemaking efforts. On a different day, I returned to Diego's home to continue interviewing Edwin. After the formal greetings and a little plática (friendly chat), I asked Edwin, "how did the truce arise?" Exhaling the smoke from his cigarette, Edwin replied:

> The truce arose in 2012. The truce was a project like any social program. At no time was it used as a policy. It was not something where we said, 'let's run a fake,' and it is all a lie. People went to the trouble. They studied the situation of the country, and realized then that the solution is the problem. Although institutions should have had to support the truce, they did not. Thus, they proposed to present the project to certain people. We conveyed the objectives, it was studied and it was seen as a good project and then the truce was proposed to certain leaders of the youth gangs and it was then also conveyed to the entire population of the pandilla: 'Look, this is the project', and they accepted the challenge because it was a big challenge. That is how the truce was born.

I further inquired: "Were you in prison when the gang truce with the government happened? "Yes," Edwin replied. I asked, "How much acceptance was there for the youth gangs' population outside of the prison?"

> In any organization, no one is involved entirely, but we talk about maybe 1 percent, who for personal reasons, for whatever reason [did not support the truce].

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When the truce was made, many were afraid, because the government has always offered projects, and it is actually a lie.

They [people from those organizations] will come and ask, what would you want, when in fact, they were people outside of the government. In reality, they posed a very crude reality that the government is already against our family, against us, and thus what do we want for our families, la *prescipción* (prescription). We were seeing that many of our *compañeras de vida* (partners), sisters, mothers…

I interrupted to ask, "What is the prescription? "

The prescription is that every person that is close to you (gang members) is assumed to be a family's conduit (for the youth gangs). Something illogical because if you are a gang member, how would you want to hurt your family? It is one more way to isolate and harm us.

I asked, "Did you have people close to you who were imprisoned? If so, what was your reaction?" Edwin answered, "Pain, impotence, frustration, anger, even being delinquent, I felt a sense of injustice."

We have ethics, and we respond for the kind of life, life path, we walk. There is a cost, which is our life, and not only that you are going to be dead, the prison, the hospital, and we are willing to pay the cost. For example, if we kill someone, we know that at some point they can catch us and we will pay that sentence. If you commit extortion [informal taxation], if you commit a robbery, we accept justice. However, we do not accept that they prey on my mother because she is the gangster's mom because they say that they collect money, that they keep arms, when those who walk in the gang are us members, not our family... Your mother might be the only one who takes food to you, and they cut you off. That is a great injustice.

I asked, "What did the gang truce mean for you, and what other challenges did you have?"

Here is a constant war, in which your enemy wants to kill you, weaken your gang and your territory. That is how we have lived… You know that if you get relaxed it can cost you your life, and after so long comes the truce. There is a break because there is a non- aggression agreement of non-homicides.

In the same way, it helped in the prison. After imposing some very strong regimes… they come beat you, torture you. And so, with the truce, the rights are

taken back… we have longer family and intimate visits, but it is not something that we were awarded, like a prize. We were given up for nothing because rights are something that we have in the constitution… the truce helped us to live better inside the prison.

At the same time, there is always something behind it… nothing is transparent…it is illogical that in two years, after decades of war, the truce would be perfect… the government takes advantage, subjugates, and persecutes them [the gang members outside of prison] … many comrades went to work sector by sector because of the truce and what the government did was to put them in prison… they do not give solutions… they boycotted them… they always do the same. There are no solutions, there is only repression. When you corner someone, one will find one or another way out… so who generates more [violence]?

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2015

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The two vignettes described above present us with the point of view of two mid-rank gang leaders, Beto from Mara Salvatrucha, and Edwin from Pandilla 18 Revolution. Their testimony sheds light on their gangs' motivations for engaging in peacemaking with the state. I juxtapose these two vignettes because they show the way that these rival

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gangs found a common cause to work together for peace based on the state repression against themselves and their families in the *barrios* where they live and in the prisons. However, instead of rejecting the state and society's characterization of gang members as purveyors of violence, in order to position themselves solely as victims of state violence, gang members used their complex positionality to make a living and forge their own practices of peacemaking. While gang member participants of my research cannot precisely identify when the gang truce with the state began, a constant thread in their explanation of the gang truce with the state is the youth gangs' long term process of reflection on the state violence against them and their families. I want to discuss the way that youth gangs' notion of peace and peacemaking, reflecting the concepts set forth by the Peace Accords, sustains gender hierarchies and violence. The analysis of youth gangs' peacemaking practices in relation to histories of violence will enable us to examine how some violence is viewed as part of a conflict while other forms of violence are normalized as a part of everyday life.

Gang members from these rival gangs have internalized the idea that becoming part of a gang entails becoming part of a larger family and participating in an inter-gang war based on the defense of territory. The gang (or their "acquired family") usually marks territory, such as streets, hallways, or entire neighborhoods as being under their control. Inter-gang violence is based on the defense of that territory and hatred directed against the rival gang. Rival gang members often kill one another, which creates a perpetual cycle of violence. When one gang member gets killed by a rival gang, the deceased member's gang kills one or a few rival gang members to avenge their fallen

brother. Getting killed by the rivals, getting sentenced to prison, and being injured as a result of this violence are expected parts of gang life.

As a part of their culture, youth gangs also exert social control over the population where they live. Referring to the explicit rule of *ver, oir y callar* (see, listen, and say nothing) that gang members have imposed on the inhabitants of the communities they control, Edwin once told me, "if people do not mess with us, why should we bother them?" The gang members with whom I worked on several occasions, and in various ways, told me that this rule was imposed so that the community would not interfere with gang activity. Gang activity includes watching out for who comes in and out of their territory, hanging out, engaging in violent confrontations, spending time with girlfriends, drinking and getting stoned. As long as someone from the community does not interfere or call the police, they will not meddle in peoples' lives. They explained that when threats and physical assaults against people in the community took place, it was because people had confronted a gang member, informed police about gang activity, or refused to pay *renta* (informal taxation). Gang members usually taxed small businesses and bus drivers, but they also accepted goods from private truck companies as the *renta* payment (e.g. bread, drinks, etc.). For these gang members, the intra-gang violence described above and the gang's control of neighborhoods could have continued to slowly escalate.

However, the government's war has made the gangs more effective actors in violent confrontations against members of the state security forces and in their forms of social control. In response to state violence, youth gangs' activities have also expanded to include protection of the communities they control. Youth gangs began to exert a tighter

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control over their territories and worked to improve relationships within their own communities. After spending the afternoon conducting participatory observation in Edwin's neighborhood, I went to my car to get my camera to take some photos and realized that I had left the car open the entire time. When I commented about this to Edwin and his family, he told me, "No one is going to steal from you here; you are here with us and if anyone would steal in this neighborhood it is us." As it turns out, gang members had prohibited stealing and selling drugs within the barrios they control to counter increasing police surveillance in the area. This agreement between youth gangs and community members is one of many localized peacemaking practices in gang controlled territories.

On another occasion, I was traveling using public transportation when I overheard an informal vendor telling another vendor that youth gangs had increased his *renta* from 25 cents to 1 dollar a day. He was going to talk to the *palabrero* (sector leader) to have the renta reduced. When I mentioned to Beto the conversation I had overheard, he responded that a few people had asked him if this gang imposed extortion on community members. Beto commented that his gang had conducted their own investigation on several occasions to find out if a member of their gang was extorting people. They found on many occasions that people's own friends, their own relatives, or the police were the ones conducting the extortion. They conducted this investigation because Beto's Mara *Salvatrucha clica* no longer imposed *renta* on people within the barrios they controlled. Not imposing *renta* on community members has become another peacemaking practice in which youth gangs have engaged at the barrios where they live.

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Another time, a friend who works in Mejicanos in a working-class neighborhood told me about the peacemaking practices that gang members engage in. He told me that after the police imprisoned Mara Salvatrucha gang members and removed them from the community, the residents contacted the gang leadership in prison to ask them to send other gang members to keep thieves and the rival gang from coming into their neighborhoods. These peacemaking practices strengthened the *ver, oir y callar* rule because some members of the community began to look favorably on it, seeing it as a mechanism to reduce common crime.

Although localized peacemaking practices did not stop the gangs from engaging in violent confrontations against rival youth gangs and the state, Beto and Edwin both agreed that state violence against the youth gangs in prison and against their families raised a desire in gang members for a gang truce with their rivals. On different occasions, Beto and Edwin told me that many of their fellow gang members were beaten, tortured, placed in isolation, and required to follow a strict prison regimen while imprisoned in extremely unsanitary conditions. They pointed out the long waiting hours and very short visiting times with their mothers and partners as other ways the government isolated them. They both viewed the physical searches to which their partners were subjected, which they said included cavity searches for drugs in their vaginas, as a violation. In addition, they viewed the government's efforts to criminalize their mothers, sisters, and partners and accuse them of being complicit with gang criminal activity as another form of state violence against the gangs. Edwin argued it was this context of repression that led his gang to begin to reflect and explore a potential gang truce with their rivals. Beto made

a similar comment about Mara Salvatrucha's exploration of a gang truce with their rivals in 2011.

Edwin told me that his Pandilla 18 Revolución began a process in which the members dedicated time to explore a gang truce. Once they came to an agreement that a gang truce with the rival gang was a feasible project, they presented it to their own leadership, who began negotiations with the rival gang. Once the leadership of the rival youth gangs agreed on the project, they sought the support of NGOs. When the NGOs refused to get involved, they sought support from ex-FMLN commander Raul Mijango, who agreed to mentor them in the process. Edwin did not clearly explain whether the gangs sought help from the government or vice versa. He assertively told me that, the peace negotiations had been a serious project, not like the policies that the state put forward when it offered a reduction of homicides and programs without following through. He waited until my recorder was turned off to tell me that the gangs had made an offer to the government to stop extorting people in exchange for authorization to run a bus line and in exchange for buses to start a transportation business. The government did not accept their offer. Edwin said, "We were serious in our offer because we are thinking about how to support our family and ourselves." Then, he told me, "I do not want my children to join the gang."

During the period of the truce (2012-2014), the political establishment, as well as international and local organizations, welcomed the reduction in homicidal violence. Much of the right-wing political establishment, the media and some NGOs critiqued the gang truce as an illegal negotiation with the government that was benefiting the lives of

criminals in prison. The media ran several articles that showed the youth gangs demands for improvement in the prisons (El Diario de Hoy, 2016; José Luis Sanz, 2012). They showed the introduction of TVs, women being allowed in the prisons, and the process of moving gang leaders from high security prisons to lower security ones. The media also condemned the Funes government's negotiations and the secrecy surrounding the truce, and critiqued the gang truce as a movement that allowed youth gangs to strengthen their own structures and gang activity. They argued that the truce allowed gangs time to reorganize to continue their struggle against the government. However, for the gang leadership in the prisons, the people who questioned the gang truce in such a way were, as Edwin put it, "ignorant" because they did not attempt to understand the key motivations behind it: reduction of violence against themselves and their families.

At the same time, the gang leadership felt that they were making a truce with the government for *nothing* (i.e. access to rights that were already granted by the constitution). Despite those sentiments, they still bet on the truce with the government and convinced their rank-and-file to stop violent confrontation with the rival gangs and with the state. The mid-rank leaders had to go sector by sector convincing their *clicas* not to engage in that violence. Many of the gang members outside of prison viewed the implementation of the gang truce as an action of solidarity with their brothers (homies) who were in prison. Many others viewed the truce as an imposition by their leadership; as Beto stated, a truce based on a *voluntad cortante* (forced willingness). Many of those who engaged in the gang truce did so because it was an order, not because it was their own conscious decision to enter into an agreement to stop violence. Moreover, the political

establishment, instead of "valuing such a big project," persecuted and boycotted the gang's efforts. For the youth gangs, the truce further proved the truth of their own critiques of the political establishment: that they do not provide solutions, but rather engage in repression that generates more violence.

From Edwin's and Beto's discussions of the gang truce among the rival gangs and between the youth gangs and the Funes government, one might safely suggest that these opposing actors found themselves at a moment where their various political and personal interests in reducing violence brought them together. The gang truce became a tool through which both the gangs and the government positioned themselves as the protectors of the nation, the family and themselves. Despite the murky waters in which the gang truce took place and the fact that other forms of violence had not been reduced, youth gangs and the Funes government characterized the reduction of homicidal violence and the drop-in confrontations among rival gangs and between those gangs and the state as peace.

Gender-Blind Peacemaking in Everyday Life

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2013

In 2013 Beto and Diego invited me to participate in the "Children's Day" community celebration, scheduled to take place in one of the poor neighborhoods of San Salvador. As I arrived, I observed that youth gang members and the members of the community council had called neighbors to meet at the soccer field at 1:00 PM. A few gang members had gone door-to- door, "inviting" other families to join the event. Some neighbors set up chairs on one side of the field, while others wrapped gifts for the children. Some mothers gave a group of girls the final touches on their makeup before their dance performance. The event was about to begin when a woman came running to let gang members know that the police and the armed forces were coming. When the police arrived, gang members were long gone, but their girlfriends stayed. After the police left, the gang members returned. Gang members' girlfriends had brought their children, but they kept close to their partners instead of participating in the event. Diego, along with other civil war veterans, showed up driving an old truck with sound

equipment and a clown. The sound of cumbia music signaled that the festivities had

begun. More than 200 people attended the event, including children, youth, and adults

who broke piñatas and played games.

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2013

"Beto was arrested," Diego told me. He explained that Beto and other gang members had

been playing soccer with children of the community and this time, nobody saw the police

coming. Diego explained that his nephew thought the police would not capture him

because he was not engaging in unlawful activity. Yet he was being charged with

extortion and illicit gathering and was facing between 10 and 40 years in jail. Diego was

disappointed exclaiming:

> What was he thinking? All other gang members ran away from the police… to have three or more young males together, all gang members, in marginal communities is considered a crime in El Salvador.

<div align="center">***</div>

Months later I visited Edwin in barrio *La Concepcion*. During the visit, Sandra,

Edwin's aunt, ran into the house to tell her mother, "The army and the police are here and

they are knocking down the doors of the apartments. I got a call that the soldiers have my son and they are beating him." Interrupting the interview, I was conducting with Edwin and his grandmother about their view of the gangs' peacemaking efforts, Yolanda, Sandra's mother and Edwin's grandmother, responded, "What are you doing here? Go there. Defend your son unless you want him arrested." Yolanda, a woman in her late 70's, lived through the Salvadoran civil war, the signing of the Peace Accords, and the current social conflict. She is the grandmother of several gang members.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

These vignettes begin to illuminate how gender relations and gender norms operate in the midst of violence and peacemaking efforts. At first glance, the Children's Day celebration seemed a successful gang-led peacemaking effort with the community. While some community members participated in the event, others helped with logistics and organization by setting up chairs, organizing games, and bringing gifts for the children. At the same time, community members who were not participating in the event tipped off gang members about the arrival of the police and the armed forces. Additionally, the relatives of gang members positioned themselves as people willing to help the peacemaking effort and to create a community living with less violence. These practices of peacemaking appeared to have created different power relations among gang members and some of the people who live in gang controlled territories. From this perspective, the presence of the state security forces in gang-controlled areas appears not as an enforcer of security, but as a threat to a fragile coexistence that community members and gang members have created.

Through a gender lens, one can observe the way that gender relations play out among gang members, male ex-guerrillas and the female relatives of gang members and war veterans. Guerrilla civil war veterans continue to view the police and the armed forces as a source of repression in a conflict in which groups that are mostly composed of men are positioned against one another. From this perspective, Diego viewed the reaction of his nephew, Beto, to the police as being naive. He also viewed Beto's male bravado as clouding his nephews' judgment about who he is and what he represents in the social conflict between the youth gangs and state security forces.

The people who can mediate during an encounter between gang members and the state security forces are gang members' female relatives. Salvadoran society's gender norms socialize women and men to believe that domestic roles, such as childrearing, housekeeping and serving men are women's tasks, and that men should provide for and protect the family and assume roles of authority. As a result, acting aggressively against women, even if they are the female relatives of youth gangs, is not well viewed by most of the population. Thus, the mothers or girlfriends of gang members usually find themselves negotiating with state security forces on behalf of gang members, searching for them at the police stations, and visiting them in jail. At the same time, gang members' female relatives' careful navigation of the space they occupy and cautious engagement with people from the community or even with males from the same gang speak volumes about the patriarchal gender norms they navigate every day. In the process of engaging in localized and national practices of peacemaking, youth gangs end up normalizing

patriarchal gender norms via the existing gender relations and hierarchies they have established.

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2013

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the way that youth gangs made the patriarchal gender norm of "protecting" (the country, their families and themselves) a key motivation for engaging in national and localized practices of peacemaking in El Salvador. As I explained in Chapter Four, the Salvadoran postwar governments declared a war on youth gangs. While using the principle of "protecting" as motivation for their punitive security measures against the youth gangs, the postwar governments have refused to define the battle against youth gangs as a social conflict. On the other hand, gang members view themselves as actors in a social conflict that emerged from the historical and contemporary contexts of socio-economic inequality and political exclusion. Given the refusal of the various Salvadoran post-war governments to treat the confrontation as a

conflict between opposing political actors, youth gangs have embraced patriarchal gender norms as the rules that structure their conflict and peacemaking efforts with the state and the rest of the population.

Positioned as men concerned for the well-being of the country and of women, gang members view the 1992 Peace Accords as a model for their peacemaking efforts with the state. The terms of the social contract that structures the accords support the coming together of opposing actors interested in bringing peace to the country. In addition, the 1992 Peace Accords do not challenge patriarchal gender norms or the neoliberal economic model that structures postwar peacemaking practices (Chapter Four). Drawing on Das' (2007) discussion of the patriarchal premises of the social contract, I suggest that the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords, which became the country's revised social contract, make it difficult to highlight how certain forms of violence are reproduced. I argue that this is because the notion of peace embedded in the social contract does not question the use of violence, gender hierarchies based in the subordination of women or gendered violence based on dominance. Like the state, gang members ended up reproducing a negative notion of peace in which the absence of violence among rival youth gangs, and between these gangs and the state, is considered social peace. It is in the voices of the female relatives of youth gangs that we find the articulation of an alternative understanding of peace and of peacemaking beyond the absence of violence for males in combat.

Chapter 6:

Women's Perspectives on Post-war Peacemaking in El Salvador

Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2015

In December 2013, as the confrontation between the st ate security forces and youth gangs increased, the civil war veterans with whom I worked became reluctant to visit their relatives who were gang members in the communities where they lived. Other issues emerged: the civil war veterans' organization with which I had planned to do my fieldwork had lost its vibrancy and was barely operating; veterans were leaving the group to work on their different political projects. I found myself in a paradoxical situation: civil war veterans, including both men and some women had opened the doors for me to work with their gang member relatives, but they could not accompany me to my research sites. At the same time, I began to realize that I could not decipher the social context in the spaces where the state and youth gangs engaged in ongoing confrontations. I never

knew whether I was in danger due to the state security operations or the imminent end of the gang truce which would inevitably increase homicidal violence. I decided to find an alternative approach to my research and began exploring the idea of volunteering for a feminist organization working with women living in gang controlled territories.

During this period of exploration, a friend of Diego's contacted me and offered me a position coordinating a gender violence prevention program, *Talk to me about respect* (Háblame de Respeto), with the feminist *Asociación de Mujeres Salvadoreñas* (Association of Salvadoran Women, AMS). We met at the Mister Donut on the boulevard of *Los Héroes* (The Heroes), which features statues honoring military men, to discuss what the coordination of the program would entail. Because it included working in gang controlled territories, I accepted. This decision to change my affiliation and the focus of my research required a long negotiation process with the Inter American Foundation to avoid losing my research funding. Fortunately, the negotiations were successful and the Foundation accepted my revised plan.

Working with this feminist organization provided me with access to the chief of police at the municipal level in Ciudad Delgado and Mejicanos and to women police officers directing the women's police units. Through discussions with them I learned the dominant view held by police towards women relatives of youth gang members. My work with AMS also enabled me to compare and contrast how notions of gender-just peacemaking differ between women in feminist organizations and women at the grassroots, especially the female relatives of gang members.

In the course of my fieldwork, my interactions with female relatives of civil war veterans and gang members also revealed their views on state and youth gangs' peacemaking. To explain the kind of peace they desired, this group of women would often discuss the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords, the privatization process that the Peace Accords ushered in, and the absence and subordination of women in decision making spaces as interrelated processes. I also began asking them about their own notions of peacemaking. One woman relative of civil war veterans characterized the 1992 Peace Accords as *una paz masculinista* (a masculinist peace) during a focus group. On another occasion, when I was interviewing a gang member, his grandmother, who supported gang peacemaking efforts, interrupted her grandchild, to say: "I have told him that if they really want peace, they have to think about what is good for women." It was striking for me to find a common analysis across generations of women who had been deeply marked by both the civil war and the current social conflict. While the participants of my research were differently positioned on the issues of youth gangs, they tended to agree on that women had been made invisible in past and present peacemaking processes. In these discussions women relatives of gang members showed both their support for, and their critiques of, youth gangs' understanding and practices of peacemaking.

Black, Native, Chicana and queer feminists Third World U. S. feminist have critiqued the invisibilisation of the question of women within social movements' struggles for social change. For instance, they faulted second wave feminism for failing to grapple with "practical and theoretical questions of class, sexual identity, homophobia, race, and racism within the social movement" and for its "tendency to generalize from a

white, heterosexual, middle-class subject position" (Visweswaran 1997: 595). This critique became known as third wave feminism, which argued that second wave feminism ignored how patriarchy affected women differently. Depending on the structural position women occupied, and on their group membership, women could be oppressed not only by class and race, but also by interlocking forms of patriarchy (Visweswaran 1997, Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002; The Combahee River, 2014). From third wave feminism emerged the concept of "intersectionality," which refers to the ways that different forms of oppression interlock, affecting some women and men more than others, and produce injustice and suffering (Crenshaw 1991, Hill Collins 2009 [1990]).

In my work with the working class women relatives of both civil war veterans and gang members, I observed that they "find ways to escape from, survive in, and oppose prevailing" gender and class oppression, political exclusion, and interlocking patriarchies in everyday life (Hill Collins 2009 [1990]:11). In this chapter, I use Hill Collins' (2009 [1990]:6) definition of oppression as, "[an] unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society." I deploy the concept of intersectionality to highlight the ways that female relatives of civil war veterans and gang members make sense of their own reality, based on their experiences and their activism against interlocking class and patriarchal oppressions. I draw on the insights of the scholarship of intersectionality to foreground how female relatives of civil war veterans and gang members are calling attention to the limitations of the state and youth gangs' grassroots peacemaking efforts. I contend that these working class women, instead of uncritically joining the efforts of their relatives,

are working towards an alternative notion of peacemaking rooted in social justice and gender equality.

This chapter is structured in the following way: I begin with an introduction of some of the challenges I confronted in my fieldwork, the moments that punctuated my analysis of the youth gangs' grassroots peacemaking efforts, and how those challenges led me to developing the theoretical framework for this chapter. The second section profiles women relatives of civil war veterans' perspectives on the peace that emerged from the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords. The third section discusses the perspectives of working class women relatives of civil war veterans and gang members regarding the state's efforts to attain peace in postwar El Salvador. The fourth section explores these women's perspectives on the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts. The last section addresses the women's analysis of how class, social discrimination, political exclusion, and multiple forms of patriarchy operate in their everyday life and provides a brief conclusion.

"A masculinist peace": 1992 Peace Accords

On a hot afternoon in San Salvador, February 2, 2015, I organized a focus group with women relatives of veterans from both sides of the Civil War. I wanted to know why so many women looked back to the 1992 Peace Accords as the moment that marked the beginning of their gender consciousness. I explained to the participants that I had invited them to the meeting because of their specific life histories. To break the ice and start the conversation, I began the meeting with a group activity I call "the sculpture of peace." This game consists of creating a human sculpture based on the role women played in the

Peace Accords. Each participant introduced herself, then contorted her body into a shape

that contributed to the collective "sculpture." Amidst giggles and teasing, participants

warmed up to the activity. I asked them who would like to volunteer to be the statue?

Jumping from her seat, the youngest member of the group said, "I will," and introduced

herself. "I am Rocio and I am a social worker. I am the stepdaughter of a former rank-

and-file army veteran. I grew up in northern Chalatenango,[22] but now live in San

Salvador." Rocio stood up in the middle of the room. I asked who would like to go next?

"I'll go," said Beatriz. She continued, "I am Beatriz. I worked for several years at a

feminist organization."

Photo credit: research participant, San Salvador 2015

Beatriz made suggestions for the sculpture, but first explained:

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[22] The department of Chalatenango is one of the states of El Salvador that suffered most heavily in the civil war. The FMLN guerrilla movement controlled several areas there, and thus the army constantly targeted the region.

> In the Peace Accords, of course, there was a huge invisibilization of the women… but also… that invisibilization, at the level of the organized women, was a moment for women to start to value their role in the armed conflict and in the postwar organization… The social vision was that women, we were not in there. However, at the level of the organized women who had participated in the conflict, there were people who were recounting the conflict, starting to analyze it through the lenses of gender, their condition, and life situation. This was an internal reflection to see each other as women…[23]

Beatriz's mother was an urban guerrilla combatant who was disappeared by the army during the Civil War. In the post-war era, she has been involved in struggles for justice for the disappeared, and in feminist movement struggles for gender equality. Her reflections are the outcome of a long self-reflection process on the effects of the 1992 Peace Accords for herself and her family. Beatriz asked Rocio to look down and she asked other women to join the sculpture and "look at each other." From across the room, Tere asked all the women in the human sculpture to kneel.

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[23] Beatriz: "En los acuerdos de paz, claro hubo una gran invisibilización de las mujeres, verdad, pero también al mismo tiempo esa invisibilización a nivel digamos de historia del movimiento de mujeres, ósea, fue como un repunte para que las mujeres precisamente empezaran a valorar su papel en el conflicto armado, y la organización pos-conflicto, vea…la visión social era esta no las mujeres no estábamos allí, pero a nivel de las mujeres organizadas que habían participado en el conflicto, estaba gente sí que estaba como haciendo el recuento del conflicto empezando a analizar con los anteojos de género su condición y situación de vida. Esta era una reflexión interna de vernos entre nosotras más que analizar el contexto."

Beatriz and Rocio, along with the other women, giggled and teased one another about women's subordination and the invisibilization of their contributions to the struggles that led to the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords. Then they passionately jumped into a discussion of the peacemaking process. Beatriz stated:

> For me [the Peace Accords] were made from a masculine perspective, where men decided, and that has to do with their relation to power; who had the power and where it was concentrated. It is also from a vision that has permeated much of the organizing work. All the social movement and also the feminists and citizen organizations have a very militaristic and hierarchical vision, with that warrior's history that armed conflicts have. So much of this is what we have at the tail end of the social movement.

Tere, entering the conversation, asserted:

> What ended was the armed conflict. For example, what was the greatest failure of the Peace Accords? The Socio-economic Forum. If not, what are we talking about? ...That was the debt of the Peace Accords and of course, we entered a bourgeois game of complete disadvantage at every level. We did not even have the means of production with which we could respond… But in that reconstruction, where did we find ourselves, at what point? And, careful, I am not speaking of the feminist organizations, of the feminists. I am speaking of the women of the grassroots. The women who sell me bread in the afternoon, tortillas... because there it is at another level.

I added to the conversation asking, "Where do you think women were left?"

Tere answered,

> I do not think we were left behind, I believe that we are advancing, but one way or another we have to acclimate to the system of things that we have, and to ask "Please," and say "Thank you." I am not saying that is bad, but many times when we have to say "Thank you," it is so that we are allowed to participate…when it is our right, but now we see it. We can evaluate how we would have felt if they had taken us into account twenty years ago and now.[24]

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[24] "Yo no creo que nos hayamos quedado, creo que allí vamos, pero de alguna manera tenemos que plegarnos al sistema de cosas que tenemos, y pedir por favor y decir gracias. Lo cual no es malo, pero muchas veces cuando nosotras tenemos que decir gracias es para que nos dejen participar, más ahora que

I asked, Rocio, "What do you think?" Rocio replied,

> The question was, what ended? The war ended, as it were, the conflict that took place, but the aftermath that remains, all of that has not come to a close. To the contrary, it sends us backwards and has made things worse… [for] women, we have to discuss the concept of vulnerability and understand how that situation comes back to bite us, how we see each other, and how the same hierarchies and power are being exercised and from what standpoint.[25]

Beatriz, Tere and Rocio agree that the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords ended twelve years of civil war, and restructured the state apparatus. However, they argued that despite the fact that many women were leaders, fighters, collaborators and activists within the social movement and the FMLN guerrilla army during the Civil War, (a fact which has been highly studied (Ching, 2016; Kampwirth, 2002; Stephen, 1997; Viterna, 2006) the question of women and women's view of peacemaking was not taken into account during the peace negotiations or afterwards. Although there were three women guerrilla commanders, Nidia Díaz, Lorena Peña and Ana Guadalupe Martínez, who formally participated in the peace negotiations, their participation in the peace negotiations did not substantively alter the negative notion of peace that predominated as discussed in Chapter Five. This notion assumes that peace the cessation of violence among the largely male factions fighting in the armed conflict without transforming socio-economic inequality (or gender hierarchies) constituted peace. One concern

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están las elecciones, tenemos que estar agradecidas que nos dejen participar…cuando es nuestro derecho, pero ahora ya lo vemos. Podemos ver hace veinte años y ahora cómo nos sentiríamos si nos hubieran tomado en cuenta."

[25] "Estoy pensando, la pregunta fue, ¿qué fue lo que se terminó? Si se terminó, pues si la guerra por decirlo así, el conflicto armado que hubo, pero las secuelas que quedan de todo esto, eso no se terminó. Al contrario, se nos remitió y empeoro… las mujeres hay que discutir esa palabra de vulnerabilidad ese concepto para vernos como mujeres, pero como ahora esta situación se nos revierte, porque como nos vemos porque se sigue ejerciendo la misma jerarquía y poder, pero poder desde que punto, verdad…"

expressed by the women to support their argument was that, even though rape was used as a torture measure and a mechanism of domination during the Civil War, the Peace Accords did not recognize this gendered violence as one of the widespread human rights violations that needed to be grappled with in order to attain peace.

The Accords assigned the Truth Commission to investigate high-profile human rights violations. These were defined as "serious acts of violence [for which] society demands … the truth." Such acts were to be exposed and documented to instill respect for human rights (Martínez Peñate 2007: 280). While investigations were conducted for many of the high-profile human rights violations, "common" human rights violations, like forced disappearances and torture were only documented. This documentation excluded forms of sexual violence that were not otherwise part of high-profile cases. The terms of the Peace Accords suppressed acknowledgement of the sexual violence that took place during the Civil War; they also ignored how the civil war increased other forms of gendered violence outside of the political domain.

In the various agreements that make up the 1992 Peace Accords, gendered violence that affected both women and men was not addressed, nor were the specific needs of the women who participated in the conflict. This might have to do with the fact that discussions about incorporating considerations of gender into the peacemaking processes had just begun in international institutions such as the United Nations. Peace processes that took place after the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords, such as the 1996 Guatemalan Peace Accords, paid attention to the issue of gendered violence, even if only minimally. However, in 1992, women combatants' views of peace were excluded from

the negotiations of the Salvadoran Peace Accords, concealing the gendered violence that took place during the Civil War. I suggest that this situation resulted from the patriarchal assumption that the wellbeing of men inevitably leads to the wellbeing of women. The negative notion of peace understands peace as the absence of violence between groups largely composed of men which, in turn, normalizes other forms of violence as unimportant to the forging of peace. Although Beatriz, Tere, and Rocio shared the critique that women's issues were excluded, they had differing perspectives on how that exclusion raised awareness of or affected gender equality for organized and grassroots women. In the postwar setting, these different perspectives appear to have created a gap between the struggles of feminist organizations and women at the grassroots.

In the next section, I briefly analyze how organized women in the feminist movement grapple with the negative notion of peace that emerged from the Peace Accords and what Beatriz described as "a militaristic and hierarchical vision" that has permeated much of "the organizing work." I then examine how the notion and practices of peacemaking that emerged from the Peace Accords continue to affect society from the perspectives of women who are relatives of civil war veterans and gang members.

Peacemaking and Legacies of Militarism in the Post-war Era

I had returned to Mama Yolanda's home to finish the interview with her and her grandson, Edwin that had been cut short by the army and police security operation in the area. I wanted to hear her views of the state's and youth gangs' postwar peacemaking practices. When I arrived, Mama Yolanda was busy arranging the supplies of her *tienda*

— a neighborhood mini store operated from her home that sells basic goods, including eggs, soap, shampoo, salt, matches, etc. Edwin was cutting wood outside the house for his mother's french fries street *venta* (stand). To allow Yolanda and Edwin to finish their tasks, I sat in the living room quietly observing them. Mama Yolanda's daughter, Xiomara, Edwin's aunt, whose son had recently gotten out of jail, walked into the living room to show me her own *venta* — some sport clothing she carried in a bag pack. While looking through brightly colored T-shirts, I asked Xiomara what had happened to her son. She replied, "The soldiers did not take him, but he was heavily beaten." Shaking her head to show her disapproval, she said, "*pues sí* (of course) he can't hide. He tattooed most of his body all the way up to his neck when in jail." Xiomara wanted me to understand that even though her son supported the gang truce, the police beat him because he can be easily identified as a gang member. Beating gang members was a common police practice when conducting security operations.

Edwin walked into the living room, greeted his aunt and me, and proceeded to sit on the sofa. As Mama Yolanda followed Edwin and sat down next to him, Xiomara excused herself and left. Mama Yolanda, in her early 70s is short and light skinned with grey hair. She makes a living by selling consumer goods from her home. During the Civil War, she actively supported her three children, all of whom joined the FMLN guerrilla forces. Two of Mama Yolanda's children were killed by the army and one of her daughters emigrated to Guatemala after being raped and tortured by soldiers. Yolanda now has ten grandchildren, some of whom are long-time members of the Pandilla 18

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Revolución gang. Having outlived the Civil War, she now experiences the social conflict associated with youth gangs via her grandchildren.

Edwin is in his early 30's. A gang member for over ten years, he had just been released from jail, and had recently achieved the rank of *palabra* (sector leader) for his gang. One of Edwin's responsibilities was to oversee the gang truce efforts in his area. However, at the time when Edwin became a participant in my research, he had initiated a process of *calmarse* (a request to his gang to enable him to retire) and was spending most of his time at his grandmother's home, which is located in a Pandilla 18 Revolución gang controlled territory.

Mama Yolanda is not an "average" Salvadoran woman, nor is her family. She experienced the Civil War, lost her own children to the armed conflict, and raised a grandson while her daughter was in exile. From an economic standpoint, however, Yolanda and her family are fairly typical of El Salvador's urban poor. Only one of her daughters has formal employment (she works with the state), while the rest make a living selling items on the street. This is a pattern that I found among many relatives of youth gangs who are employed in the informal sector (e.g., working in pupuserías or washing people's clothing, selling clothing) or who sell products like Avon cosmetics to make a living. These informal activities are not unique to female relatives of gang members; they are activities in which many economically disenfranchised families engage.

With a joyful, yet stern demeanor, Yolanda opened the conversion, asking me, "Are we continuing to talk?" When I replied, "Yes," Yolanda immediately prompted me,

"What did I tell you [before]?" I responded, "You were talking about your perspective on the Peace Accords and youth gang's peacemaking." "She agreed and continued:

> "It would be a lie to say we are doing well economically… the mistake of the Peace Accords [is] that they did not add more. They did not take into consideration the opinion of people at the grassroots level."

Yolanda went on to explain at some length how the rightwing ARENA governments had broken the agricultural industry and sold state-owned services, like the telecommunications system, to private companies. In Mama Yolanda's opinion, the rightwing ARENA governments "had made all that tamal [tamale, euphemism for plot]," so that when the leftist FMLN party gained executive power, it would have problems solving social issues. Asking herself, "What is the concept I am trying to tell you," Mama Yolanda continued, "Because the elections are coming, ARENA tried to increase the price of beans, rice, and corn, but could not to do it because [then president] Funes forced owners to open their granaries."

One reason why many women like Yolanda who are positioned at the base of economic, political and gender structures of oppression joined the war was to fight for a better economic future. However, the post-war period has not substantially changed their economic situation, and most continue to live in poverty. Mama Yolanda's perspective, rooted in her personal experiences and memories, is that one of the biggest mistakes of the Peace Accords was to leave out "the opinion of each person" on what kind of peace they desired. Her critique stems from her perspective that the peace that was negotiated by leaders of the state and the FMLN omitted the input of those who had suffered the most.

For Mama Yolanda, including the opinion of people at the grassroots level might have resulted in a less "devouring," or all-consuming, neoliberal economic system. As discussed in chapter two and five, under the auspices of the 1992 Peace Accords, the state continued its agenda of incorporating agro-industry into an international neoliberal economy. The state also privatized state-owned services which raised gross domestic income but did not benefit people at the base of the socio-economic ladder. Foreign owners of the privatized services "modernized" the institutions they controlled, resulting in massive layoffs of state workers. For those workers and their unions, as well as for the FMLN guerrilla fighters and their supporters, privatization has been a major blow to their hope of living a stable socio-economic-political life and a betrayal of a war fought to oppose military dictatorship, economic inequality and political exclusion. Mama Yolanda's critique articulates the profound disillusionment of her sector of the population with the outcomes of the 1992 Peace Accords, outcomes she characterized as bringing about an "elitist peace."

I asked Mama Yolanda: "Do you think the phenomenon of youth gangs has anything to do with economic inequality?" "Yes," she replied, but immediately changed the focus of the conversation to emphasize family disintegration, migration, and the United States government as root causes of the youth gang phenomenon. As Edwin nodded his agreement, she told me that her daughter "…made many sacrifices, she and me, because I also helped her raise these *muchachos* [men, and] put them through school." Yolanda continued:

I cannot explain how these children got into that [the gangs] because they did not live in hunger. Within our poverty, we solved everything… why they took a path of disgrace for them[selves] and for us… the family suffers more than they do…"

Yolanda's own explanation for why her grandchildren joined the youth gangs was that

"their father abandoned them…" But she also pointed to structural causes, stating:

"I say that this [the gangs] also has to do with the war… [and] the United States. [During the war], we had to take my daughter out of the country because of the state repression. I raised her son… Also, the U.S. is corrupt. There are many things they sent here, starting with the gangs."

Grabbing my hand, Yolanda told me, "Hear me well, I am going to tell you, the United

States utilized people like them [poor Salvadoran youth] for the war, and after the war

they got used to it [committing crimes]."

At this point, Edwin left the living room. Lowering her voice until it was nearly

inaudible, Mama Yolanda told to me, "He has begun to calmarse (retire), but no one

would hire him." She continued:

"Here we have to raise awareness with the people, but particularly the millionaires, who are the most opposed to this change. Something was being achieved [with the gang truce], but now they want to put in jail… [the gang truce facilitator, Raul Mijango] because they are accomplices of the gangs… Nobody will be able to speak in favor of the gangs because one becomes an accomplice… if a police officer is killed.

Then come the raids. They do not look for the culprit, but they catch anyone they find… the police imprison a hundred boys because they are gang members… I am telling you, they are wrong."

One could interpret mama Yolanda's answer to my question as a woman's excuse for the

deviance of her male relatives. However, to me, her statements reflect an important set of

political observations rooted in her life experiences of surviving the Civil War and living

the postwar social conflict. I want to focus on Mama Yolanda's reflections on the state's

peacemaking measures because in her modest manner, she provided a critical analysis of how structural violence intersects with social and gendered violence in the postwar era. She criticized the United States for economically supporting the Salvadoran armed forces during the Civil War but then not supporting their reinsertion into post-war society. She pointed to the U.S. deportation of gang members to El Salvador, arguing that the United States has deported those they do not want. Even though the economic and political elite of El Salvador are not interested in creating the social and economic conditions that would enable upward mobility for the majority of the population, including the working class youth who are sent back.

While she continued to support the FMLN political party due to their social measures, Yolanda implicitly critiqued the punitive policies against youth gangs that have been implemented by the leftist FMLN government in order to attain peace. This is a common position among women and men who have gang member relatives. They hope the FMLN governments will improve their living conditions, while at the same time, they question their continuation of the punitive measures of post-war right-wing ARENA governments. They have often commented to me that if the government continues to pressure the youth gangs, the gangs could rise up in arms. Several newspaper articles have estimated, without agreeing on a specific number, that there are between 30,000 and 70,000 gang members in the country. In contrast, the guerrilla movement fought a war with only 10,000 men. For these relatives of youth gangs, the leftist government's policies are likely to lead to disastrous social consequences, because state repression is bringing youth gangs together against the state. They are increasing tensions and violence

rather than seeking solutions. Mama Yolanda believed that the gang truce could have opened a path to reinsert gang members into society. Instead, the government has criminalized as "accomplices" those who have spoken up in support of the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts.

At the same time, I found Mama Yolanda's gender analysis fascinating. She turned upside down the dominant discourse that working class and poor women are to be blamed for their children's deviance. During my work with the feminist organization, AMS, I had to collect statistics from the police in the municipalities of Ciudad Delgado and Mejicanos on the number of women who had suffered gendered violence. Confrontation with the youth gangs is something that permeates the everyday life of police, one police chief commented in passing, "the problem is that mothers do not stay at home taking care of the children. This is why we have so many gang members." I was appalled by his comment. It invisibilized a patriarchal practice and norm that has allowed many men to abandon their parental responsibilities while holding women accountable for the dual burden of raising their children and providing for them economically.

Although I never told Mama Yolanda that story, she pointed out to me that "family disintegration" often means the abandonment of the children by a father. In the absence of a helpful male partner, women are forced to be sole parent to their children and provide for them economically. When women have to work outside the home to feed, clothe and house their children, they are often forced to leave them with another relative or at home by themselves.

Nevertheless, women are still blamed by mainstream Salvadoran society for the increasing numbers of youth in gangs. Yolanda sharply critiqued how patriarchy operates in society by blaming women at the bottom of the hierarchical structure for social problems. Blaming those who are most vulnerable becomes a feasible alternative to grappling with the economic, political, and gender structures of power in Salvadoran society that sustain the phenomenon of youth gangs. For Yolanda, blaming those who are victims and perpetrators of violence will not bring about peace.

<center>***</center>

One afternoon, I picked up Beto's older sister, Patricia, from work. Patricia lives across from a *mesón* (inn-like efficiency apartments, with one shared bathroom for all the rooms) where Beto had moved with his partner and daughter. He was preparing to ask the Mara Salvatrucha gang to allow him to initiate his process of *calmarse*. Beto and his sister thought that living close to one another would support him in his transition. Patricia told me that although Beto had been sent to jail, the room was paid for four more months. She and her mother, who is living in the United States, hoped he would be released shortly. She said the state had yet to prove the *renta* [extortion] charges for which the police processed him after his arrest.

Patricia is employed by the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Children and Youth, a state institution that works with youth, including *menores infractores* (minors who break the law). As we arrived at her house, Patricia's two daughters left their room to greet their mother and the visitors. After drinking coffee and hanging out for a bit, Patricia told me that she had to go to the university because she had an exam

scheduled for that afternoon. Since we had agreed to talk about my work, she asked me to

take her to the university and talk on the way. As we headed to the university, Patricia

talked about her work:

> "There are lots of youth that only need an opportunity. In my work, I often have
> to oversee the progress of gang members who have committed an infraction. They
> are brought to us. There is a guy from the Pandilla 18 whom I care about because
> he is putting a lot of effort into going to school and finding a job. However, every
> time I go to his community I feel insecure. My brother is from the Mara
> Salvatrucha, so when I am in a MS-13 barrio I feel safe…I can drop his name."

The expression on her face revealed her sense of the irony of the situation as she pointed

out how the social conflict has become part of everyday life, affecting both work and

personal relations. She summed up, "It is incredible how one internalizes the situations of

relatives." At the university's cafeteria, we continued the conversation over coffee, "I see

that many of the youth in gangs can have another opportunity in society, but it is an uphill

job." She made a face of frustration, and said:

> I am taking this class on violence prevention. A police chief is taking the same
> class. He thinks that there is no salvation for any joven (youth) in a gang. I listen
> to him, and I can only think about my own brother, Beto, about his own desires to
> leave the gang and the challenges he confronts… I tell him [the police chief], why
> are you in a violence prevention program if those are your beliefs.

I want to bring attention to Patricia's insight about police officers who are

preparing to lead violence prevention programs. Patricia questioned the police chief's

belief that gang members are not worth saving because this perspective represents the

dominant thinking within the police apparatus. This way of thinking about youth gang

members has led a few members of the police apparatus to join social cleansing groups as

an alternative path to "successfully" attaining peace. One of these groups is *Héroe Azul*

(Hero in Blue), a reference to the police uniform, which first emerged as a Facebook page

where police officers would post photos of members of the police who had been killed by gang members. In time, the *Héroe Azul* Facebook page became a space where police celebrated the execution of gang members, posting that "gang members have been eliminated," and showing photos of gang members with bullet in their heads.

Credit: Héroe Azul Facebook public profile

This notion of the *Héroe Azul* evokes nationalist ideals of manhood and revitalizes the historic image of heroic warrior masculinity for post-war Salvadoran society (I discussed warrior masculinity extensively in Chapter Two). In the post-war setting, the state and its security apparatus view youth gangs as the greatest social threat and impediment to building peace. Members of the state security forces consider human rights as an obstacle to conducting police operations. For them, the deployment of punitive measures against youth gangs is part of the practice of warrior masculinity, one of El Salvador's valued national traits.

As a counselor who mentors youth in trouble with the law, including gang members, Patricia clearly believes that youth deserve a second chance. She argues that people who lead violence prevention programs should care that these youths succeed. She

is especially aware of the importance of prevailing attitudes within the police apparatus which has been and continues to be a key actor in the conflict between the gangs and the state. Patricia's vision of peace is not limited by *la paz masculina*, which seeks to end violence between the army, the police and youth gangs. She is interested in creating a thriving community of conscientious social workers and advocates to support the integration of at-risk youth into society. She risks her life everyday going into rival gang territory to achieve that goal. If a rival gang member were to find out that she had a brother who is a member of Mara Salvatrucha, she could be killed. Patricia is a good example of the ways that women practice peacemaking on a day-to-day basis while also seeking a way to create lasting peace.

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Photo credit: Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, San Salvador 2013

On a warm afternoon in San Salvador, Rebecca, her daughter and I met at the Metro Centro mall to hang out. Rebecca is the partner of Beto, the Mara Salvatrucha mid-rank gang leader who participated in my research, until he was sent to prison, and with

whom she has a child. When I first arrived in the field, Beto asked me to be the

godmother of his newborn daughter, and I accepted. I understood that if I were to refuse,

he probably would not have continued to participate in the research. He then introduced

me to Rebecca and his daughter, Salma. After Beto was arrested I continued to meet with

Rebecca and Salma, although I never became their child's godmother.

On that afternoon in Metro Centro, Rebecca and I were walking around the mall,

eating ice-cream. Rebecca had begun to confide in me that Beto had proposed marriage

and that while she was considering the pros and cons, she did not want to get married in

prison. We sat down to continue the conversation. I was fascinated and was paying close

attention to her story when all of a sudden, her child began screaming desperately.

Rebecca immediately hugged her daughter, but the child fought her. Her daughter was

trying to get her to leave. We looked around trying to understand what was frightening

her and saw the mall's private security guards patrolling the area. Trying to calm her

daughter down, Rebecca explained to her daughter that they were not policemen, but

private security guards and that nothing was going to happen to them, but the child kept

screaming. We decided to continue walking. As we walked, Rebecca told me a story.

> The other day, the police were following a *uno de los bichos* (a gang member) in
> the neighborhood. The gang member saw that the front door of my house was
> open. He ran into the house and went out through the back door. The police ran
> through the house after him. One police officer came to me yelling at me that he
> knew I had hidden the gang member, and to tell him where he was, and to tell
> them where the marijuana was. The baby was watching and dancing right in front
> of the T.V., but witnessing all the yelling and police aggressiveness, she began
> crying. I ran to grab her from my room where I was folding the recently washed
> clothes. I was extremely nervous. The policeman kept threatening to take me to
> jail. I thought he would. But I was lucky, a woman police officer convinced him
> to leave me alone. I told Beto about the incident when he called me from jail. He

told me, "*Muñeca* (doll), can you imagine, if they had put some marijuana on you and taken you to jail?" What would have happened with our baby girl?

Since that incident, Rebecca told me, "My baby can't see a police officer. She is terrified of them." Rebecca concluded, "Y va a creer usted. ¡Se llevaron los cinco dólares que yo tenía en la cama!" (Can you believe they [the police] took the five dollars I had on my bed?) Sometimes, I wonder who are the thieves.

During my field research, many people advised me not to trust the female relatives of gang members, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and partners, because they were the spokespersons of the youth gangs. For many people who observe the phenomenon of youth gangs from the outside, this belief provides them with a logical explanation for the role that female relatives of youth gang members play, especially, when women address police officers and people who are not connected to the gangs. But this perspective overlooks women's agency, their own motivations for supporting gang members, and their oppositional actions against the state security forces' punitive measures. It leaves out the conditions in which female relatives of youth gang members are living, and their own practices of grassroots peacemaking in their everyday lives.

Rebecca's relationship with Beto and their daughter had given Beto the impetus to leave the youth gangs. Rebecca told me that Beto wanted to live, to be there for his partner and daughter. She and Beto had been planning together for his retirement from the youth gang and for her to go to beauty school to learn a trade. She was willing to go through that process with him, but Beto's arrest shattered their plans. Although she and her child made monthly visits to Beto in prison, they were very burdensome for her. They had to wake up in the middle of the night to catch the microbus that went around the city

picking up the relatives of Mara Salvatrucha gang members to bring them to the prison. Rebecca and the child had to arrive at the prison around 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning in order to get a spot at the front of the line.

Rebecca was excited about Beto's marriage proposal. But she also had reservations. She had to confront the possibility that Beto would have to spend the rest of his life in jail. If so, Beto's gang would keep an eye on her, but they would also police her sexuality and behavior. They would monitor her whereabouts to make sure she did not get romantically involved with another person while Beto was in jail. At the same time, Rebecca lives in constant fear of the police, as they often suspect her of criminal activity because of her relationship with Beto, even when she is going about her normal activities at home. Police have threatened her in her home and frightened her 2-year-old baby. The state's punitive security measures are not only creating consequences for gang members, but for the everyday lives of their female relatives and partners.

For middle and upper class Salvadorans who don't live in the working class and poor barrios controlled by youth gangs, home is a place where they can live peacefully and feel protected against the violence that permeates postwar society. These Salvadorans, especially in the capital city of San Salvador, protect their home and their loved ones at all costs. They hire private security guards and install iron gates around their living areas, so that only residents can enter. If the residents do not own a car, they travel by taxi. If necessary they will move to a more secure community, most likely a newly constructed, gated, upper class neighborhood. However, this is not the case for

families with gang members. For them, the home is just another space where police violence can enter.

Witnessing Rebecca's child screaming desperately and seeing the fear in her eyes reminded me of my own anxiety and the fears I experienced growing up in a working class neighborhood of Soyapando during the Civil War. Although the army and police never came into my parents' home, I remember my fear when going through military checkpoints or hearing the steps of soldiers walking in front of my house at night during the 1989 guerrilla offensive, *Hasta el Tope* (To the End). I identified with the child's reaction, and wondered, what kind of society are Salvadorans building when its people and institutions can instill so much terror in the children who are the future of the country? Have they decided that the children who are growing up in the marginalized sectors of El Salvador are disposable?

Understanding the insights shared by Yolanda, Rebecca and Patricia can provide us with a complex appreciation of the changes that will be needed to bring about peace. Female relatives of gang members understand that peacemaking is a process that entails grappling with the social- economic causes that have produced the youth gangs. The notions of peacemaking that have shaped Salvadoran post-war peacemaking efforts have obscured the economic inequalities and political exclusions that are preventing a large sector of the Salvadoran population from achieving upward mobility. Additionally, women connected to the youth gangs are also putting forth a notion of peacemaking that exposes the state's patriarchal logic. As the state places on women the responsibility for creating better citizens, it is engaging in a logic that conceals patriarchal dynamics,

including the recognition that men are not held to the same standard of care for their families as women. Many men do not parent their children or support them economically.

The state's security measures also place a heavy burden on women. The state's primary solution to the issue of youth gangs is to incarcerate male gang members, often leaving their women relatives with the burden of raising children alone. The state then holds these women responsible for the "deviance" of the youth who participate in gangs rather than grappling with the limitations of a negative notion of peace and addressing the multiple causes of the youth gang phenomenon.

Women's View of Youth Gangs' Peacemaking

Women relatives of gang members do not limit their critiques to the state's punitive security measures and their effects on everyday life. They have critically evaluated how youth gangs reproduce the dominant negative logic of peacemaking that understands peace as the absence of violence between groups largely composed of men (e.g., army, policy, youth gangs) in a conflict. During my interview with Mama Yolanda, she told me, "When they are arrested [under charges of extortion; homicide, etc.], who goes to the police to ask for them? Their girlfriend, their mother… ahhhh." Then she continued, "You should see how he controls his girlfriend and how awful he treats her during his nervous outbreaks." Edwin's cousin, who was sitting right outside the living room, commented, "I better leave, I heard the pedradas (critiques) all the way from here." With a smile that only I could see, Yolanda went back to speaking aloud, asking herself, "What was the concept I was trying to tell you…ahh yes, I say that in order to attain peace we all have to contribute, rich and poor." Mama Yolanda supported her

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grandchildren's peace efforts, but she also challenged their assumptions of masculinity and their patriarchal relations with family members.

Patricia also told me about her brother, Beto's patriarchal practices. One afternoon, we were looking over the celebration photos of Patricia's daughter's Quinceañera celebration. In the photos Beto appeared, dressed in a suit, the image of a proud uncle. Patricia commented on the photos, saying:

> My daughters love their uncle, but Beto is so careless with them. He allows them to go with him in the pickup he owns. He does not think that they could be the target of rival gang violence, or even worse that one of the gang members would want to do something to them.

Patricia expressed to me her concern that her brother's friends were viewing her daughters in a sexualized way and that Beto was not protecting them. She then moved on to discuss Beto's relationship with Rebecca. She said, "He is also so controlling with Rebecca. She can't do anything without him knowing. He is always calling her, keeping track of where she is and what she is doing."

I was aware of Beto's need to keep track of Rebecca. Often after she and I met, Beto would call me from prison to ask about the time we had spent together, and to check on when she left to take the bus. He would say things like, "she is not answering her phone, so I just want to make sure she is safe. I am worried, she has to cross downtown to get home." Salvadoran prisoners are not supposed to have access to cell phone calls. But Beto, a gang member in a corrupt prison system, was able to call out as long as he had the funds to do so. Beto might have been sincerely worried about Rebecca, since she had to cross rival gang territory in order to get back to her home. However, I often perceived his

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calls as a form of control over Rebecca. He was making sure she would not lie to him about her whereabouts, or find the opportunity to get together with another man.

These vignettes bring to light how women relatives of gang members support their relatives' peacemaking efforts, even while they are questioning their patriarchal practices. They argue that the peace advanced by the youth gangs should be supported by the state, since the end of violence among males in conflict will also benefit women. But they also challenge the limitations of the negative notion of peace. Women have begun to call attention to the ways that economic inequality, political exclusion, and state and gendered violence come together to oppress them, while privileging other women and men in Salvadoran society. Rooted in the standpoint gained from their everyday life experiences, female relatives of gang members have developed an analysis of how those interlocking forms of oppression are invisibilized by the dominant notion of peace reproduced by the youth gangs' peacemaking efforts.

Women's support of youth gang peacemaking does not mean that they do not suffer from patriarchal social norms and expectations. It means that they recognize that their own liberation and struggles against a classist and patriarchal society is tied to the liberation of their loved ones. The invisibilization of the voices and physical presence of women positioned at the bottom of different structures of oppression has opened a path for the negative notion of peace and peacemaking to continue to operate in Salvadoran society.

Contradictions of a Feminist Organization

One day I was telling Maria, one of the founding members of the AMS feminist organization, about my field work with female relatives of civil war veterans and gang members. I described to her the women's characterization of the Peace Accords as "masculinist," a phrase which I understood to included militaristic principles and behavior. I mentioned that Beatriz had pointed out during the focus groups that some women who organized in the feminist organizations that began with the FMLN had begun questioning the invisibilization of women's contributions to the struggle that made the Peace Accords possible. This analysis led women to separate from the FMLN party after the Peace Accords and to found new feminist organizations. In response to my comment and to illustrate point made by the focus group, Maria shared a story with me. She agreed, "*Pues sí* (that is right) — we were raising funds, and they [the FMLN] wanted us to prioritize the use of those funds for party objectives, over the work with the women." Maria told me that Yanira, ex-high-rank guerrilla, had founded AMS and officially separated it from the FMLN political party through a public declaration in the country's official newspaper. She framed a copy of this declaration, which hung on a wall of the Executive Director's office. According to Maria, for AMS leaders, the rupture represented an important step in their struggle for women's liberation and transformation of the patriarchal norms that structure society.

Since its formation, AMS has done important work implementing programs that have provided low income women with the skills to become economically independent. It has offered medical and psychological attention to women victims-survivors of gender violence across classes throughout the country. However, during my time working with

AMS I observed that women were often expected to act like combatants: following

orders without questioning them, being yelled at without an opportunity to respond, and

being available whenever their superiors requested. AMS helped to create *Háblame de*

respeto (Talk to me about respect), a gender violence prevention program co-directed by

AMS and Raul, a male ex-guerrilla combatant. Raul would come into the office yelling

and pressuring the women who worked under my supervision to do things that were not

safe for them, such as taking photos of gang graffiti in gang controlled territories in areas

where violence against women had taken place. While he committed those kinds of

abuses against working class women who worked in the program, Raul treated me

differently. My United States academic affiliation provided me with middle class status;

my economic survival did not depend on working for AMS, and I would stand up to him

when he attempted to abuse me.

Photo credit: AMS, San Salvador 2014

Women leaders at AMS did not agree with Raul's patriarchal behavior. However, since he had negotiated the grant that founded the *Talk to me about respect* program, they remained largely silent about his practices of gendered violence. This was particularly ironic for me because one of the key goals of the program was to raise the awareness of working class and economically disenfranchised women about the cycle of gender violence. The cycle of violence begins with verbal violence (patronizing jokes, yelling), then escalates to psychological violence (making women dependent emotionally, controlling women's behavior), and economic violence, in which women are preventing from having control over their own finances, even when they are the wage earners, or are not allowed to work. The cycle of violence does not take place in a linear way, but often escalates to physical and sexual violence. Nevertheless, Raul and the women who led AMS would rationalize their behavior as a necessary part of the pressure they needed to put on workers so they would do the work. Having fought a civil war, they viewed the demands and pressure they placed on working class women as acceptable, because it was not nearly as burdensome as the pressure they had experienced during the conflict. In my observations at AMS, women leaders, by enabling Raul's actions, were complicit in reproducing patriarchal forms of oppression.

Photo credit: AMS, San Salvador 2014

At AMS internal forms of gender violence were invisibilized in pursuit of a greater goal: the fight against patriarchy in society, especially when connected to youth gangs. AMS focused its attention on saving women outside the institution, assuming that the liberation of women as a group would also entail the end of other forms of gendered violence, such as those based on classism and social discrimination. Meanwhile, its leaders ignored the ways that different patriarchal forms of gender violence manifested themselves within the internal working relationships of the organization, reproducing injustice and suffering. There is a difficult, and pending, conversation that needs to take place within feminist organizations about the reproduction of patriarchal power relations within working relationships, even while members are fighting for gender equality in Salvadoran society.

Photo credit; Erika Torres, June 2018

The feminist movement and its historical organizations, most of which were founded by former guerrilla combatants, has played a key role in pushing FMLN governments to include a gender policy as part of their governance plan. They have also helped to focus attention on the patriarchal structuration of the political domain and the gendered practices of violence that take place in Salvadoran society. However, as Beatriz and Rocio pointed out earlier in this chapter, the Peace Accords and the feminist organizations' separation from the FMLN party did not bring about a break from the "militaristic" organizing practices that structured their operations. To end patriarchal power relations, the social movement, including the feminist movement, must begin grappling with the militaristic legacies of the civil war that continue to manifest in their internal working relationships. The feminist movement has an invaluable role to play in the social struggle for gender equality, for a life free from violence for all women and men, and for a lasting peace in El Salvador. While female relatives of youth gangs and civil war veterans are not without fault as they continue to reproduce patriarchal gendered

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practices, their unique position in society at the bottom of intersecting forms of oppression has enabled them to develop a nuanced gender analysis and gendered understanding of peacemaking. Rather than blaming youth gangs for the widespread social violence and gendered violence affecting the country, the female relatives of gang members are working with them, recognizing that they are both purveyors of violence and peacemakers.

Conclusion

Instead of unconditionally joining youth gangs' "peacemaking" efforts, women relatives of civil war veterans and gang members advance a critique of what I call "the negative notion of peace" — the absence of violence among groups dominantly conformed by men — which tends to perpetuate violence against women and, at times, men. Through their critiques, they have reconstituted the very notion of peace to include gender, class, and social justice. In contrast, the state aims to achieve its goal of attaining peace by implementing punitive measures against youth gangs. The state has consistently blamed women relatives of youth gangs for the youth gang phenomenon, obscuring the voices of those who could bring an alternative, more gender-just understanding of grassroots peacemaking. I conclude, echoing the women who shared their stories and analysis with me, that to build a lasting peace for all, it is necessary not only to end a war but to grapple with the gender, economic and political root causes of inequality and suffering.

Chapter 7:

Final Thoughts

As I write these conclusions I feel compelled to reflect on my journey conducting research on "Paradoxes of Grassroots Peacemaking" in postwar El Salvador, and on the challenges I confronted as an unmarried, relatively young Salvadoran mestiza woman in zones of non-declared war between state security forces and youth gangs.

My interest in gender relations and violence emerged as part of my life history. However, it has been my journey alongside those who fought the Civil War, and their relatives, that propelled me to study the practices of peacemaking and notions of peace in post-war El Salvador. Conducting this research was not easy. Months after I arrived in El Salvador to carry out this research project, the network of civil war veterans that originally introduced me to their gang member relatives who were involved in the gang truce disbanded. Due to the electoral climate and their own political interests, they met and supported my research in an ad hoc manner. In the days leading to the presidential elections of 2014, the pervasive climate of violence brought about by the imminent end of the gang truce made confrontations among youth gangs, and between youth gangs and the state security forces, ever more intense. This climate of violence and the fear and tension that emerged from it permeated the metropolitan area of San Salvador challenging the viability of my research. It appeared impossible to continue working with gang members and their relatives outside of and in the gang-controlled territories, or

conflict zones, in which the youth gang norm of *ver, oir y callar* (see, hear, be silent); a power relation that shaped the daily coexistence among gang members and between gang members and their communities. Despite having the door open to conduct this research, this context raised a key question: how to find a path to do so responsibly?

Without losing contact with the groups of civil war veterans and the gang members with whom I had been working, I sought an alternative entrance to the poor barrios in the metropolitan area of San Salvador and for understanding the social dynamics. I built relationships with local academics familiar with the issue of youth gangs and became an affiliated researcher at University Don Bosco in a program that focused on youth violence prevention. I met with several representatives non-for-profit organizations working in the poor barrios of San Salvador. I also built relationships and worked with Association for the Autonomy and Development of the Salvadoran Women (AMS), a feminist organization. Through these relationships, I observed how academics and not-for-profit organizations had a complex understanding of the issues of youth gang violence as well as the state and youth gangs' peacemaking efforts in the post-war setting. Some academics questioned both the state's punitive repression against youth gangs and the youth gang truce for having been negotiated without transparency. Some feminist organizations celebrated the government's gender policy as an advance in the struggles against patriarchy in Salvadoran society and viewed it as a tool to reduce violence against women, including gang violence. These observations enabled me to begin to make sense of the field of power relations operating in Salvadoran society with

regard to the issue of youth gang violence and the ways that these dynamics structured everyday life across classes and geographical sectors in San Salvador.

My work with AMS included imparting gender violence prevention workshops in gang-controlled communities, collecting monthly statistics on gender violence from the National Civilian Police (PNC in Spanish), as well as imparting a number of workshops on the Salvadoran Comprehensive special law for a life free of violence for women to members of the police. Through this work, I observed that many members of the police simultaneously viewed gang members as a plague of society that needed to be eliminated through punitive measures. Because they would be implementing those measures, they positioned themselves as heroes of Salvadoran society. They also blamed women (mothers and grandmothers) for the phenomenon of youth gangs. These police officers believed women *alcahuetean* (allow and make excuses for the criminal behaviors of their children) and do not educate them with civic and moral values and a firm hand that would have led them to a non-criminal life path. At the same time, the silencing of patriarchal forms of oppression exercised by a male ally in the organization posed a challenge to my collaborative research process: how could I avoid falling into irresponsible practices of supporting women's oppression in the name of a greater good? This work revealed patriarchal, militaristic and heroic logics, which I have called "warrior masculinity," that shape everyday life in Salvadoran society.

The work I conducted for AMS also further provided me with a perspective on the ways that differently-positioned social actors grappled with and seek a life free of violence. In conversation with the working class women relatives of youth in gangs who

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lived in gang controlled territories, I found that they viewed many of the feminist organization's programs against gender violence as limited. For these women, a life free from violence included also ending state repression against their relatives in youth gangs.

Understanding power relations in the post-war era in relation to the state and youth gangs' peacemaking measures enabled me to better situate myself to conduct this research and further develop my relationships with gang members and their female relatives. However, this did not mean that gendered and power relations in the field, or among the research participants and myself, disappeared. They were ever-present and revealed the constant dislocation of my subject position. As a researcher with a United States university affiliation, I was positioned as a privileged Salvadoran yet in my interactions with youth gangs I was seen as subordinate due to my gender. Understanding my subject position allowed me to create strategies that enabled me to conduct my research. For instance, I began to work with both the female relatives of gang members and the gang members themselves. I limited my entrance to the barrios to daylight hours and was almost always in the company of research assistants and friends when carrying out my fieldwork. My study became a multi-sited ethnography—it was conducted in different socio-economic spaces within a single city—that positioned me at times in vertical and at other times in horizontal relationships with a range of interlocutors in order to study the peacemaking efforts of youth gangs.

Conducting field research in elite spaces is a very different experience than conducting field research in poor barrios. The spaces occupied by men like General Vargas and ex-President Cristiani are difficult to access, and I was fortunate to find

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people who helped me arrange my interviews with them. On the other hand, I believe it is necessary to reflect on what it meant to have access to the poor barrios where I also worked. I discovered that, because of the undeclared war and conditions of violence in which people were living, they sometimes distrusted my motives and were reluctant to talk to me. However, over time, I developed relationships with some gang members and their female relatives who welcomed me and allowed me to visit them in their homes. The women would tell me when it was possible to visit them, and they would also tell me when it was time to leave. I owe this accessibility in part, to the support of the veterans with whom I had worked previously. Although this dissertation does not focus on civil war veterans per se, I continued to be in conversation with them and their perspectives have been key to my analysis of peacemaking and the negative notion of peace in post-war El Salvador.

The negative notion of peace and practices of peacemaking in post-war El Salvador had their origins in the Criollo-led formation of the Salvadoran nation-state. As I argued in Chapter Two, after the founding of the contemporary Central American countries in 1824, Criollos sought to shape a national identity that celebrated the "bravery" and "heroism" of "their struggles for independence." By focusing on the celebration of patriarchal notions of bravery, they obscured their real motivations for declaring independence: to position themselves at the top of the hierarchy of racialized, classed and gendered power relations. To maintain this status quo, Criollos also put forward the political project of mestizaje, the idea that the mixing of indigenous and European peoples created a better race, albeit without transforming the racial hierarchies

established during colonial times. The patriarchal understandings of male bravery embodied in the figure of the heroic warrior and *mestizaje* were incorporated into the national character of the Salvadoran nation-state. The coming together of *mestizaje* and warrior masculinity set the context for the 60 years of military dictatorship that started in 1931, and for patriarchal notions of peacemaking in El Salvador.

In addition to bravery, warrior masculinity is understood to include institutional, political and economic power. The idea that men who embodied warrior masculinity would be more capable of leading the country seems to stem from the assumption that these men could protect themselves, the sectors they represented, and the nation. According to the historical record, from 1821 until 1881, most presidents of El Salvador were politico-military Criollo leaders who came from the ranks of the army, (E. e. a. Ching, 2000; E. K. Ching & Helen Kellogg Institute for International, 2014). When Criollos presidents did not come from the ranks of the military, they often became presidents through a coup d'état. These men demonstrated that they could use coercion to win executive power which, in turn, granted them the power to protect the sectors they represented as well as the nation. Criollos used their patriarchal understanding of bravery and the figure of the heroic warrior to establish their dominance in the newly formed nation- state.

The Criollos' and elite mestizos' project of *mestizaje* sustained the racial hierarchies that rationalized the subordination and repression of indigenous and black people. In presenting *mestizaje* as a national trait, Criollos and elite mestizos centered Eurocentric ideas of capitalist development and modernity as the horizon of the newly

formed nation-state. They celebrated indigenous cultures, but not the existence of indigenous, much less black, people. Criollos and elite mestizos viewed indigenous people as "backward" and thus an obstacle for development, and blacks as people who were less than human. When General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez massacred over 10,000 indigenous people in reaction to an indigenous rebellion in 1932, he argued that communists (criminals) had misled the indigenous rebels, Criollos and elite mestizos appeared to view this despicable event as the consolidation of *mestizaje*. Being a proud indigenous person was a death sentence, as so many indigenous people hid their identity and cultural practices in order to survival racialized violence.

Hernández Martínez created within mestizaje the figure of the criminal (communist); the one who had to be eliminated for the nation to develop. The practical outcome of the massacre was that subordinated sectors of society either conformed to the dominant ideal of mestizaje or were labeled as criminals/communists. Hernández Martínez governed through populist and repressive measures that sought to benefit poor mestizos and indigenous people who rejected communism. He particularly protected indigenous people from violent attacks by mestizos, while repressing those who opposed his rule and the interests of the Criollo and mestizo elite. His authoritarian patriarchal governance became the model in El Salvador.

Before the matanza, many poor mestizos, indigenous and black people did not identify with the Criollo-led project of mestizaje because it was predicated upon their subordination, erasures of blackness, economic inequality, and political exclusion. They led several rebellions against the Criollos and elite mestizos. These became the seeds for

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the future social movement and revolutionary struggles against the military dictatorship for social, economic and political justice.

While the social movement and the FMLN guerrilla army fought the Criollo oligarchy and the mestizo elite, they shared with Criollos an identification with the mestizo patriarchal figure of the heroic warrior. The FMLN guerrillas and the social movement exalted the bravery of mestizo Farabundo Martí and indigenous leader Feliciano Ama in leading the uprising against the military dictatorship of General Maximiliano Martínez in 1932. The guerrilla movement, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, is named after Martí. In the 1960's, inspired by indigenous and mestizo rebellions and in reaction to state repression and political exclusion, the social movement organized to demand better salaries, access to education and healthcare, among others. In the 1970's, in response to an upsurge in state repression, the first guerrilla organizations (FPL and ERP) were founded. Together, the social movement and the guerrillas demanded land distribution, economic equality, and democratization of politics from the state. The years leading to the founding of the FMLN guerrilla army in 1980 are among the most violent of the armed conflict. Once the FMLN was founded, the Civil War began in earnest. Women and men who participated in the social movement and the FMLN guerrilla believed that once the FMLN won state power, it would bring social, economic, and political justice for all women and men. The FMLN guerrillas had embraced the leftist "New Man" ideology, which sought to create gender equality among women and men. Many women fought an impressive war against the United States-

backed Salvadoran security forces, alongside men in the social movement and in the FMLN, believing the struggle for justice included gender equality.

The United States government provided the Salvadoran state with almost $1.5 million of military aid per day during the 1980 - 1992 Salvadoran civil war. However, by 1989, the FMLN guerrillas had demonstrated they could wage war against the U.S.-backed Salvadoran state security forces for years. The FMLN had also shown its potential to win state power via the armed struggle. In addition, by 1989, the United States government was finding it difficult to continue financing the war. The Cold War had ended, the U.S. fight against Communism was no longer its priority, and a wave of democratic governments began to replace military dictatorships throughout Latin America. Nevertheless, it was the international outcry against the assassination of the six Jesuit Priests, their housekeeper and her daughter by the Salvadoran army's Atlacatl Battalion that forced the U.S. government to stop financing the Salvadoran war. In this context, leaders of the Criollo oligarchy and the military agreed to enter into peace negotiations with the FMLN to stop the potential ascendancy of the guerrillas to executive power. The Criollo oligarchy also sought, through peace negotiations, to check the power of the army and place it under civilian control via armed struggle (these issues are discussed in Chapter Four). The agreement to enter into peace negotiations appeared to open the door to attaining economic and social justice and democratization of politics, as well as gender equality.

In 1992, the leadership of the Salvadoran state and the FMLN guerrillas signed the Peace Accords that ended twelve years of civil war. The Peace Accords successfully

demilitarized domestic law enforcement, created the National Civilian Police and demobilized most of the army and the entire FMLN guerrilla force. To stop ex-combatants from rising up in arms again, the Peace Accords enacted a land distribution program for ex-combatants and provided them with access to educational programs. To attain national reconciliation, the Peace Accords sanctioned a United Nations backed Salvadoran Truth Commission (STC) and implemented an economic policy of privatization. The STC, land distribution and privatization became the de facto peacebuilding mechanisms of the Accords. Within this context, the FMLN demobilized and became a political party.

For the first-time members of the leftist FMLN party could run for an electoral seat at the local or national level. Salvadorans could openly identify themselves as leftist without fear of being killed by members of the state security apparatus: the armed forces, police, or intelligence. In this regard, the Peace Accords democratized politics. The phrase Sin Vencedores, Ni Vencidos (Without Winners or Losers) became the slogan of the Peace Accords, a phrase that celebrated combatants' bravery and their struggles that made the peace negotiations possible. Nonetheless, the struggles for economic equality and social justice that had propelled the social movement and FMLN guerrillas to enter into a war faded to the background of the Peace Accords. The negotiators assumed that the Accords' peacebuilding mechanisms would create social and economic justice for all. This notion of peace, the achievement of a reduction in violence between the warring parties, left intact some of the forms of inequality that had been at the center of the

military struggle and reinforced class, race, and gender hierarchies embedded within the elites' national project of mestizaje.

In the postwar era, the state and youth gangs have exalted a similar patriarchal and capitalist understanding of peace, exalting the principle of "protecting" the citizenry as a critical motivation for their practices of peacemaking in El Salvador. Since 2003, right-wing ARENA and left-wing Funes and FMLN governments have held the "criminal" youth gangs responsible for the homicidal and femicidal violence in the country and have implemented mostly punitive measures to end that violence, without success. Those governments further politicized the patriarchal principle of "protecting" of the citizenry, especially women, putting it forward as the chief motivation for their punitive measures. As Funes explicitly stated, "Violence against women was violence against the nation." This politicization further entrenched patriarchal gender principles as essential traits of the nation-state and peacemaking.

Youth gangs have become the contemporary embodiment of the "other." Within the national ideology of mestizaje, the "other" is a person who does not embodied the dominant Salvadoran identity. In the post-war period, this other is a criminal (gang members) who should be annihilated in order to attain peace. In 2012 as part of their fight against state repressive measures, economic inequality and quasi-racial discrimination, the leadership of the rival Mara Salvatrucha and the Pandilla 18 gangs, with the support of the leftist Funes government, agreed to a gang truce; as the gang leadership declared, "por el bienestar del país, nuestras familias, y de nosotros mismos acordamos la tregua

entre pandillas" (for the wellbeing of the country, our families, and ourselves, we agree to a gang truce).

Like the state, youth gangs exalted the patriarchal principle of "protecting" the citizenry as a critical motivation for the gang truce. The truce dramatically reduced homicidal violence from fourteen deaths per day to five a day in the first months. When this reduction in homicidal violence was achieved, the rival youth gangs and the state celebrated that specific absence of violence as peace, while the issues of subordination of women and some men and violence against women faded once again to the background. The negative notion of peace practiced by youth gangs challenged contemporary forms of racial discrimination and economic inequality, while re-inscribing gender hierarchies and gender violence.

Like the Peace Accords, the state and youth gangs' postwar practices of peacemaking assume that peace is the absence of violence among groups largely conformed by men in a conflict, rather than grappling with the socio-economic root causes of the conflict. The problematic figure of the masculinist heroic warrior emerges once again, presenting the patriarchal value of "protecting" as beneficial to all, when by definition "protecting" implies that patriarchal power differences are constructive for society. Women with gang member relatives viewed the youth gangs' peacemaking as reproducing the patriarchal capitalist peace of the Accords. In response, they are insisting that economic and gender justice will be necessary to attain peace.

In this dissertation, I have elucidated the histories of violence that created a warrior masculinist ethos and explained how that ethos has been reproduced in

contemporary El Salvador. This warrior masculinity – fighting to protect— has enabled the state and gang members to occupy the paradoxical position of being both "peacemakers" and purveyors of violence. In the name of peacemaking, the state uses the patriarchal notion of "protecting" the citizenry to implement punitive measures against the youth gangs, whom it labels as criminals. These state practices of peacemaking do not transform the social-economic-gender inequities that are the root causes of the conflict. Conversely, youth gangs have reclaimed the same patriarchal norm of "protecting" as a peacemaking measure that enables them to question the structures of power, economic inequality, and quasi-racial discrimination. As a result, they have developed a sharp critique of the economic and political elites' notion of the ideal Salvadoran—a productive citizen who follows the rules of neoliberal capitalism. However, gang members, in their peacemaking practices, have not sought to change the neoliberal economic system. Women relatives of civil war veterans and youth gangs, rather that uncritically joining the peacemaking efforts of their relatives, question the patriarchal premises of their practices of peacemaking. Through their critiques, these women have reconstituted the very notion of peace, as something that, given the absence of gender, economic, and social equality, still needs to be created.

Drawing on these women's perspectives, I refer to the state and youth gangs' practices of peacemaking, as "negative notion of peace. I explain "negative notion of peace" as the idea that protecting is limited to ending violence among (male) groups in conflict. The notion of negative peace normalizes patriarchy, conceals inequities that make up the root causes of social conflict, and perpetuates violence against women and

some men. I maintain that if we want to build a lasting peace, we must grapple with the root causes of racialized gendered inequality that causes conflict and everyday suffering during war and peace.

Working Class Women's View of the Negative Notion of Peace

In Chapter One, I identified the pervasiveness of the negative notion of peace, which entails silencing weapons without transforming the root cause, socio-economic inequities of a conflict. I am borrowing from Johan Galtung (1969: 183) the concept of "negative peace," which he defines as "the absence of interpersonal personal violence," in contrast to "positive peace," which he defines as the "absence of structural violence." In this dissertation, I am specifically focusing on the concept of negative peace while giving it an intersectional focus. I have proposed an analytical framework that suggests that to attain peace, it is necessary to grapple with interlocking forms of inequalities that produce suffering and violence in everyday life.

Sectors of society that have been historically subordinated do not experience only one form of oppression (e.g. state violence). Instead, they are constantly struggling against multiple forms of oppression related to the specific position they inhabit within the structure of power relations in society. This is why the Criollo and political elites that emerged with the signing of the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords did not see it as a problem that the Accords did not address economic, racial, and gendered forms of oppression. By the same token, youth gangs do not see a problem with reclaiming the patriarchal norm of "protecting" as the impetus for their practices of peacemaking. The

youth gangs' peacemaking practices question economic inequality and quasi- racial

discrimination in relationship to themselves. But they have not questioned how patriarchy

affects the rest of the population, because they benefit from women's and some men's

gendered subordination. On the other hand, women have critically supported the

peacemaking efforts of their relatives in youth gangs, while at the same time demanding

gendered understanding of justice within the peacemaking processes. For women who are

targets of patriarchal forms of domination, developing a critical understanding of the

logics that view the absence of armed violence, continuation of gender based violence,

and socio-economic injustice as peace is an important point of departure for developing

their own theories and practices of peacemaking. These women have intuitively

developed a critical intersectional analysis of the interlocking forms of oppression that

affect them in everyday life, including racial discrimination, class and gender. They are

arguing that peace without gender and economic justice is not peace.

The intersectional framework of analysis raises questions that this dissertation can

only begin to answer. Why have members of a historically subordinated group who

fought for and demanded multiple forms of justice focused on one axis of oppression—

ending violence among males in conflict—leaving the rest to be resolved by some

unspecified mechanism in the post- conflict era? What are the general patterns from such

practices emerge? What are the theoretical insights we could generalize from in order to

compare and contrast with other postwar societies in order to build a generalized

framework for a more just and peaceful society?

In this work, I have argued that members of marginalized groups throughout the history of the Salvadoran nation-state drew on the national ideology of warrior masculinity to strengthen their struggles against the Criollos and the military dictatorship. In these struggles, members of marginalized groups have often uncritically accepted the patriarchal gendered premises of warrior masculinity with its gender hierarchies and structured power relations. When members of historically subordinated groups in El Salvador have engaged in peacemaking, peace has been understood as the absence of violence among the groups in conflict, which are dominantly conformed by men. Often, male-led peacemaking efforts have taken place around the negotiation of one axis of oppression in which those at the top and bottom of the power hierarchy share a common interest. The men who engaged in the peace process acknowledged that they were leaving other forms of injustice to be grappled with in the post-war setting. But even then, gendered oppression was not recognized as a form of social suffering that would make it impossible to attain peace, and thus, it was invisibilized. In El Salvador, gendered forms of oppression, such as violence against women, have been strategically used as a tool to justify the politicization of security. To grapple with patriarchal power relations would require the transformation of the very foundational violence which produced the negative notion of peace which the state and youth gangs hold in common.

This negative notion of peace and the peacemaking practices that emerge from it are problematic because they present patriarchal gender hierarchies, principles and power relations as beneficial for all members of society. Meanwhile this negative notion of

peace, by representing patriarchal society as the norm, strengthens the subordination of women and men who practice a non-hetero-patriarchal masculinity.

In El Salvador, youth gangs embrace the negative notion of peace via the patriarchal principle of protecting the country, their families and themselves because that patriarchal principle serves their agenda to question state repression, the quasi-racism directed against them, and economic disenfranchisement. The negative notion of peace also enables them to do something for their families within the capacities that their marginal masculinity can provide. As gang members are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy of economic and social power relations, patriarchal gender norms provide them with a grammar of a power with which they can resist state punitive measures (this is discussed in Chapter Three). At the same time, the patriarchal society of El Salvador positions male gang members at the top of the gendered power hierarchy of relations within their community. As long as they are wedded to this position, they, like the state, are blind to the needs and visions of justice held by women and men who practice a non-hetero-patriarchal masculinity.

Drawing on intersectional theory, we can generalize that to create alternative notions of peace and practices of peacemaking, those who are positioned at the bottom of multiple interlocking structures of oppression within marginalized groups must be included in peacemaking processes. Inclusion does not mean that those actors are free of dominant ideologies and will not reproduce them in their everyday life or in their political actions. While the women with whom I worked challenged the ethos of warrior masculinity that naturalized gender-based forms of violence as part of gang members'

notion of negative peace, these women also reproduced patriarchal gender norms around issues of sexuality (e.g., the hetero-normative nuclear family). I suggest that intersectional theory must pay attention to the difficulties an intersectional practice of social justice that would bring a lasting peace presents to members of subaltern groups, and the ways that some aspects of dominant thinking are simultaneously internalized and contested.

Significance and Broader Contributions

While the focus of my dissertation emerges from my own lived experiences and previous academic work with Salvadoran army and FMLN ex-combatants, I am also influenced by the academic literature on feminist analysis of everyday violence and anthropology of conflict. My dissertation connects these different bodies of literature to examine, largely from various feminist perspectives, the relationships between peace, women and men, and political subjectivities. By drawing upon the concepts of intersectionality, masculinities, and everyday violence, my dissertation has examined the potentialities for justice that grassroots peacemaking processes provide to women and men in El Salvador. My findings indicate that women and men from subaltern groups in El Salvador built strategic alliances through past and present experiences with state violence, and the material socio-economic conditions in which they live. This process of alliance building has been based on the reproduction of premises that keep gender hierarchies in place. My dissertation thus examined how gang members' notions of justice within the "grassroots peacemaking processes," reproduce gendered power relations.

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My dissertation contributes to the gender justice field with both a scholarly and social impact. It enhances theoretical understanding of the relationship between national discourses and notions of justice formed outside of the state apparatus, including the way that patriarchal gender ideologies permeate alternative processes for social justice. It benefits a multi-disciplinary audience of scholars interested in transforming the logics that sustain violence against women and some men in times of war and "peace," and in the social construction of political subjectivities that challenge the pervasiveness of hegemonic domination within struggles for social justice and peace. More importantly, this dissertation has discussed how women's and men's nuanced political subjectivities mediate, refigure, and potentially transform ideological structures inherent in Salvadoran notions of justice. My dissertation provides an ethnographic account of grassroots peacemaking and highlights the potentialities of these alternative processes while problematizing the usefulness and viability of patriarchal gender ideologies within resistance movements.

This dissertation provides insights for improving policy responses to challenges arising in nascent democracies as they struggle to create just, peaceful societies. This, in turn, will benefit a broad audience of social scientists and policy makers interested in better understanding of endemic violence in El Salvador and most of Latin America. This work has assessed the potential and limitations of grassroots initiatives as pathways for resolving problems associated with youth gang activity, poverty, violence and gender hierarchies in post-war societies. In this context, my theoretical contribution is that my work expands the analytical gaze to include perpetrators' views of endemic violence and

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to provide a more explicit formulation of grassroots peacemaking. My hope is that this

dissertation sets the stage for developing new insights to support local efforts and social

policies that resist the tendency to silence gender disparities within social justice efforts.

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