



“We are all victims here”

Perceptions of Safety and Violence
among Guatemalan youth in Santa
Cruz del Quiché

Elsa van Zoest

Both pictures on front page taken by Elsa van Zoest on February 20, 2016 in Quetzaltenango



Universiteit Utrecht

“We are all victims here”

Perceptions of Safety and Violence among Guatemalan youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché

Bachelor Thesis 2015/2016

Elsa van Zoest – 4005678

e.j.vanzoest1@students.uu.nl

Supervisor: Geert Mommersteeg

Word count: 18.900

Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Introduction	11
<u>1. Theoretical Framework</u>	15
1.1 The Anthropology of Conflict	15
1.2 The Anthropology of Law	16
1.3 Conflict in Latin America	17
1.4 'New' Violence in Latin America	19
1.5 Coping Strategies in Latin America	21
<u>2. Context: Guatemala</u>	24
<u>3. Empirical Chapter</u>	27
3.1 Safety and Violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché	28
3.1.1 (Mis)trust and Corruption	28
3.1.2 Indigenous Law	29
3.1.3 The Ongoing Violence	32
3.2 Perceptions of Safety and Violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché	36
3.2.1 Causes of the Ongoing Violence	36
3.2.2 Victims of the Ongoing Violence	39
3.2.3 Gang Violence	41
3.3 Coping Strategies of the Youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché	43
3.3.1 Dealing with Unsafe Surroundings	43
3.3.2 Consequences of the Ongoing Violence	45
4. Concluding Remarks	49
Bibliography	53
Appendixes	58
A. Overview informants	58
B. Summary in Spanish	59



Figure 1: Map of Guatemala and neighboring countries. The purple triangle displays the location of Santa Cruz del Quiché¹.



Figure 2: Map of Santa Cruz del Quiché, including the hospital and cemetery. Santa Cruz's city center is located right under the city's name on the map. The red triangle shows the location of the head office of the local police forces. The blue triangle displays the location of the bus terminal.

¹ Both maps are from <http://www.oldmapsonline.org/>

Acknowledgements

At the end of January 2016 I arrived in Guatemala: a country I had spent countless hours reading about during the months leading up to my research. Feeling both excited and nervous, I submerged myself in the country's culture and the Spanish language. After all, doing anthropological fieldwork was something I had been looking forward to for almost two and a half years and was one of the reasons why I decided to study at Utrecht University to begin with. Because of my long-found interest in conflict-related topics and my desire to continue my academic career within this field, it was an easy decision to focus my research on violence and safety. Human resilience is a concept that has always fascinated me and through my research in Santa Cruz del Quiché I was able to further develop my interest.

This thesis is the product of my eight week research in Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala. I would like to thank all my informants, who not only took the time to help me, but also showed the courage to share personal and often emotional stories with me. There are a few people I would like to thank in particular. My Guatemalan host-parents; for welcoming me into the family and making me feel at home during my two months in Santa Cruz del Quiché. My parents; for their patience and support. Marie-Louise Glebbeek; for her guidance, feedback and for helping me get in touch with the local police department in Quiché. Gardien Steenbeek; for her uplifting and encouraging words of motivation. Last, but not least, my supervisor Geert Mommersteeg; for his guidance, feedback, expertise and critical eye during the past seven months.

Elsa van Zoest

Utrecht – June 20, 2016

Introduction

April 2016

The end of my fieldwork is quickly approaching. With less than two weeks left in Santa Cruz del Quiché, I find myself at the local police station after my interview with Diego, the deputy commissioner, has come to an end. As we leave his office, I notice it has started to pour outside and it seems everyone has found shelter inside, leaving the streets surprisingly empty. When I say my goodbyes to Diego, a black pick-up police truck pulls up in front of the station. Without wasting a second, Diego tells me to get in so the officers can give me a ride home. Even though I tell him that I do not mind to walk home, Diego insists and a minute later I squeeze myself into the backseat in-between two armed police officers while two more are seated in the front. They are all wearing the same black uniforms and black boots and even though they ask a few questions about my stay in Santa Cruz, they quickly revert to their previous topic of conversation: alcohol selling permits. The officer on my left side, a lollipop between his lips, suggests to patrol in zona 2 that night, but the driver reminds his colleague that they have already been there last night. It only takes a few minutes before the pick-up truck leaves the paved roads behind and we make our way into zona 4, where I am living during my stay in the city.

'Are we in trouble?' Fernando, my oldest host-brother asks the second the pick-up truck disappears out of sight. Thinking he is joking, I laugh and explain the police officers just gave me a ride home from the station. My host-parents linger behind their son and seem concerned more than anything else even though they do not speak up. 'You should have declined. You could have walked or taken a tuk-tuk here,' Fernando tells me angrily. A little confused I explain once more that I had an interview at the police station and that they simply offered to drive me home instead of letting me walk through the rain. Regardless, Fernando does not back down. 'It's not safe. You never know what they are up to.' Later that night I find myself unable to sleep – the conversation with Fernando lingering at the back of my mind. His words expressed not only a concern for my wellbeing, but also an alarming distrust in the police officers, who, in my eyes, were simply doing me a favor. Perhaps more importantly, his words illustrate that the inhabitants of Santa Cruz del Quiché are not 'just' possible victims of assault, robbery and other types of (violent) injustice. More than that, they are constant victims of fear and worry and these feelings are even instilled by those who are meant to protect them.

As a region, Latin America has a dramatically high level of violence as defined by homicide rates. This number has increased by 50% from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s (Moser and McIlwaine 2006:90). The homicide rates in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador are around 45 murders for every 100,000 inhabitants, the highest number within Latin America (Glebbeck 2010:68). Remarkably, citizens often feel less safe now than during the civil wars that ravaged most Latin American countries (Glebbeck 2010:64). In contemporary society, fear and insecurity have become ‘normalized’ into the reality of daily life (Moser and McIlwaine 2006:91). While it is often thought that violence ends when peace accords are signed, it has been proven that by no means this is always the case. In Guatemala, the years of ‘peace’ turned out to be almost as dangerous as the years of conflict that ravaged the country for thirty-six years. This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the aftermath of violent conflict and of the lives of youth in postwar Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala.

Research on violence in contemporary Guatemala has often been focused on the Mayans in the highlands of Guatemala or on the urban population as a whole. In contrast to the older generations, however, Guatemalan youth have not actively lived through the civil war and will thus plausibly have a different understanding of the contemporary violence in Guatemala. By focusing on the perceptions of safety and violence among urban Guatemalan youth we will be able to add an extra dimension to the existing studies. From the 29th of February until the 24th of April 2016 I have carried out this research in Santa Cruz del Quiché, the capital city of the Quiché department located in the northwest highlands of Guatemala. I have performed this research in order to answer the following question: *How do Guatemalan youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché perceive safety and violence in their everyday lives and how do they cope with their possibly unsafe surroundings?*

The theoretical relevance of this research is to complement the existing knowledge on everyday violence in contemporary Guatemala. Moreover, as social relevance, this research will offer more insight into the everyday experiences of Guatemalan youth regarding safety and violence, making it possible for social institutions such as universities, high schools and sports clubs, to align their approach with the actual experiences of Guatemalan youth. The focus will mainly be on describing and explanatory research. Firstly, I will identify the ‘new forms’ of violence that Guatemalan youth experience in their everyday lives. Secondly, this research aims to explain what underlies these perceptions of safety and violence.

During my fieldwork, I was able to learn more about everyday life in Santa Cruz del Quiché through the use of several research methods, as referred to in Boeije (2010) and DeWalt and DeWalt (2011). Anthropological fieldwork usually requires spending a longer

period of time with the research population. During the eight weeks I lived in Santa Cruz del Quiché, participant observation helped me to reduce the distance between my research population and myself. I was able to build rapport with the locals by ‘hanging out’ at the central park. Because I was the only non-Guatemalan girl living in the city at the time, people often approached me out of curiosity. This has led to many interesting (informal) conversations and qualitative interviews, which have contributed to my research. Later-on I was able to participate in the daily activities of my informants, such as going to university, visit the local market and spend time with friends and family. At times, however, the degree of participation was lower than I originally expected because most informants did not leave the house all that often. It was only later-on that I realized that this, too, was relevant for my research as activities such as listening to music, watching sports games or movies and helping out at home, too, were ways of coping with unsafe surroundings.

By using the snowball method I was able to get in touch with new people. This started mainly through my host-family in Santa Cruz del Quiché, who never passed on an opportunity to introduce me to family members and friends in the city. Through informal conversations I was able to get to know my informants and learn about their perceptions and personal experiences. While informal conversations leave much of the control to the informants, it has proven to be a useful way of exploring sensitive topics. After all, talking about violence or loss can be emotionally charging and painful. Informal conversations give informants the opportunity to tell their story in their own words without the risk of dragging up difficult or painful memories. At the same time, it seemed that my informants wanted to get these stories heard. Realizing that your opinion counts, and that it matters what you think or feel, does people good.

Informal conversations have often led to (semi)structured qualitative interviews. By using a list of questions and prompts I tried to increase the likelihood that all topics would be covered in each interview in more or less the same way. I have recorded all of the qualitative interviews as well as some of the informal conversations. Moreover, I have constantly written down jot notes in order to record all data as accurately as possible. Taking notes also reminds people that research is occurring. Later-on I used the recordings for clarification and to remember exact words and phrases used by informants when translating the jot notes into field notes. Moreover, I kept a diary to reflect on personal feelings and thoughts as well as to develop a self-reflexive account. Additionally, I have kept a logbook to chronologically organize records that provided a calendar of events, financial accounts and other matters.

Through the use of footnotes within the empirical chapter, I will clarify when (and

which) informants have shared their stories with me. All interviews and conversations referred to, took place in Santa Cruz del Quiché and all names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals. Lastly, through document analysis, such as news reports and official documents, I was able to gain insight in the actual situation concerning safety and violence in order to compare it to the perceptions that became apparent from the qualitative interviews, informal conversations and participant observation.

Anthropological fieldwork, however, involves choices. While these choices were usually carefully considered and deliberately made, it is likely that others were made without noticing. It already starts with the questions asked – for example, when do you continue to carefully push further and when do you let your informant drop the subject? Maybe more than with other disciplines, anthropological fieldwork is a personal experience. A researcher, possibly led by coincidence or personal preference or interest, influences the outcome. While some see this as a weakness, I believe that, at the same time, it is a strength that distinguishes anthropology from other disciplines. Through anthropological fieldwork, we encounter stories that otherwise would not be heard. When it is possible to explore the unexpected, it can enrich the end result. During my fieldwork in Santa Cruz del Quiché, the Mayan judicial system caught my attention and intrigued me to no end. Consequently, it takes up more space in my thesis than I was originally planning on. This way my personal interest has influenced my decision to dive deeper into the subject of indigenous law, which, in my opinion, was of invaluable worth in understanding perceptions of safety and violence among Guatemalan youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

In the next chapter, I will start with exploring the important concepts and theories in the existing academic literature. Here we will explore anthropological work within conflict studies and continue towards the violent history of Latin America. Secondly, in the context, we will take a closer look at safety and violence in Guatemala and specifically the characteristics of Santa Cruz del Quiché. Thirdly, we will turn to the empirical data I have collected during my fieldwork and link this to the theoretical framework. Subsequently, in the concluding remarks, we iterate the most important theories with the empirical data and come to a conclusion in order to answer the research question. Appendix A includes a list of all informants referred to in the document. This list provides background information such as occupation and age and is listed in the order in which they are presented in the empirical chapter. Appendix B consists of a summary of the research in Spanish.

1. Theoretical Framework

In this section we will explore important concepts and theories described in the existing academic literature. Firstly, we will examine the anthropological work within conflict studies. Secondly, we will briefly look into the anthropology of law. Thirdly, we will take a closer look at the violent history of Latin America and how violence and fear still shape the daily lives of most citizens in Latin American countries. Fourthly, we will identify the types of ‘new’ violence that now characterize most contemporary societies in Latin America. Lastly, we will turn to coping strategies used by citizens in Latin America to deal with the fear and insecurity that characterizes their daily lives.

1.1 The Anthropology of Conflict

Questions of peace and conflict have always been important in anthropology (Goldschmidt et al. 1986:12). The earliest anthropologists were mainly interested in the cultural manifestations of conflict and war within and between so-called ‘primitive’ or ‘tribal’ peoples. Later on, they turned to concepts of ‘social order’. While they were still interested in conflict, they primarily studied social conflict as an aspect of relatively stable societies. After World War II, anthropological interest in social conflict was stimulated by the national liberation struggles and other conflicts associated with the process of decolonization in ‘third world’ countries, by the cold war threat and by the Vietnam War (Sluka 1992:21). The focus thus shifted from social order in relatively stable societies towards social conflict in societies undergoing rapid change. Conflicts have become more frequent, more serious and more radicalized over time. Social conflict has thus gained more interest and has become a dominant anthropological interest (Sluka 1992:19). This anthropological interest in conflict, however, remains wide-ranging: from personal motivation in conflict, to the social structures and dynamics of specific conflict situations, to interest in the global nature of contemporary militarism (Sluka 1992:20). Anthropologists have long noted that because social life inevitably entails frustrations and incompatibilities between individuals and groups, conflict is a basic form of human interaction that occurs in all social systems. Social conflict is thus viewed as cultural universal. At the same time, however, anthropologists recognize that there is a wide range in the degree and forms of conflict exhibited across human societies (Sluka 1992:20).

Robben and Nordstrom (1995) note that the chaos of warfare and the incomprehensibility for its victims are rarely addressed in academic writings. Human suffering exists both during war as well as during peace. After all, peace does not necessarily imply the absence of violence and terror. Violence is not ‘somewhere else’: in a third world

country or on a distant battlefield. In fact, violence is ‘an inescapable fact of life’ (Robben and Nordstrom 1995:2). Sluka (1992:19) notes that there have been at least several hundred wars since the end of World War II. This means that there has not been a single day of world peace since then. In fact, in a number of places, war has become a permanent ‘way of life’.

Violence, according to Nordstrom and Martin (1992:13), is not a socio-culturally fragmented phenomenon that occurs ‘outside’ the arena of everyday life. It is part of life for millions of people all over the world. If we are to understand peace and conflict, it is to people themselves that we must turn. After all, on average, 90% of all war-related deaths now occur among civilian populations. This number of battle-related deaths does not provide an adequate account of the true human costs of conflict. Conflict kills people in less direct ways than being caught in the crossfire, for example through the collapse of a society’s economy, infrastructure of health and human services and public safety systems (Human Security Report 2005:31).

Anthropology, more than other disciplines, is grounded in people and the way they experience conflict and the enactment of violence (Nordstrom and Martin 1992:15). Anthropologists are able to display the ‘absurdity’ of conflict, because those whose faith is being decided are hardly heard as they have little voice in the events that determine their lives. Instead of rationalizing conflict, anthropologists can explore the contradictory realities of conflict – namely, the simultaneous coexistence of laughter and suffering, fear and hope, absurdity and commonplace – by sharing stories (Robben and Nordstrom 1995:10). Anthropologists bring more strengths to the study of conflict. According to Stuka (1992:20) these include a cross-cultural and comparative perspective, a holistic approach, reliance on participant observation and a commitment to getting as close as possible to the participant’s point of view.

1.2 The Anthropology of Law

At times there can be overlap between the anthropology of conflict and the anthropology of law. In some cases this can result in an area of tension when (violent) conflict causes informal or parallel state structures to arise. We will briefly look into the anthropology of law in order to be able to understand possible crossovers between both fields of study later-on.

An important development in the anthropology of law is the expansion of the space in which law has effects beyond legal institutions (Merry 2012). This meant a shift from the role of law as exercised by legal institutions to the role of law in everyday life. Within the broad spectrum of anthropology of law, special attention has been paid to indigenous law and

consequently the concept of legal pluralism.

Legal pluralism implies the coexistence of different legal systems within the same social field (Simon Thomas 2013:260). According to some authors it occurs, for example, when two legal mechanisms could be applied to an identical situation but Simon Thomas states that different legal systems applying to different situations should not be labeled 'legal pluralism' but instead 'plurality of law.' Plurality of law, on the other hand, requires interaction of two or more different legal systems instead of mere coexistence. During the 1990s and 2000s, constitutional reforms throughout Latin America increasingly recognized legal pluralism which meant that the jurisdictional faculties of indigenous communities authorities were recognized and their rights to exercise their own, culturally specific forms of law were confirmed (Sieder 2011:45). The revival and strengthening of indigenous law is a result of the increase in crime and insecurity. For example, in Guatemala the practice of indigenous law is described as a reflection of 'cultural differences, a response to past and present violence and a resource for a population denied access to justice' (Sieder 2011:43).

Contrary to state law, indigenous law is usually based on oral communication and regulates a wide range of spheres of social life such as marriage, parenthood, inheritance and conflict resolution. Discussion and dialogue are crucial for resolving cases in a satisfactory manner and conflict resolution is focused on reconciliation, compensation and restitution (Simon Thomas 2012:27). Based on a case-study on the settlement of internal conflicts in Zumbahua, Ecuador, Simon Thomas (2012:260-265) illustrates that the law is a concept that has different meaning in different settings. While the formal recognition of legal pluralism was often considered a victory for indigenous people, at the same time it meant legal uncertainty for persons involved in internal conflicts. For example, in Zumbahua, the actual day-to-day governance is divided among different authorities but the boundaries between those different authorities have become blurry. This highly complex daily practice of dispute settlement resulted in the labeling of the legal reality in Zumbahua as 'interlegality'. Different elements in conflicts cannot be viewed in isolation. After all, more often than not, conflicts, as well as the jurisdictions and procedures of authorities, overlap one another. It is exactly this interconnectedness that reflects the complexity involved in resolving local conflicts. Legal pluralism, then, is viewed as imperceptibly combined elements of both systems, which reflect a daily reality of interlegality in Zumbahua.

1.3 Conflict in Latin America

Latin American countries have experienced relatively little inter-state conflict and

comparatively high levels of intra-state violence over the last decades. Almost every country in Latin America has experienced civil war, political revolt or other forms of political conflict (Brands 2011:229). The violence was usually directed against the internal enemies of the state. These included guerilla forces, revolutionary movements and presumed ‘communists’ among others (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:15). The worst of these conflicts, those in Guatemala and Colombia, claimed around 200,000 lives each. The price, however, was not only paid in human lives. The wrecked economic capacity and government institutions set Latin American countries back by decades (Brands 2011:230). Since then, processes of reconstruction, democratization and social and institutional reforms have been initiated in most Latin American countries (Glebbeek 2010:63).

While the reforms were received to be promising, by now the high expectations have vanished into thin air (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:1) The processes of reform have not been able to contribute to more peaceful and secure surroundings. Instead, many of the Latin American countries have faced a rise in criminality and violence. What is most striking about this growth of crime in Latin America is not that of crime as such, but of the violence with which it is committed; not attacks on property, but aggression against people (Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga 2002:25). While the extent and nature of violence varies from country to country, as a region Latin America has a dramatically high level of violence as defined by homicide rates. This rate of intentional homicide in Latin America increased by 50% from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s (Moser and McIlwaine 2006:90). The homicide rates in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador are around 45 murders for every 100,000 inhabitants, the highest number within Latin America (Glebbeek 2010:68). Citizens often feel even less safe now than during the civil wars. Fear and insecurity have become ‘normalized’ into the reality of daily life (Moser and McIlwaine 2006:91). It seems, then, that progress and development following the violent conflicts have brought with them suffering, inequality and violence (Benson et al. 2008:38). In more than one scenario, conflict has led to the emergence a culture of violence (Steenkamp 2005:254). War has impacted on society’s norms and values in such a way as to foster an increased social tolerance of individuals’ violent behavior. And thus, even though the overt political violence has come to an end in most Latin American countries, generalized violence has increased. These ‘new’ forms of violence especially affect urban areas and are characterized by the high proportion of deaths by small firearms and the overrepresentation of the young population, both as victims and perpetrators (McIlwaine and Moser 2001:969; Koonings and Kruijt 2015:4). These ‘new’ forms of violence will be addressed in more detail in the next section.

Nowadays almost 75% of the population in Latin America lives in cities (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:7). Between 50 and 70% of urban citizens in the region are estimated to live on the wrong side of the breach of poverty, insecurity and exclusion. The fragmentation and deterioration of the urban space through inequality, insecurity and fear affect the lives of the elites and the middle class as much as they do the poor (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:1). Urban poverty in Latin America has proven to be persistent, and violence is often rooted in poverty (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky 2011:62). Consequently, cities have become the prime domain of the 'new' forms of violence (Koonings and Kruijt 2015:5). Many consider processes of globalization to be a root cause for the increase in poverty that turned Latin America into a breeding ground for violence (Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga 2002:22). For example through the ubiquitous presence of television, even in the poorest of urban homes, cultural patterns of consumption spread massively. This has caused individual's expectations to increase even though their real chances of satisfying those aspirations did not increase.

Especially in Central America, gangs are national security threat number one. Tens of thousands of children and young adults, usually aged between twelve and thirty years, belong to a (youth)gang (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:17). The existence (and persistence) of these gangs would most-likely not be possible if it wasn't for the phenomenon of local 'governance voids'. Contemporary urban poverty and social exclusion exist as a result of the failure of the state to guarantee citizen's security. This failure is reflected in the incapacity to protect citizens from everyday violence but also in the involvement of (members of) state agencies in extra-legal and criminal violence (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:17). Consequently, alternative, informal or parallel structures arise.

1.4 'New' Violence in Latin America

Despite the term, the 'newness' is no longer a relevant distinction when talking about the increase in violence in Latin America. What was new prior to 2000, is now viewed as normal. 'New' violence, then, refers to the shift from political violence towards more generalized violence. Repressive military and insurgents have been replaced by new sets of actors, namely criminal and social armed actors as well as official security forces engaged in public order and law enforcement (Koonings and Kruijt 2015:6). Across the region, criminal groups are waging a form of irregular warfare against government institutions. These groups participate in illicit activities ranging from drug smuggling to arms dealing to extortion. They often use bribery and coercion to 'hollow out' state institutions from within while they kill policemen,

government officials and citizens who refuse to cooperate (Brands 2011:229). These voids left by state incapacity, in combination with poverty and social exclusion, have contributed to the emergence of alternative forms of social organization. The internal conflicts in Latin America have left a social legacy of weapons and drugs money, making violence the prime foundation of such alternative forms (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:19).

The existence of governance voids have also led to an increase in popular lynchings of suspected criminals at the hands of large crowds in Latin America. Citizens, thus, have taken the law into their own hands. These incidents are often viewed as random and regrettable acts of violence while in reality they might be purposeful and political influenced (Snodgrass Godoy 2004:261). Instead of violence as a 'top-down' phenomenon, from state against citizen, these incidents reveal a new sort of violence that originates at the bottom. Embattled communities not only seek to punish and deter criminal activity, but also to reassert themselves as agents rather than victims (Snodgrass Godoy 2004:261). It is important to note, however, that the lynchings do not occur in the areas where crime is at its worst and most of the people lynched were accused of relatively minor property crimes instead of more grave criminal offenses such as rape or murder. Lynching, thus, is not only about regaining control over crime but also over decision-making authority (Snodgrass Godoy 2004:629-638).

The lethality associated with contemporary crime in Latin America is a consequence of the massive spread of firearms among the population. It is remarkable that both people for whom crime is a way of life as well as those for whom it is not, usually own a weapon (Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga 2002:26). If firearms were not so readily available, the mortality rate would be much lower. After all, fists or knife-fights are much less likely to kill than firearms. The proportion of homicides committed with firearms is dramatically high in Latin America, exceeding 80%. The massive spread of firearms in the region is linked in considerable measure to drug trafficking (Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga 2002:25).

Drug selling turned out to be a very profitable business in Latin America (Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga 2002:24), and when more people became involved this contributed to the growth of everyday violence. Getting involved in drug trading is attractive for its financial gain, prestige and provision of a sense of identity, community and belonging (Leeds 2007:25). For example in *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, drug trading organizations increasingly dominate communities' economic and political life. Sometimes these drug trading groups have even taken over the role of judge, jury and often also of punisher of perceived crimes (Leeds 2007:25). The inability to earn an adequate living is one of the main motives for involvement in drug trading. Another motive for viewing the drug trade as a viable alternative

concerns the absence of a supportive family life or other means of socialization, such as school or church (Leeds 2007:27). Moreover, violence within the home is often identified as a primary reason for young men to join a local gang and consequently, get involved in drug-related crimes (McIlwaine and Moser 2007:119).

While often overlooked, it seems violence against women is one of the continent's most pressing problems. This term covers a wide range of abuses targeted at women and girls. These include geographically or culturally specific forms of abuse such as female genital mutilation and honor killings, as well as forms of violence that occur worldwide, such as domestic violence and rape (Watts and Zimmerman 2002:1232). For example, in Latin America, between 10% and 35% of women are physically abused by their partners (Flake and Forste 2006:19). While partners are the most frequent offenders, it also happens at the hands of parents, other family members, neighbors, teachers, colleagues and state employees, such as policemen and soldiers. The region is infamous for its high rates of political and social violence causing the violence that occurs behind closed doors to be much less understood (Flake and Forste 2006:19). Domestic abuse may lead young people to join gangs because they will make them 'feel big'. Traditional institution of the state and the family are unable to provide young people with a meaningful social identity, making gangs a rational alternative (Winton 2004:89). These factors, combined with anger fostered by repression and corruption, are often enough to push already marginalized youth into the option of drug trading (Leeds 2007:27). Simply put, the prospect of being a good citizen is unlikely to outweigh the benefits of belonging to a gang in many urban areas throughout Latin America (Winton 2004:89).

1.5 Coping Strategies in Latin America

Insecurity, violence and fear have given rise to new ways of coping with violence in everyday life (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:4). Within the context of Western societies, coping strategies are usually based on an individualistic approach whereby the individual can seek help through professional channels. In many other societies, there are more collective coping approaches. Here, individuals are part of a community and this community resolves problems and functions as a source of support. Consequently, the support of family, for example, is often more vital than professional counseling (Hundt et al. 2004:418). Violence increasingly dominates the lives of citizens and as urban violence becomes more widespread, so too do the fear and insecurity that it generates (McIlwaine and Moser 2007:120). While there are multiple ways of coping with insecurity, it is important to note that the extent of fear is not necessarily linked to the actual possibility of becoming a victim of violence. Fear also reflects

individual-level characteristics such as socioeconomic status, media exposure, economic and political insecurities and trust in law enforcement among others (Dammert and Malone 2006:28).

Violence and insecurity have resulted in social mistrust and a lack of social fabric in communities. Fear undermines communication because of a lack of trust, which in turn generates further mistrust and even conflict. Consequently, people use several ‘avoidance’ strategies in order to cope with insecurity but at the same time these avoidance strategies severely restrict the movement of urban citizens and damage the social relations of a community (McIlwaine and Moser 2007:121). This happens, for example, when people start avoiding certain urban areas that are associated with danger and violence. These places usually include areas where gangs and drug users meet up, such as public parks or particular street corners. Alternatively, people stay indoors because they are afraid to leave their homes except for work or education (McIlwaine and Moser 2007:123). In 2004, a research was carried out measuring strategies for coping with prolonged conflict by Palestinian young people (Hundt et al. 2004:423). They found ‘improving oneself’ to be the most-used coping strategy, which was shaped by studying hard and independently making decisions. Moreover, seeking diversions and relaxing was a frequently cited coping strategy, whereby, for example, diversion was found in reading, sleeping, watching television and listening to music. Lastly, they found the Palestinian young people to develop social support and to invest in close friendships in order to cope with their surroundings.

Moreover, there are more ‘active’ ways of coping with insecurity and violence. At times, specific neighborhoods become synonymous with urban conflict. Social interaction within these so-called ‘red zones’ is often severely undermined. (McIlwaine and Moser 2007:125), which can make people decide to carry a weapon. This, as mentioned earlier, has everything to do with wanting to reassert themselves as agents rather than victims in a situation (Snodgrass Godoy 2004:261). By taking matters into their own hands, urban citizens hold onto a sense of power and ‘being in control’. This occurs in particular when people fear for their own safety (Duncan 1996:345). More drastically, people also cope with insecurity by taking matters into their own hands through lynchings, as discussed in the previous section.

At the same time, urban citizens try to cope with their unsafe surroundings by forming so-called ‘neighborhood watch groups’ This initiative has emerged all throughout Latin America. This preventive approach is based on citizen involvement and aims for neighborhood residents to watch out for criminal and suspicious behavior. They can report it to local law enforcement to help prevent crime and promote cooperation among residents and

police forces. While such groups are run by the state, in some cases they become attached to private interests and controlled by local businesses, powerful residents or even organized criminal networks (Ungar 2007:24).

As mentioned earlier, urban violence affects social groups in very different ways and thus they react differently as well (Coy 2006:124). Wealthier people are to a greater extent exposed to assaults, various forms of robbery and more recently also kidnapping. This had led to the emergence of so-called ‘gated communities’ in Latin American cities. In some cases they are equipped with public and private schools, universities, shopping centers and sport infrastructure (Borsdorf et al. 2007:366). The fear of crime is generally cited as the most important reason for the enormous success of gated housing areas (Coy 2006: 123).

In conclusion, after the years of military dictatorship, civil-military governments and civil wars – processes of reconstruction, democratization and social and institutional reforms were initiated all throughout Latin America. However, many of the Latin American countries have faced a rise in criminality and violence. Citizens have different coping strategies to deal with their possibly unsafe surroundings: fear causes some people to avoid having to leave their homes while others seek to hold on to some kind of control. This happens, for example, through neighborhood watch groups or through more drastic measures such as lynchings. Those who can afford it increasingly live in ‘gated communities’ while specific poor neighborhoods become synonymous with urban conflict. Social interaction within these so-called ‘red zones’ is often severely undermined. Fear and insecurity created by everyday violence, thus, has damaging effects on the social relations of a community. In order to illustrate this, we will now turn to the case-study of safety and violence in Guatemala.

2. Context: Guatemala

Even though the official peace accords have been signed in 1996, Guatemala remains a dangerous place. During the thirty-six years of armed conflict, in which the Guatemalan Army was responsible for 93% of all human rights violations, violence and fear became routine aspects of everyday life (Sanford 2008:106, Benson 2008:38). The violence was mainly directed against the Mayan people. This cultural group comprises a majority of the Guatemalan population, yet remains marginalized by poverty, inequality and discrimination (Sanford 2008:106). The height of the violence came about during the early 1980s, after the guerilla movement had unified into the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union (URNG). The government responded with a violent campaign in which many people were forced by the military into resettlement camps (Clouser 2009:10). The military also heavily relied on tactics such as forced disappearances, torture, political killings and even massacres (Snodgrass Godoy 2002:642). Despite now being a 'post-conflict' state, Guatemala continues to be wracked by violence (Winton 2004:83).

Social indicators such as education, health and mortality rates show that Guatemala ranks as one of the worst in the region, surpassed only by Haiti (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky 2011:56). Almost half of the population is poor and over the last ten years, these rates have only marginally declined. The incidence of extreme poverty, about 15% of the population, has remained the same. Moreover, Guatemala's distribution of wealth is extremely unequal (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky 2011:56). It seems, then, there has been little progress towards securing the protection of human rights and upholding the rule of law since the peace agreements. Since the formal end of the civil war, criminal groups, including transnational (drug-trafficking) gangs and corrupt Guatemalans have expanded their influence and operations. Guatemala's state institutions have been unable to contain the violence (Brands 2011:229). The national media emphasizes the prominent role of gangs in the ongoing violence and terror that afflicts the country. Partly due to the wide availability of arms in the current postwar setting, armed gangs have been able to control entire neighborhoods. It is important to note, however, that the police, the judiciary and local and departmental governments are characterized by criminal collaborators and infiltrators (Brands 2011:228). In April 2007, a few months before the political elections in Guatemala, a poll revealed that 90% of the Guatemalan citizens did not trust the police (Sanford 2008:111). The two rounds of voting were widely judged to be free and fair, but the election campaign was characterized by political violence. Over fifty political figures were killed (Brands 2011:228). Yet impunity is frequently occurring: ten years ago only around 1% of violent crimes were successfully

prosecuted (Benson et al. 2008:390). Despite major progress in this regard, the belief that the military and the judiciary are connected with drug traffickers and organized crime has not been rejected.

Consequently, some people speak of a ‘human rights crisis’ in peacetime Guatemala (Sanford 2008:104). A society that lives in fear of violence is unable to go on with its life and business in the way that it wants. Moreover, each year it becomes more dangerous to be a woman in Guatemala. Between 2002 and 2005, the number of women killed increased by more than 63%. Nearly 40% of these murders took place in or around Guatemala City (Sanford 2008:105). These gender-based crimes against women, however, occur within the context of growing civic insecurity. This social context of everyday violence makes ‘femicide’ – the killing of women because of their gender - possible in the first place (Godoy Paiz 2012:89-92).

Despite recent democratic and judicial reforms in Guatemala, systematic human rights violations and everyday crime and insecurity continue to increase. In fact, Guatemala, with a population of approximately fourteen million people, has one of the highest per capita murder rates in the world (Godoy-Paiz 2012:90). While young gang members are usually cited in governmental and everyday discourses as the main cause of the ongoing violence, it has become clear that multiple factors play a role. These include vast social inequalities, high levels of poverty, legal impunity and clandestine groups that profit from illicit activities such as the trafficking of human beings, arms and drugs. However, the category ‘gang member’ also functions as something of a scapegoat in contemporary Guatemala (Benson 2008:43). ‘Social cleansing’ refers to the elimination of ‘undesirable’ members of society. It has involved the mass killing of young people, particularly young men who are socially constructed as ‘criminals’ and thus responsible for the country’s social ills (Godoy-Paiz 2012:92-93). Victims of femicide and social cleansing are dismissed as being ‘less than worthy’ by calling them gang members or prostitutes. In other words, the police does not even try to bring perpetrators to justice. When the state fails to hold the perpetrators accountable, they send out a message to society that violence is both acceptable and inevitable (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky 2011:60).

Feelings of desperateness and powerlessness have ‘forced’ Guatemalan citizens into taking matters into their own hands. The United Nations Mission to Guatemala documented 482 lynchings in the country between 1996 and 2002, almost six per month. We can assume many more have gone undetected. Without a doubt, the lynchings in Guatemala are a legacy of state terror. Remarkable enough, these attacks involve mass civilian participation and

usually take place in broad daylight. These lynchings are assumed to be an indication of citizens' desperation and could indicate a manifestation of sociological trauma (Snodgrass Godoy 2002:641).

In conclusion, Guatemala is plagued by new forms of violence caused by former military and police members, paramilitary and guerrilla forces and street gangs (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky 2011:57). Even though there came an end to the civil war in 1996, Guatemala is still ravaged by violence. The 'new' violence is rooted in the violent history of the country and its legacy of a culture of violence (Godoy-Paiz 2012:90). While young gang members are usually blamed for the ongoing violence, it has become clear that multiple factors play a role. While it is exactly twenty years ago that the peace accords have been signed, Guatemala remains a dangerous place.

My bachelor research took place in Santa Cruz del Quiché, located in the Quiché department in the northwest highlands of Guatemala. With an extension of 9,378 km² Quiché is the third largest department in the country. In 2002, Quiché counted a population of 655,510 inhabitants making up for around 6% of the total population of Guatemala. More than 90% of the population in Quiché is indigenous (Sieder 2011:49). Older generations usually speak Spanish as well as the indigenous language of this area, called K'iche'. Younger generations often know some K'iche' words but rely heavily on the Spanish language. Quiché was one of the regions hardest hit by the internal armed conflict (Sieder 2011:50). Nowadays 85% of the people in Quiché live below the poverty line and 33% lives in extreme poverty. In recent years the region has become known as a major exporter of immigrants to the United States of America. Santa Cruz del Quiché is the departmental capital and is classified as an urban area with a population of 62,332 counted in 2002. It is the most important economic center of the region and any government offices, such as the departmental governor's office, the municipality, the main police station and the law courts are located here. In addition, the city is home to multiple governmental and nongovernmental projects, banks, shops and a market (Sieder 2011:49). We will now turn to the everyday experiences and perceptions of safety and violence among Guatemalan youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

3. Empirical Chapter

3.1 Safety and Violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché

When asked to describe Santa Cruz del Quiché, most people give the same answer: the city is *'tranquilo'*, meaning peaceful or calm. 'Nothing happens here,' according to the locals, especially in comparison to the violent affairs that take place in Guatemala-city. Stories regarding murder and other types of violence fill the daily newspapers every day.

Consequently, most people do not understand why I came all the way to Santa Cruz del Quiché to look into perceptions of safety and violence. My host-brother Fernando (24) almost seemed concerned that I would have to return to the Netherlands empty-handed: 'if you want to do research on violence, maybe you should go to Guatemala-city instead.'²

Santa Cruz del Quiché is a small city, making it possible to reach most outskirts by foot. When leaving the city center, where the church and the municipality are located, the streets quickly become empty while the central park is usually lively at any hour. It is a gathering place for all ages, mainly because there are hardly any restaurants, bars or nightclubs in the city. Consequently, friends meet up on the steps and benches in the park, where cars drive-by blasting loud pop music and red-colored tuk-tuks drive on and off. There are hardly any tourists in this part of the country and thus my presence draws a lot of attention. People walk up to me everywhere I go, wondering what brings me to the city and it does not take long until even strangers in the streets refer to me as *'la holandesa'*.

Chichicastenango, on the other hand, is one of Guatemala's most-visited places by tourists due to the famous markets held every Thursday and Sunday. In recent years, many hotels and restaurants were built here to accommodate the growing numbers of tourists. Although Santa Cruz del Quiché is less than half an hour away by bus, there are hardly any tourists in the area. In fact, except for the arrival of two missionaries from the United States and myself, Santa Cruz del Quiché seems little affected by outsiders. Consequently, the city largely remains the same.

Some people move away to study at a university in a different city, others try to cross the border to the United States but most people stay where they are. They like the city they live in: the peace and quietness around them. But when addressing the issue further, after speaking about violence, kidnapping and rape, the answer is always the same. What would they like to see change in Santa Cruz del Quiché? Better streets, more restaurants but above

² Fernando, informal conversation, 10/03/2016

all: less violence.

3.1.1 (Mis)trust and Corruption

Santa Cruz del Quiché is located in the department of Quiché, the safest department within Guatemala. According to data of the *Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo* (2016) on violence in Guatemala, in the first two months of 2016, ‘only’ five murders were reported. Two of these murders were carried out with firearms while the other three were carried out with knives, according to deputy commissioner Diego. Moreover, he stated that the violence that occurs in Santa Cruz del Quiché is ‘almost always the product of alcohol-abuse.’ The department of Quiché has the lowest murder rate in the country per 100,000 inhabitants. For Diego, this is a result of effective cooperation. The police officers in Santa Cruz del Quiché work as a unified team that aims to lead by example. Moreover, by patrolling on the streets, they try to prevent violence rather than deal with its consequences. Diego stressed the importance of mutual trust as a reason for Quiché being safer than the other departments in the country.³ A notable sign above the service desk in the reception area of the police office reminds whoever walks in of the aim of the local police in Santa Cruz del Quiché: ‘to be a professional, honest, modern and respectful institution, in service of everyone.’

Despite Diego’s optimistic outlook, strikingly enough, all but one of the *indígenas* that I have spoken to have said not to trust the police. Instead, it seems, that the police has earned a reputation of being paid off easily whenever a crime occurs and most informants are unimpressed by the results of the last few years since many offenders are back on the streets within days. In fact, Miguel (23) said he would ‘never take his problems to the police because they only have one interest: money.’⁴ According to Daniel (21), a *ladino* originally from Guatemala City, this is a result of the civil war. To this day, ‘the Mayan still think the government is against them. It happened over twenty years ago, but you can still see the consequences of what happened.’⁵ During these 36-years, most violence against the indigenous population was state-sponsored and Quiché was one of the regions hardest hit by the internal armed conflict (Sieder 2011:50). Sofía (20) stated that while some politicians have ‘good intentions’, other politicians are ‘stealing from us and from the country.’⁶ Likewise, others argued that politicians only care about their own benefits. At the same time, both police officers as politicians are perceived to be very helpful and protective once

³ Diego, structured interview, 19/04/2016

⁴ Miguel, semi-structured interview, 28/03/2016

⁵ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁶ Sofía, semi-structured interview, 11/03/2016

(western) foreigners need help. More than once I was reminded that if *I* was ever in trouble, my safest bet would be to go to the police. According to many, foreigners have ‘a higher priority’ because even one bad experience in the country would keep off other tourists and thus the country as a whole could risk losing income.

Guadalupe (20) called the current political situation ‘a sad reality that affects the entire country.’⁷ Especially corruption is often linked to (national) politics, but also to local police forces. A prime example that almost always comes up is the case of ex-president Otto Pérez Molina and ex-vice-president Roxana Baldetti who are currently being prosecuted for a corruption scandal. While many considered this to be a step in the right direction, Fernando argued it is simply a result of the pressure that the United States is exerting on Guatemala.⁸ Sofía added: ‘if even the president is stealing from us.. what are we supposed to do?’⁹ Consequently, according to Daniel, ‘whenever something bad happens, people do not know who to trust.’¹⁰ And it does not stop at the stories about corruption. The indigenous poor suffer from structural exclusion and often face discrimination within the official justice system. Going to the police or the courts is widely perceived by the local population to be ineffective and expensive (Sieder 2011:51). Or, in the words of Fernando, ‘going to the police is a waste of time.’¹¹ The mistrust runs deep and Miguel even stated that some police officers are part of the drug-trafficking in Santa Cruz del Quiché.¹²

3.1.2 Indigenous Law

Because most people in Santa Cruz del Quiché have little faith and trust in the police, most people attribute the safety in the city to the existence of *la ley Maya*. This Mayan judicial system functions as an intervention to remedy a problem, which can range from theft to murder. Alvarez, *el primer alcalde indígena* (indigenous mayor) in Santa Cruz del Quiché, stated that Guatemalan legislation does not correspond to the reality of life.¹³ He argued that the state system does not function and does not serve the community, and his opinion seemed to be broadly shared. As a result, in 2004, the indigenous leaders in Quiché came together and decided to revive the Mayan judicial system. This mainly had to do with the fact that the government proved to be incapable of ending the violence that negatively affected the lives of

⁷ Guadalupe, semi-structured interview, 19/04/2016

⁸ Fernando, informal conversation, 18/03/2016

⁹ Sofía, semi-structured interview, 11/03/2016

¹⁰ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

¹¹ Fernando, informal conversation, 18/03/2016

¹² Miguel, semi-structured interview, 28/03/2016

¹³ Alvarez, semi-structured interview, 10/03/2016

the citizens in Quiché. Consequently, they recreated a judicial system that, in their eyes, was ‘more natural, more in accordance and closer to the reality’ of everyday life in Santa Cruz del Quiché.¹⁴

Pixab’ stands for the philosophy underpinning indigenous law, which is all about giving advice and transmitting experience. The contested part, however, are the ritual beatings called *Xik’a’y* that are usually carried out in public. According to many, this is part of Mayan culture and broadly accepted to occur, also within the home. At the same time, on an international level, it has led to a discussion on human rights violations involving several international organizations. Alvarez argued that this type of *castigo* (punishment) should not be seen as a human right violation because it only occurs *after* the process, when someone has been found guilty. In Mayan culture, it is a generally accepted way of correcting someone’s behavior and helping someone make a change in their life.¹⁵ This ‘public shaming’ aspect of *la ley Maya* functions in a way of making people ‘behave’ in the streets. With this goal in mind, it seemed very effective. Fernando stated: ‘no one wants to receive *castigo* from Alvarez in the central park, and thus I keep my head down and stay out of trouble.’¹⁶ This mindset turned out to be common, especially among male informants. Where police officers have a reputation of being corrupt and working for their own benefit, Alvarez has earned a reputation of bringing justice quickly and perhaps more importantly, without accepting money that could influence the outcome of the trial. Alicia (42), who works on a women’s rights project in Quiché, added on the topic that the Mayan cosmology promotes family values which helps to prevent violence in all its manifestations.¹⁷ Cosmology covers the worldview of a society and thus includes important norms and values that have developed over time. Seen in a broader sense, it shows a society’s attempt to understand and explain everything around them.

Both deputy commissioner Diego as well as a few youths with *ladino* background living in Santa Cruz del Quiché said that the indigenous law is not based on real fundamentals. What to them seems random and taken out of context, is for Alvarez everything but. According to the indigenous mayor, the Mayan judicial system is built on a philosophical explanation that is descended from this Mayan cosmology. For example, the ritual beatings only occur in five possible amounts: five, nine, thirteen, twenty and forty. Five, for example, signifies the cardinal points: the north, east, south, west and the center (or the ‘heart’) of the

¹⁴ Alvarez, semi-structured interview, 10/03/2016

¹⁵ Alvarez, semi-structured interview, 10/03/2016

¹⁶ Fernando, informal conversation, 12/03/2016

¹⁷ Alicia, structured interview, 22/04/2016

earth. Nine signifies the nine phases of the moon and this way, nothing is done randomly. Everything, thus, has a meaning within Mayan cosmology and nothing is chosen at ‘random’ as others seem to think. Even the branch that is used for the ritual beatings comes from a special tree that is yellow on the inside, because yellow signifies prosperity in Mayan cosmology. The Mayan judicial system, for Alvarez and most *indígenas*, thus has strong fundamentals in Mayan culture and history. By purifying and spreading positive energy, he or she who has been found guilty will be able to continue their life within the community. This type of punishment often also involves community work and paying for the wrongs that have been committed. This is in line with what Simon Thomas (2013:27) wrote on the topic of indigenous law. He stated that conflict resolution is focused on reconciliation, compensation and restitution. Consequently, most people prefer this type of punishment over being sent to prison, where the criminal can live ‘an easy life’. The final sanction of the Mayan judicial system, however, is banishment. Once someone has been punished with five, nine, thirteen etc. ritual beatings but does not learn from his mistakes, he is sent away to live in exile. This way, the Mayan judicial system tries to avoid lynchings from taking place in the department of Quiché. Until a few years ago, people were lit on fire by crowds of people without any sort of trial which has now become very uncommon. Preventing lynchings from happening was thus one of the main reasons for the revival of the Mayan judicial system in Santa Cruz del Quiché in 2004. Here, too, the indigenous law appears to have been successful even though, according to some, lynchings still occur in rural areas every now and then. While most people recognized that the Mayan judicial system is more effective than the local police in bringing justice, only the *indígenas* would actually go to Alvarez for help. Luis (24) for example, who identifies himself as *ladino*, said it is ‘just for their culture’. It is possible, however, for *ladinos* as well as for outsiders to be trialed by indigenous law even though it does not happen often. Surprisingly, according to Alvarez, it has occurred that *ladinos* seek out his help when they have been wronged. It must be said, however, that they usually obtain a confession through the Mayan judicial system and subsequently take this to the police as evidence. This way, the police officers usually have no choice but to prosecute the offender, while it possibly would not have gotten this far without the confession obtained through the work of Alvarez. This interconnectedness between both judicial systems illustrates a daily reality of ‘interlegality’ (Simon Thomas 2013). Consequently, while the indigenous law can be used against *ladinos*, they can also take advantage of it.

In order to understand the concept of indigenous law, we will now turn to a description of a public *castigo* that took place early in April, 2016. My two host-brothers had showed me

short videos on YouTube of the public beatings taking place in Santa Cruz del Quiché before, but they were bound on showing me ‘the real thing’ if the opportunity came along. So when Fernando received a call from one of his friends to alert him, he immediately got into his car and came to pick me up. Without explaining what was going on, he made me meet him in front of the café where I was transcribing an interview at the time. His car barely came to a full stop as he told me to get in, as if he was afraid we were going to miss the spectacle.

April 2016

It only takes a few minutes before the park fills up with people. For a moment, it almost seems as if everyone is waiting for a dance- or singing performance to start. Several rows of people stand in front of the stage that is used for all kinds of purposes, located in the center of the city. Most people are holding up smart phones in an attempt to get the spectacle on video. A middle-aged man in a striped shirt steps upon the stage and takes the straw hat of his head. He does not have to introduce himself before he starts reading the community’s conclusions: the sixty-five-year-old male that follows him up onto the stage has been found guilty of raping his thirteen-year old stepdaughter multiple times, eventually resulting in her pregnancy. The older man in the yellow shirt keeps his eyes trained on the ground as the Mayan leader continues to read the punishment the community had decided on: buy five acres of land on behalf of the unborn child, build a house with two rooms for the mother and the unborn child, deposit a monthly amount of 800 Quetzals, receive 20 ritual beatings and live in exile for the rest of his life. The crowd starts whispering when the older man kneels on the stage, bracing himself for what is to come. The Mayan leader does not hold back, the branch seemingly hitting the older man’s back harder every single time. A mother takes her daughter away after six beatings. A young couple leaves after twelve. But the majority stays and watches. The atmosphere feels tense. Some people shout insults directed at the offender. Others are smiling, some even seem to enjoy the spectacle as they cheer after each time the branch hits the older man’s back. Eighteen ritual beatings have been given when two police officers walk-by. They hardly look up and start to regulate traffic instead. The Mayan leader does not stop until all twenty ritual beatings have been given and the man is holding back his tears. Within a minute, the park empties again and daily life goes on.

3.1.3 The Ongoing Violence

Despite the existence of *la ley maya*, different types of violence still do occur. In academic writing, the term ‘new’ violence has been introduced in order to describe the shift from

political violence towards more generalized violence (Koonings and Kruijt 2015:6). In Santa Cruz del Quiché, however, informants usually speak of the ‘ongoing’ violence or the ‘everyday’ violence that plagues the city. Therefore, from now-on, we will use these two terms to describe the many different types of violence that occur in the city.

Especially domestic violence, sexual violence and violence directed at females is perceived to be widespread in and around the city. One in three women in Guatemala suffer violence in any of its manifestations: physical, psychological, economic or sexual (Musalo et al. 2010). On April 17, 2016, *Nuestro Diario*, a national newspaper, reported the arrest of four teachers in Santa Cruz del Quiché. They are suspected of having raped a seventeen-year-old girl after drugging her. The investigation was still on-going by the time I left the field and to this day the outcome has remained unclear to my host-family. During my time in Santa Cruz del Quiché, I was confronted with many personal stories on (sexual) violence. Violence, indeed, has become ‘an inescapable fact of life’ (Robben and Nordstrom 1995:2) for many citizens in the city. For example, in 2013, the 58-year old sister of my host-father in Santa Cruz del Quiché was tortured and murdered while walking home after work. Feelings of powerlessness and desperateness prevailed. Ana Lucía (48), my host-mother, told me what happened to her sister-in-law with tears in her eyes. After much insistence, she was allowed to see the body two days after the murder took place. Pupils blown wide, Ana Lucía was convinced her sister-in-law must have been drugged. But the forensic doctors were bribed and all signs of torture were missing in the official reports¹⁸. Another family-member wrote a touching request for further investigation that was published in a local newspaper. The relatives were desperately seeking answers, but to this day no answers have been given. According to Ana Lucía, the police has not even tried to catch the offender(s). Fact is, no perpetrators were brought to trial for the murder on my host-father’s sister. Another informant, Daniel, shared a story about his female friend, who was kidnapped three years ago after leaving her university at around 18:00 pm. Her body was found three months later, in Quetzaltenango – a city two hours away. He shared: ‘the police said they have tried [to find who did it]. We don’t really know.’¹⁹ A third informant shared a similar story. Here the victim was kidnapped only meters away from her house. Her body was later found in an apartment in Sololá, a city around forty kilometers to the west.²⁰

Stories of kidnapping are not common. But according to my informants, it happens in

¹⁸ Ana Lucía, informal conversation, 08/03/2016

¹⁹ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

²⁰ Felipe, semi-structured interview, 29/03/2016

Santa Cruz del Quiché around four or five times a year. In most cases, the victims of kidnapping are females. According to Alicia, who frequently deals with stories like these because of her job promoting women's rights, this is because the female body has been characterized as weak through social images over time. This type of violence is often stigmatized as 'inevitable' and 'part of life in Guatemala' but Alicia wants to see a change by building a real image of women with a focus on peace, respect and cordiality.²¹ In the mean time, violence against females is often not recognized as a serious problem in the country. This is in line with the argument made by Flake and Forste (2006:19) who stated that domestic violence is often overlooked because there are so many other types of violence going on. Moreover, more often than not, girls and women are blamed for being a victim of sexual violence. This includes assumptions that the victim must have 'provoked' the abuser in some sort of way or that they were 'asking for it', for example by drinking alcohol, being out on the street late at night or wearing short skirts or dresses.

Besides violence directed at females, theft, assault and problems concerning land are perceived to be widespread in the area. For example, during my two months in the city, a robbery took place in the local hospital. Even though no official statement came out, it was rumored multiple computers and other valuable machines had been stolen during the night. Many people spoke of a scandal and no one understood how anyone could target a hospital but no one seemed truly surprised. More generally, all informants indicated to be afraid of falling victim to violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché. When Daniel was fourteen, a school fight broke out at his school. One of the boys, just thirteen at the time, pulled out a knife. He still could not fully comprehend what happened that day: 'in what world does a thirteen year old boy think it is okay or even necessary to bring a knife to school?'²² It should be mentioned, however, that this seems to be an exceptional situation. Most people did not seem to second guess their (grand)child's safety when sending them to school. Susana (21), for example, never expressed concern about her oldest son going to school.²³ In fact, she was looking forward to the day her youngest son would go to school as well.

Meanwhile, while extortion might be the most pressing issue in Guatemala at the moment, in Quiché it is perceived to be uncommon. Diego confirmed that the police has not dealt with direct reports or allegations in years. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the only poster on the wall in the office at the police station is on reporting organized crime, giving extortion

²¹ Alicia, structured interview, 22/04/2016

²² Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

²³ Susana, informal conversation, 18/04/2016

and the trafficking of drugs, weapons and persons as examples. Alvarez acknowledged that extortion is not a widespread problem within the community. He said it makes up for about 5% of all the cases he has dealt with.²⁴ According to many, however, public transport-owners are often the victims of extortion and this is perceived to happen on routes such as Quiché-Guatemala as well. On the sixth of March 2016, a bus exploded in the town of San Jose Pinula, killing one passenger and leaving eighteen passengers injured. In Quiché, too, people were left scared and speechless. The attack caused Guatemalan citizens to speak up on the topic of extortion and gang violence. For example, in an opinion article that was published in *Nuestro Diario* a day after the attack, a concerned writer reminded his fellow-citizens that in 2015, 412 people had been killed during attacks on public transport. Among these victims were mainly drivers of buses, minibuses and tuk-tuks. Drivers are often killed either as a ‘warning’ for the company owner or a ‘reminder’ for the company owner to pay the amount of money that has been asked for. The writer blamed the state for being weak, corrupt and incapable of improving citizen security. He argued it is essential to develop policies to improve the quality of life by preventing crime and violence.

Another problem often brought up is racism and discrimination. Examples given were, among others, about the police and the hospital. According to informants, people here often look down upon the indigenous population, especially when wearing their traditional clothing. Here, they often feel as if they are treated as ‘less’. *Ladino* informants, on the other hand, emphasized that racism is a two-way process and that it happens to both. Nayeli (21), for example, said it is harder to find a job in Quiché as a *ladino* who does not speak the local Mayan language called K’iche’²⁵. Informants highlighted different features of what would be the differences between both groups. According to most of them, the *ladinos* are descended from the Spanish people. At the same time, it has been pointed out repeatedly that in today’s society it is close to impossible to speak of a clear distinction between those who have ‘pure’ Spanish blood and those who have ‘pure’ Mayan blood since most people now stem from mixed descent. Therefore, for others, differences are related to culture and language. Despite the racism and discrimination, none of the informants said to feel excluded from society. This seemed to be related to the fact that Santa Cruz del Quiché is a relatively small city allowing most people to know, or at least recognize, each other. Especially in the different neighborhoods within the city, people often stopped to chat when crossing each other in the streets. Due to the familiarity, people feel like they have a ‘place’ within the community and

²⁴ Alvarez, informal conversation, 04/04/2016

²⁵ Nayeli, semi-structured interview, 15/04/2016

like they are part of society. Segregation at the level of the city itself, as discussed by McIlwaine and Moser (2007:125), thus, does not appear to be an issue for the citizens in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

3.2 Perceptions of Safety and Violence

Generally speaking, all informants stressed that the *real* violence takes place in and around the capital city and the border areas. The violence in Guatemala City is often attributed to the presence of gangs, who are, according to some, better equipped than the police and consequently are able to control certain areas of the city. In Estuardo's (49) opinion, the gangs have started a war within the country. Even though Guatemala 'is not recognized as a warzone, the numbers of murders everyday prove otherwise'.²⁶ Compared to Guatemala City, Santa Cruz del Quiché is perceived to be a very quiet and safe city. This was confirmed by *el Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo* (2016), who ranked the department of Guatemala City the third-most dangerous department with 370 murders reported solely within the first two months of 2016 while Quiché 'only' reported five. However, as Dammert and Malone (2006:28) justly noted, the extent of fear is not necessarily linked to the actual possibility of becoming a victim of violence. That being said, Nayeli moved to Santa Cruz del Quiché around two years ago after she witnessed the murder of her boyfriend, who was shot during a robbery at his home in Santiago Atitlan.²⁷ Consequently, his death was one of the reasons for her family to move to Santa Cruz del Quiché: a city known for its tranquility.

3.2.1 Causes of the Ongoing Violence

As mentioned earlier, despite the good reputation, violence is not absent. Reasons listed for the ongoing violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché differed greatly. Alcohol-abuse is often cited as a main reason for the violence, especially domestic violence. As everyday violence becomes more pervasive throughout urban Latin America, drug and alcohol abuse is increasingly identified as a source of insecurity (McIlwaine and Moser 2004:49). Deputy commissioner Diego also considered alcohol to be the main cause of the ongoing violence in the city. Consequently, the police is in the process of shutting down clandestine alcohol shops. Initiated in March, the police now carries out inspections in bars and clubs more often in order to prevent the continuing of alcohol-selling after 01:00 a.m. Additionally, during early March 2016, the local police forces carried out at least four raids in order to dismantle illegal

²⁶ Estuardo, informal conversation, 24/03/2016

²⁷ Nayeli, semi-structured interview, 15/04/2016

(sometimes even underground) alcohol selling points. *Nuestro Diario* (March 8, 2016) reported that two arrests had been made during the raids, implying that two producers have been captured. The raids were a result of neighborhood complaints, as citizens did not want the illegal selling of alcohol to cause (more) problems within the community. The raids seem to have been successful in closing the illegal shops and people were optimistic about the outcome. However, there remain many more within the city. When wandering around in the different areas of the city, drunks sleeping it off at the roadside are a common sight. Additionally, there remains the fact that alcohol in Guatemala is extremely cheap, even in legal shops. Even if the police would be able to close-down all the illegal selling-points in the city, the alcohol problem would most-likely persist.

Other common answers concerning the ongoing violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché included the lack of education and (job) opportunities. Violence is perceived to be used by those who do not have money, but especially by those who want money without working for it. This way, violence is perceived to be an easy way to earn a living. Moreover, if you are not able to either go to school or have a job for whatever reason it might be, you will have a lot of ‘free’ time on your hands. According to most informants, many of those people will cause problems on the streets when they search for things to do instead. Possibly connected, out of jealousy or envy of the working class, or in other words, those who *do* have (some) money, are often targeted.

According to Ogrodnik and Borzutzky (2011:62) violence is often rooted in poverty. Therefore, it is striking that even though Quiché ranks as one of the poorest departments in Guatemala, the level of violence is relatively low compared to other places. Nevertheless, many of my informants did think there is a connection between violence and poverty. For some, this meant that desperation can lead to taking ‘extraordinary’ measures. If you cannot feed your children, you might easily be tempted into stealing. After all, you have to do *something*. Unemployment rates seemed to be high, especially among youths. This was illustrated by the high turnout when a new restaurant in Santa Cruz del Quiché announced to be looking for employees. The entire day, in early April 2016, the street was filled with young job seekers.

For Débora (23), however, poverty could never justify the use of violence. As a hard-working single mother who works as a house help, she knows what it is like to live in poverty. ‘I tell my son: today I am poor. But as long as I have my hands, my feet and my eyes, I can

find a way to overcome poverty. Just because I am poor today, does not mean I will be poor tomorrow.’²⁸ Her opinion seemed to be shared among other youths in Santa Cruz del Quiché. Luis, for example, said there are always other options, ‘but some people simply do not *want* to work.’²⁹ When talking about poverty, many informants have also brought up the young children, sometimes not even ten years old, who clean shoes in the park in an attempt to earn some money. It seemed to be ‘common knowledge’ that the money they earn goes straight to their parents to buy alcohol. And as mentioned earlier, alcohol often leads to violence. Or in Miguel’s words: ‘in my experience, alcohol makes people feel superior. And this behavior causes problems.’³⁰

In many countries, conflict has led to the emergence of a culture of violence. War has impacted on society’s norms and values in such a way as to foster an increased social tolerance of individuals’ violent behavior (Steenkamp 2005:254). Possibly, machismo behavior could be seen as a result of this culture of violence. Machismo behavior is a stereotype that emphasizes hyper-masculinity and is usually associated with the Latin American male (Hardin 2002:1). In Guatemala, too, the idea that this type of behavior is part of Guatemalan culture is widespread. According to Diego, it explains why men are the main perpetrators and consequently, why women and children are the main victims of violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché. In an opinion article in *Nuestro Diario* on March 8, 2016, a local author wished to reflect on machismo behavior in response to International Women’s Day. He described machismo behavior as a ‘barbaric attitude’ in which females are beaten and seen either as servants or as good-for-nothing. According to Hardin (2002) machismo behavior implies a form of male pride that combines courage with an aggressive manliness. Fact is that machismo behavior is still widespread even to this day. Males view themselves as the head of the household, which becomes apparent in the bossing around of female family members, especially within the home. This was illustrated by the fact that, during my three months in Guatemala, I have never seen a male step foot in the kitchen other than to ask for food. This illustrates a strong traditional hierarchy within the home, which, possibly, could translate to certain expectations and demands.

According to Alicia this machismo behavior causes another injustice to occur, namely the denying of economic contribution.³¹ It is a much-told story: both women and children are often expected to hand over their well-earned money to the (oldest) male in the family. For

²⁸ Débora, semi-structured interview, 02/03/2016

²⁹ Luis, semi-structured interview, 18/04/2016

³⁰ Miguel, semi-structured interview, 28/03/2016

³¹ Alicia, structured interview, 22/04/2016

example, Ana Lucía grew up in a family with seven sisters who are now all married. She earns her money by making traditional Mayan blouses that she sells from home. Ana Lucía is the only one of her sisters who keeps the money she earned because she does not want to be dependent on her husband. She added: ‘I may be female, but I am not afraid.’³² Her story, however, is the exception rather than the norm. Unequal power relations are common and some men do not even *allow* women to work outside the home.

A final reason listed for the violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché is the lack of morals and/or values. For many, this means people ‘forget’ what is important in life: such as honor, family and honesty. The older generation, for example, seemed to struggle to accept the disinterest in Mayan history and culture from their children. It seemed that ‘losing touch’ with their indigenous background is seen as a cause for resorting to violence. For others, it had to do with processes of globalization. According to Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga (2002), cultural patterns of consumption spread massively through different types of (social) media. This causes individuals’ expectations to increase even though their real chances of satisfying those aspirations did not increase. In Santa Cruz del Quiché, too, the large majority owns a smart phone and these have the capacity of ‘blurring’ boundaries. It causes people to learn about different countries and cultures where life could come across as ‘better’ or ‘easier’. Consequently, many (young) people wish to cross the border to the United States and consequently, they have lost interest in their own cultural heritage. Whether life truly is better ‘on the other side’ of the border, remains the question. Most people have no other choice but to stay in Guatemala, which can lead to feelings of frustration and desperation. Subsequently, these feelings could possibly ‘push’ someone into deciding to resort to violence instead.

3.2.2 Victims of the Ongoing Violence

It is often said that Santa Cruz del Quiché, but more generally all of Guatemala, is more dangerous for females than it is for males. According to Watts and Zimmerman (2002:1233) one of the most common forms of violence against women is that perpetrated by a husband or other intimate male partner. This type of violence is often named domestic violence and can take various forms, including physical violence and sexual violence. More often than not, these acts are accompanied by emotional abusive behavior such as forbidding a woman to see her family and friends, ongoing belittlement, humiliation or intimidation as well as economic restrictions, such as preventing a woman from working or confiscating her earnings. Between

³² Ana Lucía, informal conversation, 02/03/2016

2002 and 2005, the number of women killed in Guatemala even increased by more than 63% (Sanford 2008:205). However, Alicia thought these numbers are not correct. She said that violence against females has always existed in the country. In her experience, the violence has not increased but due to awareness campaigns more cases have been identified.³³ Simply said, women now know where to go for help and thus more cases of violence have been denounced. At the same time, it is possible that the true dimension of the problem continues to stay hidden. It is often said that possibly many sexual crimes go unreported due to the stigma experienced by female victims. Another reason for not reporting (sexual) violence to the police, according to my informants in Santa Cruz del Quiché, is fear. People are often afraid of reprisals and because they have little trust in the police to either successfully prosecute the perpetrator or to protect them and their loved ones, they decide not to speak up instead. Suffering in silence, it seems, is a safer option. Again, females are often blamed for the injustice that they have been put through.

Among the youth, not everyone agreed the city is more dangerous for females. Sindy (21), for example, stated that ‘especially children’ fall victim to the ongoing violence in the city.³⁴ But Felipe (20) argued that the violence affects the entire society and thus regards everyone as a (possible) victim.³⁵ Nayeli stated: ‘we are all victims here. Everyone is exposed to the violence in Santa Cruz del Quiche.’³⁶ Simply said, *everyone* I have spoken to knows someone who has been murdered during the last five years. Perhaps because of it, the existence of violence in the city is ‘normalized’. This normalization is also reflected in the course of most interviews I have conducted. As part of the introduction, the informants answered a question on their dislikes concerning Santa Cruz del Quiché. Common answers included the lack of restaurants, the poor conditions of the roads, and the alcoholics in the streets. Between thirty minutes and an hour later, the final question of the interview was usually about their wishes for the future. After speaking about violence and safety for a considerable amount of time, understandingly, these answers went in the other direction. Wishes for the future were almost inevitable: less violence. However, it remains remarkable that this answer was hardly ever mentioned at the beginning of the interview.

Possibly coherent, most informants do not experience violence to be part of their daily lives. And when they do, it is usually because the newspapers and news broadcasts on television are filled with stories on murder and other types of violence. For this reason, too,

³³ Alicia, structured interview, 22/04/2016

³⁴ Miguel, semi-structured interview, 28/03/2016

³⁵ Sindy, semi-structured interview, 30/03/2016

³⁶ Nayeli, semi-structured interview, 15/04/2016

some said they have chosen *not* to read newspapers. Remarkably enough, while almost all the informants indicated to be afraid of falling victim to violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché, at the same time they stated to generally feel safe in the city. However, many have expressed fear of loved-ones falling victim to violence. Fernando, for example, father of two, is afraid his oldest son might want to study in Guatemala City when he gets older.³⁷ Daniel, on the other hand, has a younger sister who he worries about. He shared: ‘I do not want anything bad to happen to her, but I cannot be around her all the time.’³⁸ While these two stories illustrate the importance of family, at the same time, however, the disintegration of the family has been named as a cause of the everyday violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché. On the fifth of April 2016, *Nuestro Diario*, reported a case of domestic violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché in which a man had attacked his twenty-five-year-old sister with a kitchen knife. The neighbors called the police after hearing her scream for help and later-on she was rushed to the hospital with stab wounds in her face, arms and legs. While her brother tried to escape, he was arrested two hundred meters away from the house. Drug use was reportedly the cause of this act of domestic violence.

3.2.3 Gang Violence

More generally, according to many, the disintegration of the family also causes youths in places such as the capital city or areas close to the borders to join gangs, which was also pointed out by Winton (2004:89). She stated that gangs can become a rational alternative when traditional institutions of the state and the family are unable to provide young people with a meaningful social identity. They search for love and acceptance when this lacks in the home situation. In some cases, gang members are as young as ten or eleven years old. Daniel, who volunteers in a shelter home that houses twenty-two young victims of (domestic) violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché noted that most gang members come out of ‘broken homes.’³⁹ Here, too, alcohol and domestic violence ‘force’ children to find a better life on the streets. Regarding the existence of gangs in Santa Cruz del Quiché, the opinions differ greatly. Some were of opinion that two gangs are active in the area, while others said that gangs were active until a few years ago and some said there have not been any problems with gang violence as long as they can remember. According to the police, too, gang violence is not a pressing issue in the department of Quiché. However, within Guatemala gang members are

³⁷ Fernando, informal conversation, 10/03/2016

³⁸ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

³⁹ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

often seen as the number one cause of violence. In Daniel's words: 'gang members are the main violators in the country. Because of them we have a whole bunch of murders every single day. Sometimes they kill because someone did not pay them. Or because there are conflicts between the different gangs within the country. And other times - they don't need a reason to kill at all.'⁴⁰

Surprisingly, deputy commissioner Diego stated there is no drug- and weapon trafficking in Santa Cruz del Quiché while a large majority of the informants thought the opposite.⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, one informant even suspected an involvement of police officers in the drug trade within the city. Among the youth, drug trafficking is perceived to be more widespread than the trafficking of weapons. Corresponding to this, most informants did not know any people who own a weapon in the city. Obtaining a weapon legally requires permits and a lot of paperwork, while obtaining an illegal weapon is perceived to be easy and cheap. Most people who *do* own a weapon seem to find this necessary out of personal security-reasons. The use of drugs is more common, especially among males. Daniel could think of five places in the city where it is possible to buy drugs⁴² while others said most small shops around the city center sell marijuana. For hard drugs, such as cocaine, places are more limited but the cemetery and the bus terminal are often named as possible selling locations.

Most informants do not see any connections between the civil war that ended twenty years ago and the violence that currently plagues the city. Fernando, for example, even called it 'two very different things.'⁴³ Felipe, however, believed that the civil war has led to a normalization of violence and that, because of the civil war, people are now used to solve their problems through the use of violence.⁴⁴ In other words, during the civil war it was no longer possible to solve a conflict through dialogue. People had become so used to violence as a means of solving conflict but also as a means of organizing (social) life in general, that they 'forgot' there were other ways, too. Logically, then, it takes time for such a change to become incorporated into decision-making again. Luis held a different opinion. He stated that in some cases the survivors of the civil war are still trying to get revenge for what happened to their families and loved-ones.⁴⁵ After all, the official peace accords were 'only' signed twenty years ago, meaning that a lot of what happened has not been forgiven and forgotten yet.

⁴⁰ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁴¹ Diego, structured interview, 19/04/2016

⁴² Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁴³ Fernando, informal conversation, 24/03/2016

⁴⁴ Felipe, semi-structured interview, 29/03/2016

⁴⁵ Luis, semi-structured interview, 18/04/2016

3.3 Coping Strategies of the Youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché

As stated earlier, violence and insecurity have become ‘normalized’ into the reality of everyday life. Perhaps, this explains why almost all informants agreed on generally feeling safe in Santa Cruz del Quiché while, in the past five years, they all have lost someone they knew to violence, whether it was a family-member, friend or fellow student. Being confronted with violence on such a personal level can have far-reaching (social) consequences. The community, among which family-members, have proven to function as a source of support as people continue to live their lives (Hundt et al. 2004:418).

3.3.1 Dealing with Unsafe Surroundings

Informants in Santa Cruz del Quiché employ different coping strategies in order to avoid violence from occurring in their lives. One of the main coping strategies named by informants is avoiding to walk alone during night time. Especially girls seem to be more aware of possible dangers at night time. Susana, mother of two young children, mentioned she only leaves the house whenever it is necessary. This is mainly a result of the close to continuous presence of alcoholics asleep in the street where she lives due to the existence of several illegal alcohol selling points close-by.⁴⁶ Others feel less restricted in their movement. None of the females, however, said to feel safe while walking home during the middle of the night. It is also common for girls to be accompanied by (older) male family-members or to be brought and picked-up by car instead of walking home. ‘*Not* being alone is always a good thing’, according to Daniel.⁴⁷ This also applied to me. For example, even when it was just a short walk away, I was always brought home by car after nightfall. Even though I offered to walk instead, that idea was usually rejected within seconds. Moreover, whenever members of my Guatemalan host-family in Santa Cruz del Quiché did not enter the house with me, they always waited until the door was safely locked behind me before driving away.

Corresponding, the only concrete rule that was ‘imposed’ on me during my time with the host-family was that I always had to make sure one of my Guatemalan host-brothers came with me when I needed to withdraw money from the ATM. This was asked of me because my host-parents were afraid someone would follow me from the ATM and try to (forcefully) steal my money. The idea of either of their sons accompanying me, took most of their concerns away.

Certain places in and around the city are directly associated with danger and violence,

⁴⁶ Susana, informal conversation, 09/03/2016

⁴⁷ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

such as the cemetery and the bus terminal. This is because these places are usually very dark, without any streetlights and the cemetery, for example, has a reputation of being a meeting-place for drug dealers. Consequently, these places are often avoided during the night as well as the early hours of the morning and could be considered ‘red zones’ as discussed by McIlwaine and Moser (2007:125). Moreover, Daniel mentioned he always carries a knife with him during night time, because ‘you never know what can happen.’⁴⁸ While weapon ownership in Santa Cruz del Quiché is perceived to be uncommon, according to all my informants, it shows another strategy of coping with unsafe surroundings. Carrying any sort of weapon can give a feeling of power and control, instead of helplessness. Perhaps paradoxical, Daniel continued to say that he was unsure of whether he would actually be capable of using a knife against another person, but he still carries it with him whenever he leaves the house at night.

Public transport is also perceived to be dangerous, especially when traveling in the direction of the capital city. ‘Nobody is safe,’⁴⁹ according to Sofía and thus, those who can (afford it), prefer to travel by car. This, however, is not ‘just’ a result of the assaults that have happened in the past, as discussed earlier, but, perhaps more importantly, because ‘traffic accidents are the number one death cause in Guatemala’ and ‘most drivers drive recklessly’.⁵⁰ The combination of both risks causes most people to avoid having to travel by public transport. But not everyone has other options to choose from, meaning that some people continue to have to rely on public transport, for example when visiting family out of town. If nothing else, public transport in Guatemala is cheap and thus it continues to be an appealing option, especially for the poorer people in the country. Consequently, because most people do not feel safe in public transport, they take measures to deal with being in a (possible) unsafe surrounding. For example, they bring as little money as possible. Some even decide to bring an old phone or leave valuables at home all together. At the same time, this lack of security in public transport has led to the emergence of a social media platform that can be used to ‘share’ rides. While the Facebook page is not yet known to many people in Guatemala, it seems to be gaining popularity quickly. The platform gives people the opportunity to search and offer rides to many different destinations in the country. For many people, this is a safer (even though possibly a bit more expensive) way to travel.

Among those with a Mayan background, there were two girls who said they try to

⁴⁸ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁴⁹ Sofía, semi-structured interview, 11/03/2016

⁵⁰ Felipe, semi-structured interview, 29/03/2016

avoid violent encounters by ‘having a good heart’.⁵¹ Nayeli, a *ladina*, stated that she tries to avoid violent encounters by ‘being a good person’ and treating everyone fairly without discriminating.⁵² All informants, however, agreed on trying to ‘avoid’ problems in order to prevent violence from occurring in their daily lives. For Luis, this means busying himself with beneficial activities for his future, such as studying and reading.⁵³ Seeking for diversions and ways to relax, then, too, are a way of coping with insecurity (Hundt et al. 2004). For many others, it means avoiding certain places during night time. Fernando, for example, avoided certain areas in zone two of the city where a group of boys often hangs out at night. Most likely caused by machismo behavior, they feel as if that part of the city is their territory. ‘They are always looking for trouble, so I try to ignore them the best I can,’ he added, ‘and whenever I have to drive through their area, I turn the music down and close the windows.’⁵⁴

Another coping strategy used by the youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché is the de-humanizing of criminals. Sofia, for example, said there is less violence in Quiché because ‘the people here are more respectful, more human.’⁵⁵ Other informants said that people are ‘more conscious of what they are doing’ in Santa Cruz del Quiché than in other places, which causes less theft and assault to occur. For some, this is connected to Mayan cosmology. Daniel stated: ‘Mayan laws are different – so [because of it] people show more respect here.’⁵⁶ Fernando even advocated for the return of the death penalty saying people who do not show remorse and keep making the same mistakes do not deserve to go to prison. ‘They are not serving our society. Then why send them to prison? With play-station and a television. They are not human.’⁵⁷ By de-humanizing criminals, it seems people try to distance themselves from the offenders who are responsible for the ongoing violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

3.3.2 Consequences of the Ongoing Violence

Even though the violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché is not as widespread as in other places within the country, all but one of my informants still stated that the everyday violence damages the social relationships in the community. Gabriela (21), for example, stated she is not allowed to leave her parent’s house after 18:00 p.m. while her friends usually do not meet

⁵¹ Sofia, semi-structured interview, 11/03/2016 and Débora, semi-structured interview, 02/03/2016

⁵² Nayeli, semi-structured interview, 15/04/2016

⁵³ Luis, semi-structured interview, 18/04/2016

⁵⁴ Fernando, semi-structured interview, 18/04/2016

⁵⁵ Sofia, informal conversation, 06/03/2016

⁵⁶ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁵⁷ Fernando, semi-structured interview, 18/04/2016

up before 19:00 pm.⁵⁸ This way, she is barely able to see her friends in-between work and studying. Daniel added that people have become very suspicious and usually do not easily trust others.⁵⁹ At the same time, however, Fernando argued that violence does not damage social relationships but instead brings people closer together.⁶⁰ An example can be seen in the emergence of so-called *grupos de vigilancia de barrio*, or neighborhood watches, whereby the different *zonas* in the city organize themselves in order to protect the community. Usually, whistles are used to warn other community-members in case of (potential) danger. While none of the informants could recall an example in which this was actually used – it does appear to contribute to a feeling of community and safety. More generally, it appears that people are willing to help each other out in the streets of Santa Cruz del Quiché. Daniel, for example, once screamed for help when his phone was stolen out of his hand while he was making a phone call. Only seconds later, people started coming out of their houses causing the thief to make a run for it and drop the phone on the ground in the process.⁶¹ The idea of being able to call out for help gives people a certain sense of reassurance that together they can be stronger than apart.

These neighborhood organizations, also known as *cocodes* within Guatemala, usually have meetings varying from once every week to once every month. According to Diego, representatives of the local police forces are often part of these meetings. This way they aim to be seen as part of the community and show their willingness to cooperate with the local citizens of the city.⁶² Additionally, for the local police, attending these meetings is a way of learning about what concerns the people in the community. In some situations, it also offers an opportunity to help possible victims of domestic violence. While those stories often stay hidden behind closed doors, the meetings of the neighborhood organizations have proven to be an effective way to learn where domestic problems could be taking place.

As a result of the violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guadalupe thought people live in fear.⁶³ According to Moser and McIlwaine (2003:114) fear and insecurity have become ‘normalized’ into the reality of daily life in many Latin American countries. Security and insecurity are not just about conflict and violence, but also incorporate notions linked with risk, threats and fear. This implies that there does not always have to be a convincing threat

⁵⁸ Gabriela, semi-structured interview, 30/03/2016

⁵⁹ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁶⁰ Fernando, informal conversation, 18/04/2016

⁶¹ Daniel, semi-structured interview, 16/03/2016

⁶² Diego, structured interview, 19/04/2016

⁶³ Guadalupe, semi-structured interview, 19/04/2016

for people to experience fear. For some, this means that people are afraid to leave their houses during night time and early morning. As mentioned earlier, Susana stated she only leaves the house when absolutely necessary.⁶⁴ Otherwise, she simply preferred to stay inside, where she also worked in an adjacent internet café. This way, Susana literally hardly ever leaves the ‘safety’ of the house. Instead she kept herself busy within the house with cooking, cleaning and looking after her two children. Fear can thus influence the reality of daily life.

For most others, however, fear has less direct consequences. While they might always be aware of possible risks, it does not stop them from continuing their daily activities. José (23), for example, said: ‘some people do not care about the violence in our country. But I have dreams and goals, I am afraid to die.’⁶⁵ While he did not feel restricted in his mobility, like most informants, the fear of being confronted with violence is ever present. Consequently, even though the ongoing violence does not stop most informants from leaving the house after nightfall, some of them still take measures to secure their safety in the best way they know: for example by carrying a weapon. It seems, perhaps logically, that parents are often more worried about the safety of their children than the youth is about their own safety. While they realized it was an impossible request, parents would prefer their children to stay in more often instead of going out on the streets or driving around in the area somewhat aimlessly. Ana Lucía stated, for example, that she was unable to sleep until she knew that all her children were safely at home.⁶⁶

Dealing with violence, especially stories of murder and kidnapping, clearly has a big impact on everyone involved. After Nayeli lost her boyfriend during a robbery in Santiago Atitlan, she suffered from emotional and health problems for months. Consequently, she is the only informant who emphasized that she does not want to be in a relationship again anytime soon while generally speaking, most informants were in serious relationships at the time. Instead, Nayeli wants to focus on graduating and finding a job.⁶⁷ For others, the stories on murder and kidnapping they are confronted with on a daily basis through (social) media, influence them to want to commit to a better future. They express a desire to come together and help Guatemala to be what they believe it once was. For example, Felipe wants to pursue a political career so he can help improve the current situation in Guatemala.⁶⁸ Lastly, a far more common response to the unsafe surroundings they are confronted with on a daily basis,

⁶⁴ Susana, informal conversation, 09/03/2016

⁶⁵ José, informal conversation, 20/04/2016

⁶⁶ Ana Lucía, informal conversation, 15/03/2016

⁶⁷ Nayeli, semi-structured interview, 15/04/2016

⁶⁸ Felipe, semi-structured interview, 29/03/2016

is the desire to leave; to escape. Most informants, especially the male informants, said they would leave Guatemala in search for a better life somewhere else if they had the chance. Often jokes were made on informants 'joining' me to the Netherlands. While the United States appeals, it is and remains difficult, expensive and dangerous to cross the border and most people realize they will have to settle for a future in Guatemala instead.

4. Concluding Remarks

For many people everywhere in the world violence has become an ‘inescapable fact of life’ and citizens increasingly find themselves in the middle of violent conflict. Anthropology is grounded in people and the way they experience conflict and the enactment of violence. Anthropologists are able to display the absurdity of conflict and give voice to those who are hardly heard (Robben and Nordstrom 1995:2-10). During my time in Guatemala I have tried to explore the contradictory realities of conflict: the simultaneous coexistence of laughter and suffering, fear and hope, absurdity and commonplace. Through anthropological fieldwork I was able to take a closer look at the personal stories and experiences of youth in a city plagued by different types of violence. In the empirical chapter I have intertwined the findings of my research and linked them to the concepts used in the theoretical framework. Here, I will discuss contemporary debates concerning human security and the normalization of violence. Subsequently, I will give answer to the research question: *How do Guatemalan youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché perceive safety and violence in their everyday lives and how do they cope with their possibly unsafe surroundings?*

As my case-study has proven, peace does not necessarily imply the absence of violence. Exactly twenty years after the signing of the peace accords, violence is not ‘somewhere else’ for the citizens of Santa Cruz del Quiché. Instead, violence is ‘normalized’ and has become part of everyday life. Even though Quiché is the safest department within Guatemala, with ‘only’ five murders reported in January and February of this year, here, too, violence is perceived to be widespread. After assault and robberies, domestic violence and (sexual) violence against females are perceived to be the most common types of violence occurring in the city. Compared to other parts of the country, however, the citizens of Santa Cruz del Quiché seem to consider themselves lucky. For many, this relative high degree of safety and security is a result of the existence of indigenous law. The Mayan judicial system was revived in 2004 in a (successful) attempt to prevent lynchings from occurring and aims to resolve conflicts through discussion and dialogue (Simon Thomas 2012:27). Remarkably, both the informants with Mayan background as well as the informants with *ladino* background perceived the Mayan judicial system to be more effective and successful in tackling crime. On the one hand this is because police officers are frequently perceived to be corrupt and uninterested in resolving crime. More than once, informants spoke about alleged criminals being back on the streets within days which has caused the trust in police officers to diminish. On the other hand is the Mayan judicial system perceived to be more successful because of the ‘public shaming’ aspect whereby an offender receives ritual beatings. Out of a

sense of fear of being embarrassed in public, informants said to ‘behave respectfully’ in the streets of Santa Cruz del Quiché. The public shaming aspect thus functions as a warning and the message it radiates is well understood.

Even though the Mayan judicial system and the local police generally work separately, at times their field of work overlaps. As mentioned earlier, both groups have more faith in the resolving capabilities of the Mayan judicial system than in the local police forces. Therefore, it is particularly remarkable that none of the *ladinos* I have spoken to would approach Alvarez in case they have been wronged. However, that does not mean it never happens. At times *ladinos* do seek out the help of the indigenous law system, according to Alvarez, but usually only to obtain a confession that they can take to the police later-on. Moreover, indigenous law can be applied to anyone. Consequently, even though most *ladinos* do not seek out the help of the Mayan judicial system, it still is possible, although uncommon, that the indigenous law is applied to them. This illustrates the ‘interlegality’ that is often associated with legal uncertainty for the people involved (Simon Thomas 2012:260). At the same time this uncertainty, combined with the distrust in local police officers, could mean that many crimes could go unreported and unnoticed.

Perceptions of safety and insecurity are not ‘just’ about conflict and violence, but also linked with risk, threats and fear (McIlwaine and Moser 2003:114). Santa Cruz del Quiché, compared to other cities, is relatively safe. While all informants agreed on generally feeling safe, at the same time they are all afraid of falling victim to the violence that plagues the city. Even though murder rates are low, other types of violence exist and could even be considered to be widespread. Domestic violence, for example, continues to stay hidden but everyone knows *someone else* who has been a victim of this type of violence. Moreover, all the informants have heard of kidnappings happening within their social setting – some of these violent encounters even ending in homicide. Through stories like these, fear spreads throughout an entire society. While, rationally speaking, the chances of becoming a victim of violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché are relatively low, feelings of fear and wariness seem to be ever present. The causes that are perceived to enable these types of violence to occur in the city differ greatly. Gangs are perceived to be the main perpetrators within Guatemala, but in Santa Cruz del Quiché alcohol-abuse is most frequently cited as the main reason for the everyday violence, especially domestic violence. Consequently, the local police force has started carrying out more inspections in bars and clubs in order to prevent the continuing of alcohol-selling after 01:00 a.m. Along with this goes machismo-behavior that is often viewed as part of a culture of violence that has emerged in the country (Steenkamp 2005:254).

According to the deputy commissioner, machismo-behavior explains why men are the main perpetrators and consequently, why women and children are the main victims of violence in the city. Many informants, however, had the tendency to perceive everyone as a possible victim. Other common answers concerning the causes of the ongoing violence included the lack of education and (job) opportunities. Violence, then, can be a result of despair but it is also perceived to be an easy way to earn a living for those who do not want to work. Lastly, the violence is also perceived to be caused by the lack of morals and/or values as a result of processes of globalization.

Guatemalan youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché cope with risks, threats and unsafe surroundings in different ways. The coping strategies used can be divided into three categories: avoiding-strategies, agency-strategies and personal-strategies. Firstly, avoidance-strategies include the wide range of ways in which the youth in Santa Cruz del Quiché tries to prevent themselves from being confronted with the different types of violence. This happens for example by avoiding having to walk alone, especially during night time and the early morning, as well as avoiding areas that are perceived to be unsafe or have a reputation of being dangerous, such as the bus terminal and the cemetery. These places are associated with illegal drug-selling and are usually very dark, without any streetlights. Girls, in particular, are perceived to be ‘easy victims’ when walking alone, which is confirmed by the too-frequent stories on kidnapping and sexual violence. Sometimes, people even try to avoid having to leave the house all together and thus try to keep themselves safe by staying indoors. Fear of becoming a victim of the ongoing violence in the city, thus, can have far-reaching (social) consequences regarding everyday life. More common, however, are the avoidance-strategies linked to the perceived insecurity in public transport. On the one hand this has to do with robberies and assaults, but on the other hand with the lack of driving skills of the (bus) drivers. Consequently, whenever possible, all the informants try to avoid traveling by public transport. Instead, they prefer to travel by car. This has resulted in the emergence of ‘shared rides’ online communities where people can offer and search for shared transport.

Secondly, agency-strategies entail ways in which the informants try to hold on to some sort of ‘control’ in an ‘uncontrollable’ situation. As discussed earlier, confronted with daily stories on violence, people try to reassert themselves as agents rather than victims. This can lead, for example, to the decision to carry a weapon. More generally, it could be argued that the revival of the Mayan judicial system in 2004, too, was about regaining a sense of control over crime and decision-making authority. Moreover, on a smaller scale, the organization of different areas within the city into neighborhood watch groups shows that residents have

taken measures into their own hands in an attempt to increase their safety.

Thirdly, personal-strategies include ways of coping with insecurity that can be considered more internal. For example, by ‘being a good person’ or ‘having a good heart’, informants try to prevent themselves from being confronted with violence as well as by treating everyone fairly without discriminating. Moreover, others busy themselves with beneficial activities focused on their future. By spending time studying and reading, in a sense they have ‘less time’ to get in trouble. At the same time, Guatemalan youths in Santa Cruz del Quiché deal with unsafe surroundings by ‘de-humanizing’ the offenders. Repeatedly offenders were described in terms of being ‘less human’ than others. It seems then, people try to find a way to distance themselves from the offenders: it is not us, it is them. Subsequently, some even vowed for the return of the death-penalty. Instead of sending offenders to luxurious prisons, society would be better off with them gone. After all, ‘they are not human.’

It should be noted, however, that the three categories are not mutually exclusive. As we have seen, it is possible to decide to carry a weapon but still avoid roads that are perceived to be dangerous at night time. More often than not, different strategies are employed in order to cope with the insecurity that has become the reality of everyday life for most inhabitants of Santa Cruz del Quiché.

The ongoing violence in the city has far-reaching consequences. It often damages the social relationships in a community. This happens, for example, because out of fear people would rather not leave the house, but also because other (older) family members do not want their loved ones to leave the house. People have become suspicious and do not easily trust each other. Yet, at the same time, the violence can also bring people together, for example through the emergence of neighborhood groups. Fear and insecurity have, however, become ‘normalized’ into the reality of life which can have a big (psychological) impact on everyone involved. Being confronted with violence can, for example, lead to emotional and health problems. At the same time, it motivates Guatemalan youth to aspire a better future. For some, this means pursuing a (political) career in order to improve the situation in Guatemala. For others, it means day-dreaming about a day when they will be able to ‘escape’ the country and live at the other side of the border. For most of them, that day will never arrive.

Bibliography

Benson, Peter, Edward Fischer and Kedron Thomas

- 2008 Resocializing Neoliberalism: Accusation, and the Sociopolitical Context of Guatemala's New Violence. *Latin American Perspectives* 162(5):38-58.

Boeije, Hennie

- 2010 *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Borsdorf, Alex, Austria Rodrigo Hidalgo and Rafael Sanchez

- 2007 A New Model of Urban Development in Latin America: The Gated Communities and Fenced Cities in the Metropolitan Areas of Santiago de Chile and Valparaíso. *Cities* 24(5):365-378.

Brands, Hal

- 2011 Crime, Irregular Warfare, and Institutional Failure in Latin America: Guatemala as a Case Study. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34(3):228-247.

Briceño-Leon, Roberto and Verónica Zubillaga

- 2002 Violence and Globalization in Latin America. *Current Sociology* 50(1):19-37.

Clouser, Rebecca

- 2009 Remnants of Terror: Landscapes of Fear in Post-Conflict Guatemala. *Journal of Latin American Geography* 8(2):7-22.

Coy, Martin

- 2006 Gated Communities and Urban Fragmentation in Latin America: The Brazilian Experience. *GeoJournal* 66:121-132.

Dammert, Lucia and Mary Fran T. Malone

- 2006 Does It Take a Village? Policing Strategies and Fear of Crime in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society* 48(4):27-51.

DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt

2011 Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers. Washington DC: AltaMira Press

Duncan, David F.

1996 Growing Up Under the Gun: Children and Adolescents Coping with Violent Neighborhoods. *The Journal of Primary Prevention* 16(4):343-356.

Flake, Dallon, and Renata Forste

2006 Fighting Families: Family Characteristics Associated with Domestic Violence in Five Latin American Countries. *Journey of Family Violence* 21(1):19-29.

Glebbeck, Marie-Louise

2010 Mano Dura: Fighting Crime, Violence, and Insecurity with an Iron Fist in Central America. In J.B. Kuhns & J. Knutsson (Eds.), *Police Use of Force: A Global Perspective*. Santa Barbara, California: Preager Publishers.

Godoy-Paiz, Paula

2012 Not Just “Another Woman”: Femicide and Representation in Guatemala. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 17(1):88–109.

Goldschmidt, Walter, Mary Lecron Foster, Robert A. Rubinstein and James Silverberg

1986 Anthropology and Conflict. *Anthropology Today* 2(1):12-15.

Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo

2016 Informe de Monitoreo de Violencia Homicida en Guatemala. Mes de Enero y Febrero 2016.

Hardin, Michael

2002 Altering Masculinities: The Spanish Conquest and the Evolution of the Latin American *Machismo*. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 7(1):1-22.

Human Security Report

2005 War and Peace in the 21th Century. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University.

Hundt, Gillian L., Dawn Chatty, Abdel Aziz Thabet and Hala Abuateya

2004 Advocating Multi-Disciplinarity in Studying Complex Emergencies: The Limitations of a Psychological Approach to Understanding How Young People Cope With Prolonged Conflict in Gaza. *Journal of Biosocial Science* 36:417-431.

Koonings, Kees and Dirk Kruijt

2007 *Fractured Cities: Social Exclusion, Urban Violence & Contested Spaces in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.

Koonings, Kees and Dirk Kruijt

2015 *Violence and Resilience in Latin American Cities*. London: Zed Books.

Leeds, Elizabeth

2007 Rio de Janeiro in *Fractured Cities: Social Exclusion, Urban Violence & Contested Spaces in Latin America*.

McIlwaine, Cathy and Caroline Moser

2001 Violence and Social Capital in Urban Poor Communities: Perspectives from Colombia and Guatemala. *Journal of International Development* 13:965-984.

McIlwaine, Cathy and Caroline Moser

2003 Poverty, Violence and Livelihood Security in Urban Colombia and Guatemala. *Progress in Development Studies* 3(2):113-130.

McIlwaine, Cathy and Caroline Moser

2004 Drugs, Alcohol and Community Tolerance: An Urban Ethnography from Colombia and Guatemala. *Environment and Urbanization* 16(2):49-62.

McIlwaine, Cathy and Caroline Moser

2007 Living in Fear: How the Urban Poor Perceive Violence, Fear and Insecurity. In *Fractured Cities: Social Exclusion, Urban Violence & Contested Spaces in Latin America*.

Merry, Sally Angle

2012 Anthropology of Law in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Moser, Caroline and Cahty McIlwaine

2006 Latin American Urban Violence as a Development Concern: Towards a Framework for Violence Reduction. *World Development* 34(1):89-112.

Musalo, Karen, Elisabeth Pellegrin and S. Shawn Roberts

2010 Crimes Without Punishment: Violence Against Women in Guatemala 21:161-222.

Nordstrom, Carolyn and JoAnn Martin “

1992 *The Paths to Domination, Resistance and Terror*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ogrodnik, Corinne, and Silvia Borzutzky

2011 Women under Attack: Violence and Poverty in Guatemala. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 12(1):55–67.

Robben, Antonius C.G.M., and Carolyn Nordstrom

1995 *The Anthropology and Ethnography of Violence and Sociopolitical Conflict in Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Sanford, Veronica

2008 From Genocide to Femicide: Impunity and Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Guatemala. *Journal of Human Rights* 7(2):104-122.

Sieder, Rachel

- 2011 Building Mayan Authority and Autonomy: The 'Recovery' of Indigenous Law in Post-Peace Guatemala. *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* 55:43-75.

Simon Thomas, Marc

- 2013 The Challenge of Legal Pluralism: Local Dispute Settlement and the Indian-State Relationship in Ecuador. Published in-house.

Sluka, Jeffrey

- 1992 The Anthropology of Conflict in The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Snodgrass Godoy, Angelina

- 2002 Lynchings and the Democratization of Terror in Postwar Guatemala: Implications for Human Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly* 24(3):640-661.

Snodgrass Godoy, Angelina

- 2004 When 'Justice' is Criminal: Lynchings in Contemporary Latin America. *Theory and Society* 33:621-651.

Steenkamp, Christina

- 2005 The Legacy of War: Conceptualizing a 'Culture of Violence' to Explain Violence after Peace Accords. *The Round Table* 94:253-267.

Ungar, Mark

- 2007 The Privatization of Citizen Security in Latin America: From Elite Guards to Neighborhood Vigilantes. *Social Justice* 34(1):20-37.

Watts, Charlotte and Cathy Zimmerman

- 2002 Violence against Women: Global Scope and Magnitude. *Lancet* 359:1232-1237

Winton, Alisa

- 2004 Young People's Views on How To Tackle Gang Violence in "Postconflict" Guatemala. *Environment and Urbanization* 16(2):83-99.

Appendix A: Overview Informants

	Name	Age	Occupation
1	Fernando	24	Student social science, owns an internet café
2	Diego	Unknown	Deputy commissioner local police Quiché
3	Miguel	23	Auto mechanic
4	Daniel	21	Volunteer in a shelter home for children
5	Sofía	20	Student social science
6	Guadalupe	20	House keeper
7	Alvarez	52	Indigenous mayor in Quiché
8	Alicia	42	Founder women's rights project Quiché
9	Luis	24	Teacher primary school
10	Ana Lucía	48	Seamstress traditional Mayan clothing
11	Susana	21	Employee in internet café of her boyfriend
12	Nayeli	21	Teacher primary school
13	Estuardo	49	Owner mechanic shop
14	Debora	23	House keeper
15	Sindy	21	Student political science
16	Felipe	20	Volunteers as ambulance driver
17	Gabriela	21	Teacher primary school
18	José	23	Teacher primary school

Appendix B: Resumen de la tesis

En las últimas dos décadas, la mayoría de los países de América Latina, han enfrentado un aumento en temas de inseguridad y de violencia. La tasa de homicidios muestra que a través de toda la región, existe un alto nivel de violencia. En Guatemala, por ejemplo, la tasa de homicidio es alrededor de 45 homicidios por cada 100.000 habitantes, el número más alto en América Latina. En consecuencia, los ciudadanos a menudo se sienten menos seguros ahora, que durante las guerras civiles que asolaron la mayoría de los países de América Latina (Glebbeek 2010:64). En la sociedad contemporánea, el miedo y la inseguridad se han normalizado dentro de la realidad de la vida diaria (Moser y McIlwaine 2006:91). A pesar de que oficialmente hubo un acuerdo para promover la paz, la violencia continua ocurriendo. En Guatemala, por ejemplo, la ‘paz’ resultó ser casi tan peligroso como los años de conflicto que asoló el país durante treinta y seis años. Esta tesis se centra en las percepciones de la seguridad, la violencia y las estrategias de afrontamiento de la juventud guatemalteca, en la ciudad de Santa Cruz del Quiché. Los hallazgos de la tesis, se basan en mi experiencia de trabajo de campo en dicha ciudad, realizado dentro de un período de ocho semanas, entre el veintinueve de febrero y el veinticuatro de abril de 2016. La pregunta principal de la tesis es: *¿Cómo percibe la juventud guatemalteca en Santa Cruz del Quiché la seguridad y la violencia en su vida diaria y cuáles son las estrategias para lidiar con la inseguridad?* La idea principal del documento es el de contribuir una mejor comprensión sobre las consecuencias de los conflictos violentos y el estatus de las vidas de los jóvenes de la ciudad en el periodo posguerra.

A pesar de que el departamento de Quiché es el departamento el más seguro dentro de Guatemala, con ‘solamente’ cinco asesinatos registrados en enero y febrero de este año, existen otros tipos de violencia que continúan perjudicando el bienestar de los habitantes de la ciudad. Especialmente la violencia doméstica y la violencia sexual hacia mujeres, así como los robos y los asaltos. Sin embargo, en comparación con otras ciudades del país, Santa Cruz del Quiché es relativamente seguro. Muchas personas atribuyen esta seguridad a la existencia de la ley indígena. El derecho indígena se caracteriza por la discusión y el diálogo. Se centra en la reconciliación, la compensación y la restitución (Simon Thomas 2012:27). Porque los funcionarios de la policía local a menudo son percibidos como corruptos y poco interesados en la resolución de casos, la mayoría de la gente en Santa Cruz de Quiché opta por confiar en la ley indígena. Causa de la desconfianza en los agentes de la policia local, muchos delitos no se denuncian y podría desapercibido. En parte debido a esta desconfianza en los agentes de la

policia local, interesadamente, tanto la población indígena como la población ladina, reiteran su confianza en la ley indígena, sin embargo, la población ladina usualmente no utiliza la ley indígena porque se considera separado al sistema legal de la cultura indígena.

Al mismo tiempo, hay muchas opiniones sobre las causas principales de la violencia. En particular, el alcoholismo, las drogas, la falta de educación, la falta de oportunidades de empleo y el machismo. Puede ser que la violencia en Santa Cruz del Quiché sea una consecuencia de la pobreza y la desesperación, pero también se tiene que considerar que la misma violencia presenta una oportunidad para ganar dinero fácil, la cual lamentablemente es muy tentadora para la gran cantidad de personas que no *quieren* trabajar. Según otros informantes, la violencia en Santa Cruz del Quiché es un resultado de la discriminación y el racismo. Especialmente la población indígena, se sienten despreciados y más aún cuando llevan sus trajes tradicionales. Finalmente, la falta de moral y los valores también son nombrados como causas de la violencia en la ciudad.

La juventud guatemalteca tiene diferentes estrategias de afrontamiento para lidiar con la violencia y la inseguridad en Santa Cruz del Quiché. Múltiples respuestas señalaron que la más común, era la estrategia de evitación. Por ejemplo, algunos informantes dicen que la violencia en la ciudad crea sentimientos de ansiedad. Por el miedo, ellos no quieren salir de su casa o ellos tratan de evitar los lugares peligrosos como la terminal de autobuses y el cementario. Además, la mayoría de mis informantes comentan que tratan de evitar caminar solos, especialmente durante la noche y la madrugada, así como evitan el tener que viajar en transporte público. Es el miedo y la inseguridad que debilita las relaciones sociales en la comunidad.

Aparte de las estrategias de evitación, existen estrategias de afrontamiento. Por ejemplo, hay personas que tratan de aferrarse a algún tipo de control. Ya sea portando armas de fuego o estableciendo grupos de vigilancia vecinal denominados cocodes, en cual los vecinos de una zona pueden unirse y protegerse mutuamente. Finalmente, hay estrategias más personales. Por ejemplo, el tratar de evitar enfrentamientos violentos por ser ‘una buena persona’ y por ‘tener un buen corazón.’ Otros ocupan en actividades beneficiosas se centraron en el futuro. Por ejemplo, por el gasto de tiempo al estudio y la lectura, en cierto sentido, los jóvenes tienen menos tiempo para meterse en problemas. Además, la juventud en Santa Cruz del Quiché trata la inseguridad y la violencia por la deshumanización de los delincuentes. En repetidas ocasiones, los delincuentes fueron descritos en términos de ser ‘menos humanos’ que otras personas. Frecuentemente, la juventud guatemalteca combina diferentes estrategias de afrontamiento.