Violence, Drugs and Crochet: 
An Ethnography of Masculinities, and Changing Gender Relations on the Mexican Riviera
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene
The governmental organization, Desarrollo Integral Familiar (DIF - Integrated Development of the Family), is situated in Cancún’s Region 94. The DIF provides medical, social, and legal services for poor families and is located in a poor neighborhood. The area is regularly mentioned in the newspapers because of gang activities. The neighborhood where the DIF is located consists of small streets with small one or two story houses. Next to the DIF, lies a patch of undeveloped land, called a park. At night the area is poorly lit, and few people venture out on the streets. Every Wednesday night at eight, a group of men gather in the courtyard of the DIF’s Centro Atención Violencia Familiar (CAVI - Centre for Attention to Family Violence) that is situated within the compound. All the men are involved in domestic violence. Most men don’t explicitly talk about their violent actions and they may not even want to be here, however, they have come to appease their wives. With the guidance of a psychologist, they discuss their relationship troubles. One of the new members introduces himself:

I don’t use violence. My wife says I have an alcohol problem but it is not true, I might drink once a week and then not for a period of three months. I think the problem has to do with her relationship with her father: he was an alcoholic, and he died from cirrhosis. Maybe the problem is also related to age: my wife is six years younger. We didn’t really get a proper chance to get to know each other before marriage: we had to get married because she was pregnant. She is at home with the kids. I allow her to work, but I have advised her to do something at home. I want the kids to grow up well, and to be attended to. Recently she found work, selling perfumes, something she can do from our house, so now the problem has been solved.

One of the group members responds to the theme of working women:

I am doing my utmost to fulfill my obligations. I make sure there is money for food, but yes, I do expect something in return, she needs to fulfill her obligations too! Honestly it does frighten me that many women work nowadays.
During the course of the therapy session, a fight is going on between various gangs outside on the empty field adjacent to the DIF. Stones are flying from one part of the field to the other. No one in the group is paying much attention, but they stop talking when the shooting starts. The proximity of the fight is so close that the fire from the guns is actually visible. The men seem to be barely affected by the shooting; they resume talking as soon as it dies down. They explain the shooting as coming from the police who are trying to scare off rioting gangs. One of the men uses what’s happening outside as a justification of his position and argues that youngsters would not join gangs if they had stable homes. He says: “You see this is why I don’t want my wife to work” (Field notes 2-3-2005).

The DIF’s CAVI was one field site where I met the male perpetrators of violence who played a key role in my research. The quotes above describe what this research is all about in a nutshell—men from the lower social classes who have perpetrated violence against women, some under the influence of alcohol and drugs, in a setting of changing gender relations and urban violence.

In this introductory chapter, I first give an overview of the motivations for my research topic and the fieldwork setting in Playa del Carmen and Cancún. Then the research questions that guided my study will be addressed. Thousands of migrants, men and women, arrive in Playa del Carmen and Cancún to search for a job in the tourist industry. Gender relations change rapidly due to growing employment opportunities for women, and governmental actions to stop violence against women. The related social transformations the migrants experience in their new environment affect the performances of masculinity. For men, making a living for their families is an essential aspect of masculinity. However, whether and how the men can provide the necessary income depends on circumstances. If no other options are available, even crochet can be an acceptable way to earn money, as we will see in Chapter 9.
Salen a relucir bombas "molotov"

Como no había policías preventivos, un grupo de elementos de la Judicial intervino para detener a un grupo de vándalos

POR ERIC GALINDO

CANCÚN: Mientras la policía preventiva se ubicaba en el sector, un hombre que se quejó sin vigilancia policíaca la ciudad, en la región 94 dos grupos de pandillas se enfrentaron a golpes donde se registraron detenidos y heridos.

Los Pachucos y Los Daráctes, fueron estos los protagonistas de una batalla campal en el parque de la región 94, que se ubicó a un costado donde se encuentran las instalaciones del DIF municipal.

Eran las 15 horas de este miércoles cuando se dio el primer enfrentamiento: los vecinos sólo veían rodar las piedras, quienes llamaron a la policía preventiva, pero simplemente los teléfonos no fueron contestados en el número de emergencia 990.

Los vecinos de esta región tuvieron que escondérsese y esperar a que los pandilleros caminara sus zanjas. La riña duró aproximadamente 15 minutos.

Pero el descuido vendría mas entrada la noche. Eran las 22 horas cuando alrededor de 15 integrantes de los Pachucos empezaron a reunirse en una de las esquinas de dicho parque y en el otro extremo se encontraban ya Los Daractes que eran más de 30 muchachos.

Empezaron los insultos y de ahí vinieron las piedras y toda clase de proyectiles, incluso bombas molotov. Una vez más los vecinos tendrían que sufrir las consecuencias de estos grupos de vándalos.

Las piedras dieron blanco en ventanas de varios domicilios, así como a un local de almacén de material público. De hecho varios participantes de esta presa resultaron con heridas no graves por proyectiles, pero ninguno de graveidad.

Con la esperanza de que en esta ocasión alguien les hiciera caso, los lugareños volvieron a solicitar la presencia policial, esta vez llamaron a la Policía Judicial del Estado.

Un convoy de la Policía Judicial del Estado (PJE) con al menos 40 agentes judiciales, encabezados por el subdirector de la corporación, Lázaro Hernández Sánchez, se trasladaron al sitio de la riña.

En el lugar fueron capturados ocho muchachos, entre ellos cuatro menores, entre 12 y 15 años de edad; también fueron detenidos Antonio Zayas Méndez, de 20 años; Orlando Chih Maru, de 17 años; Antonio Hernández Zapata, de 26 y Román Hernández Díaz, de 20. Todos ellos fueron puestos a disposición del juzgado deolicista por cometer faltas administrativas al Bando de Policía y Buen Gobierno.

Asimismo en un recorrido por el área en donde se suscitó la batalla campal, fueron entrevistados: "El Olas", "El Fumado", "La Roca" y "El Picocho", quienes pertenecen a la banda Los Pachucos.

Los cuatro participaron en el enfrentamiento de la noche del miércoles. Dicen que son los mejores y a pesar de que son menos que los otros, logran vencerlos.

"Ellos traen el apoyo de "Los Canarios", "Los SIM" y "Los Anónimos" pero ni ellos ni así pacificaron con nosotros".

Se justificaron al señalar que ellos estaban tranquilos en el parque, pero fueron los Daractes los que empezaron la trama, pues los provocaron y fue cuando empezaron la riña.

Finalmente indicaron que casi ahorca hora tomo la bronca y los policías no hicieron nada. Después de que llegó la policía judicial se ocultaron en sus domicilios.

De sus integrantes ninguno fue detenido, en cambio de sus rivales, señalaron que sí hubo. Eso significa que son los mejores de la región 94.

Figure 1. The newspaper Novedades Qroo placed an article about the gang fight that occurred in the park next to the DIF (Galindo 4-3-2005)
1.2 Male violence related to changes in the economy and gender relations
Transformations in livelihood mean changes in gender relations. Various studies in Mexico and the Caribbean show that women’s remunerated employment brings about processes of change in gender relations. Although women’s identification with the household and motherhood does not necessarily alter (Safa 1996), and women’s household bargaining positions vis-à-vis men are not necessarily strengthened (Gates 2002), women may spend more time and money according to their individual preferences (Nathan 1999, Prieto 1997). Thus, men’s position as the sole provider and head of the household can be hard to sustain. Although men may find it impossible to provide for their families in practice, their identity as workers and providers might not change (Fuller 2003). Nevertheless, women’s growing independence, an increasing number of female-headed households and men’s diminishing roles have been associated with a so-called “crisis in masculinity” (Cleaver 2002: 3) or “male disempowerment” (Silberschmidt 2001). The inability to be a provider, which is deemed to be an essential part of manhood, is found to be responsible for this identity crisis (ibid).

Various authors (Gutmann 1996; Bourgois 1996; Schuler 1999; Silberschmidt 2001, Cleaver 2002) address the issue of changing gender relations in relation to an increase of domestic violence in several geographical locations. Some specifically associate this increase with the presumed crisis of masculinity or male disempowerment (Cleaver 2002; Silberschmidt 2001). I will argue in this book that these assumptions warrant more in-depth study of changes in gender relations and men’s reactions to the changes. I am not going to simply dismiss the causal connection between disempowerment and violence, but I will show that the relationship between male disempowerment and violence is more complex.

Over the last decade, the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, bordering the US, is frequently in the news for the huge number of murdered women. There seemed to be a link between the murders and the so-called maquiladora (assembly) industry. The majority of workers within this industry are women (Cooney 2001). To study the connection between the new industries, changing gender relations and the increased violence against women in the northern Mexican border towns would be a risky undertaking for a female researcher like me. For that reason, I conducted my research in the southern part of Mexico, in the towns of Playa del Carmen and Cancún. These towns are in the state of Quintana Roo and border the Caribbean Sea. They do not have maquiladoras, but host a booming tourist industry that provides working
opportunities for women. There are many jobs that are traditionally filled by women, such as chambermaids, waitresses and cleaners. Quintana Roo’s commercial sector employs almost twice as many women as men (INEGI 2004). At the same time, the first National Survey of Violence against Women (ENVIM 2003) shows that Quintana Roo has the highest prevalence of violence against women in the country. On average, 21.5% of Mexican women have experienced physical, economical, psychological or sexual violence by their current or last partner, and for Quintana Roo the rate is 10% higher. On average, 34.5% of the Mexican women have suffered domestic violence from a partner (ever), and in Quintana Roo this percentage was the second highest in the country at 44.3%. Overall, on average, 60.4% of Mexican women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. For the women in Quintana Roo this was 70%. Thus, Playa del Carmen and Cancún were good locations to research masculinity (in crisis) and violence in the context of social transformation.

1.3 The Mexican Riviera: A tourist area in flux
The towns of Cancún and Playa del Carmen owe their existence to tourism. In the 1960s, the Banco de Mexico (The Bank of Mexico) initiated the development of tourism in the country. In the formerly under-developed federal territory of Quintana Roo, the small port of Benito Juarez was renamed Cancún and selected to become a major tourist destination in Mexico.¹ This decision meant a drastic change for the region. Thousands of migrants arrived to construct hotels, roads, and an international airport. In 1974, the first hotels opened their doors (Cacho 2005), and the region had already become sufficiently affluent to fulfill the requirements for conversion from a federal territory into a sovereign state². Thus, Quintana Roo became one of the 31 states in the Mexican Federation.

In 1974, the population of Cancún counted 18,000 people who were mostly single men from all over the country. The region was like a frontier zone, a no man’s land, with a volatile population that made its own rules. The migrants just came to make money and didn’t develop roots in the area. The local government made little effort to improve the quality of life. Few investments were made in the service sector like hospitals or schools (Cacho 2005: 24).

¹ La Historia de Cancun
http://www.cancunlahistoria.com/cancun/cancun_historia.html (last viewed 2-1-2013)
² Historia
http://www.qroo.gob.mx/qroo/Estado/Historia.php (last viewed 2-1-2013)
Quintana Roo was divided into 10 municipalities. Cancún is part of the municipality of Benito Juarez; the official population of this municipality now consists of 661,175 people, whereas, it may actually be a number of times larger. With a total population of 1,325,578, half of Quintana Roo’s population now lives in and around Cancún. Cancún’s tourist developments have spilled over to the rest of the coastal area. The fishing village of Playa del Carmen, 120 kilometers from Cancún, came to be a booming tourist town. It wasn’t preplanned for development like Cancún, but grew steadily alongside Cancún into its present shape. Playa del Carmen is part of the municipality of Solidaridad that now has an official population of 159,310 inhabitants. The whole coastal area is being filled with spacious all-inclusive resorts, and the end of the construction period is not in sight. This tourist zone is often referred to as the Mexican Riviera, and is locally better known as “La Riviera Maya”.

In many ways, Playa del Carmen is still a frontier zone. The population is increasing annually by 6.8%. Migrants arrive from around the country, drawn by the growing tourist economy and the relative tranquility when compared to urban zones like Mexico City or Monterrey. Some migrants have a good education and look for work in the service sector. The population is not as imbalanced as it used to be; the male-female ratio has become almost equal. However, many of the men are young with little education and come from rural areas in states like Chiapas and Tabasco. They may find employment in the lower strata of the employment market, such as construction work or hotel maintenance. Still a large part of the population does not permanently reside in the towns, but rather are a population popularly called “floating people.” These migrants may go back to their homes during planting seasons or holidays. There is a core population of migrants who have either settled down or were born and raised in these tourist towns.

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1.4 Wealth and poverty: Worlds divided

The separation of wealth and poverty is important in this research, since the informants were mainly from the lower to lower-middle classes. Being poor in a country that has enormous wealth means being confronted with inequality. For many of the informants, this was a chronic situation and how this affects them is a recurring theme throughout this book. There is a spatial division between the worlds of the poor and the wealthy. The tourist industry creates fairytale-like zones, where daily problems like domestic violence and the poverty of the residents of Playa del Carmen and Cancún seem to belong to another reality. Cancún’s hotel zone is built on a man-made 25-kilometer long peninsula in the Caribbean Sea. The hotels are huge luxurious resorts and many have quite remarkable architectural design. Inside the hotels one finds apparent unlimited luxury. The guests can chose from various restaurants, swimming pools and shops inside the resort. Situated on a peninsula, the hotel zone is separated from the city of Cancún on the mainland and this divides the tourists from the local population.

The town of Cancún has various middle class areas, but a large part of the city is poor. The contrast between the enormous luxury of the hotel zone and the poverty of the residential areas is striking. This contrast became even sharper after hurricane Wilma devastated large parts of Cancún in 2005. Much of the hotel zone was quickly repaired, but the city area became even more impoverished. The city of Cancún has a complicated grid of regions, blocks and superblocks. Tourists are not provided with maps of this area. Most of the tourists who stay in one of Cancún’s resorts do not see the mainland other than the airport. The worlds of the wealthy and the poor are literally separated here. The separation is even more pronounced since most of Cancún’s beach is only accessible through the hotels, which means that locals are barred from going there. The separation of the urban and the tourist zone is less accentuated in Playa del Carmen. Although there are tourist zones, like Playacar, where grand and luxurious resorts and condos are separated from the town’s residential area, many other tourist accommodations are situated within residential areas. The center of town is becoming so expensive that apartment buildings are generally populated by expats or wealthy Mexicans. Some areas have yet to be redeveloped and in the mean time provide housing for the poor. Many poor people live in so-called palapas—houses made of plywood with corrugated iron roofs. This housing usually has one room shared by a whole family. A type of housing that is a bit better than the palapa, is the so-called cuarto—a room with four concrete walls.
In Playa del Carmen, tourist and residential accommodations compete with each other for space. Many neighborhoods where migrants come to live are not pre-planned by the government or developers, but rather they arise organically when migrants build shelter on bare terrain bordering the city. These neighborhoods lack streetlights, pavements and other city provisions. When the areas become incorporated in town and the municipality starts to invest in streetlights, a sewer system and roads, many of the makeshift houses are bulldozed to make room for apartment buildings to be sold or rented as condominiums for tourists. Rich and poor may live next to each other until the luxury condominiums with live-in guards and maintenance men completely take over a neighborhood and the poor and the middle classes are pushed to the fringes of the city.6

1.5 Drugs and daily life
The temporality of the living arrangements of the Mexican migrants, the expats and the tourists creates a situation where there is little sense of belonging. Few people actually invest in their surroundings and create an environment to inhabit in the future. Many of the rich live anonymously in the private space of their condos, while many of the poor live in circumstances that give them little privacy. Whether rich or poor, generally people only reside in the area temporarily, and therefore do not enforce social control on each other. The anonymity of this fast-moving tourist area makes it a good location for illegal activities. This part of the Caribbean coast is known for drug trafficking. Cocaine is widely available and comparatively cheap. The lines of trafficking from Colombia to the US follow the Caribbean. At the time of this writing (2009-2012), there is a drug war raging in Mexico and attempts by the Calderon government (2006-2012) to crack down on organized crime has resulted in a bloody war between the army and the criminal organizations, as well as among these organizations. The ensuing fights are most frequent and bloody in the northern Mexican cities like Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez and Monterrey, but do not leave the state of Quintana Roo untouched. The local newspapers explicitly print bloody pictures of mafia members who are murdered in the region.7 The Zetas, the former legionnaires’ army of the “Gulf Cartel”, is increasingly active within the region. The involvement of the local

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6 This city movement is thus opposite the one described by, for instance, Theresa Caldera in *City of Walls* (2001). The subject of this book, is the middle class of Sao Paolo that leaves the urban center out of fear of crime and violence due to the increasing poor urban population.

7 “Ejercito” de “Zetas” *Por Esto* 20-12-07
government of Cancún in drugs-related crimes is attracting international attention. The head of police, the director of the municipal prison, and the mayor’s assistant were incarcerated in March 2009 for their presumed involvement in the murder of General Tello Quiñones. The general was to combat organized crime in the region (Zoon 2009). Barely one year later, the mayor was incarcerated for his presumed connections with the drug mafia.  

For most citizens, the awareness of the drug wars comes from newspaper articles and television broadcasting and thus, their lives are not directly affected by the warfare. However, daily life in Cancún and Playa del Carmen is affected by smaller but related gang fights. The battle between the rivaling gangs in the park next to the DIF is not exceptional. In affluent neighborhoods, one may not notice, but los pandilleros (as gang members are called here), do have an important effect on life in the poor neighborhoods. Young boys in particular may feel they have to show their affiliation for one gang over another to feel secure within their own neighborhood. Gangs are involved in small-scale criminality and drug trade at the local level. The shooting in the park next to the DIF didn’t seem to instill any immediate fear in the men from the group. Accustomed to this kind of violence they didn’t fear stray bullets. However, it did remind them of their children’s risks of becoming hooked up with drugs and gang life. Many of the informants of this research had been part of a gang during their childhood or adolescence.

The presence of criminal organizations also affects the local communities through the wide availability of drugs. Cocaine and especially crack are easily obtained, but the drug of choice is alcohol. Most people work six days a week and many have Sunday off. Sunday is the day when the beach is packed with tourists and locals. Groups of friends and co-workers hang out on the beach together. These groups often carry a bag of beers and as the day progresses people become increasingly drunk. Sunday drunkenness seems to be such a part of the local culture that the law stipulates that no alcohol can be sold after five o’clock on Sundays. Public drunkenness is a feature of life in this area, especially in the weekends. Most people get paid once every two weeks, traditionally, co-workers celebrate this moment by drinking together. For many people this is the start of an alcohol binge. Those who can’t find their homes and fall into a drunken stupor on the beach or in the streets are taken away in open police pick-up trucks to sober up in the police station.

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8 Buitenland.nieuws.nl (26-5-2010) “Burgemeester Cancún opgepakt wegens drugshandel”
http://buitenland.nieuws.nl/597819 (last viewed 2-1-2013)
Within the local discourse, drug use is one of the factors usually mentioned when speaking about the causes of domestic violence. This presumed connection is so persistent that the exploration of this connection came to have an important place within this research. Research about lower-class Mexican men is unfeasible without addressing drugs in male social life. In this book, the use of drugs will not be considered only from an individual perspective. I will also account for the politico-economical reasons for drug use. For poor people, there are only few escapes from the harshness of everyday life. A six-day workweek and a low salary leave little time or money for activities to break the tedium of everyday life. Alcohol and drugs are cheap and easy access to excitement. Moreover some work conditions like those on building sites are hard to endure, thus drugs like marijuana may help workers keep going. Therefore, drug abuse will not be seen simply as an individual disease but will be seen as related to a variety of individual and societal factors.

1.6 Research focused on men
The tourist area with a shifting population of migrants and tourists, as described above, was the context for this research. Domestic violence and violence against women in general receives a great deal of attention in this area. Women’s right to a life without violence has become an issue placed high on the political agenda. In 2008, during the local elections in Quintana Roo, ensuring women’s rights was an important electoral issue. In the 1990s, federal laws were accepted that made family violence a crime. These laws were converted to state law in Quintana Roo, in 2006. Various organizations like the DIF, mentioned earlier, help to enforce these laws. Billboards by the side of the road, soap operas and newspaper articles all include the topic of domestic violence. Much of this attention is focused on women—on their safety and empowerment. This research, on the other hand, is about masculinity and violence.

In the 1980s, research on masculinities took off. Masculinity is no longer taken for granted, but rather it is problematized. Authors like Connell (1987), Brod and Kaufman (1994) and Kimmel (1987) have made key contributions to theorizing masculinity. In the Latin American context, Gutmann (1996, 1997)...

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9 With drug use, I mean alcohol as well as other drugs used for an effect on the nervous system.
10 For an overview into research of masculinities see Brod (1994) and Gutmann (1997)
has created an awareness of the stereotypes others have used when theorizing about Latin American men. He argues that constructions of masculinity are significantly more fluid than the stereotypical *macho* they are often portrayed to be. Despite the growing attention on men, anthropological research into men’s experiences as perpetrators of domestic violence is still relatively new. In the Latin American context, Hume (2009) is one of the few anthropologists who has studied male experiences of perpetrating (domestic) violence. My research aimed to fill part of our knowledge gap of male perpetrators of domestic violence, their experiences and perceptions of masculinity and violence. In presenting my research findings in this book, it will become clear that domestic violence cannot be conceived as separate from other forms of direct violence and structural violence.

While the focus of this book is on men, the voices of women do form an essential part of my study. Because male and female worlds of the informants of this research are so divided, women’s experiences of gender relations are very different from men’s experiences. To put the men’s stories into perspective, the women’s stories are essential.

### 1.7 Main focus of the book and related research questions

In this book, I will take issue with studies that give a view of the complex relationship between the role of provider, male disempowerment and increasing violence against women that is too simplistic. I will show how other factors such as poverty, migration, drug use and legislation all play into the relationship between masculinity and violence. This research does not aim to find out why some men are violent and others are not, rather it aims to unpack how the perpetrators of violence relate their acts to discourses of masculinity and drug use, and how social transformations affect their use of violence. Violence is not merely taken as an interpersonal act intending to harm. Chronic inequality, such as poverty or the submission of women, can be seen as forms of violence. I will argue that various forms and sorts of violence are connected to each other and to the way in which men and women “do” gender. By making these arguments, this research will answer the following questions:

*How is the relationship between masculinity and violence expressed in the context of socio-economic transformations in the tourist areas of Playa del Carmen and Cancún, Mexico?*
Sub-questions
• How is violence connected to masculine performances?
• How is domestic violence related to other forms of violence?
• How did policies that focused on a reduction of domestic violence emerge and develop and how were they put into practice?
• How is the performance of masculinity affected by these policies?
• How does the role of a man as a provider, or the inability to play this role, relate to masculinity and violence?
• How is drug abuse connected to masculinity and (domestic) violence?

1.8 Outline of the book
Before introducing each chapter separately, I first present the general structure of the book. This introduction chapter with the next two chapters, on theoretical concepts and the methodology respectively, form the foundation of the book. The subsequent five chapters presenting the empirical findings can be roughly divided into two clusters. First, chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on the normalization of violence. These chapters show how violence forms a part of the everyday life worlds of the research participants. In other words, violence has become normalized in order to deal with day-to-day problems. The second cluster contains chapters 7 and 8 and demonstrates that there is also a process of unsettling the normalization of violence taking place. Efforts by the feminist movement have led to the implementation of laws and policies aimed to protect women from violence. While the application of these policies leaves much to be desired, they do lead to a growing awareness of domestic violence. Violent practices that may have been considered normal as an exercise of male domination can now be punished with incarceration. Bringing the two clusters of chapters to a close, chapter 9 shows that practices of masculinity are malleable and violence is only one way of doing masculinity. When alternative expressions of masculinity are offered, violence may subside. However, whether or not this leads to changed perceptions of masculinity is doubtful.

Within chapter 2, the theoretical underpinnings of this book, including the concepts of violence, gender and drug abuse, are presented. I will explain these themes from a practice approach, which implies that I will not give preference to either explanations from a structural or an action perspective. Instead, I will try to show how structure and action interact. I start with a discussion of violence, the concepts of structural and symbolic violence and their interconnectedness. Violence tends to reproduce itself, creating the omnipresence of violence. To cope with a violent reality, violence becomes a
normalized behavior. Subsequently, I will explain gender as a way of “doing”. Part of this doing is directed at the preservation of institutions that support existing gender differences. For many men, participating in this research doing gender means performing dominant behavior. Finally, the popular disease approach to drug use will be critiqued, as I argue that the discourse of drug use as a disease does not provide sufficient attention to the societal context in which drugs are used.

Chapter 3, “Issues of Methodology,” describes the research process as it developed. It gives an overview of the various locations where the research took place, the multiple positions I held in the field, and the consequences of these positions on the process of knowledge production. I end by reflecting on issues of power and powerlessness that tie in with these alternative positions and the ethical unintended consequences of power and powerlessness.

Chapter 4, “The Chain of Violence,” addresses the relationship between various forms of violence, and between the (in)ability to play the role of the provider, masculinity and violence. The main narrative of this chapter illustrates how my informants’ violent actions are connected to their own experiences of violence. Experiences of structural violence have created a vulnerability that results in situations of interpersonal violence. The chapter shows how various forms of violence overflow. To cope with the presence of violence, desensitization occurs and violence becomes normalized. Both experiencing, as well as perpetrating violence become normal. The accepted ideology of the hegemony of masculinity, which values dominance and violence, gives legitimacy to the normalization of violence. Moreover, the ideology of males as providers makes women tolerant of the violence that is directed at them, even if their violent partners do not in fact provide for them.

Chapter 5, “The Normalization of Violence within the Alcoholics Anonymous in Cancún,” addresses the relationship between drug abuse, masculinity and violence. Popular opinion holds drug use to be responsible for much of the local violence. The popularity of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) contributes significantly to the dispersal of a discourse in which drug use is portrayed as an illness; drug use is seen as part of a degenerative disease that will inevitably lead to violence, imprisonment, and death if the illness is not treated by attending AA sessions. This conceptualization of drug abuse as an individual infliction absolves the society from any responsibility for drug abuse and the presumably causally related violence. All this together contributes to the normalization of violence.
Chapter 6, “Violence as a Relational Process,” focuses on the relationship between providing for a family, masculinity and violence, and presents a specific husband and wife as an exemplary case. I will look at the various theories of violence against women within the domestic sphere. In all of these theories, surprisingly little attention is paid to how gender shapes what is experienced as domestic violence. Coercive practices are legitimized as normal performances of hegemonic masculinity. However, with the help that the governmental organization DIF is offering women, some manage to leave their subjugated position and change the relational balance of power. The examples given in this chapter point towards a gradual unsettling of the normalization of violence, which is the theme of the next two chapters.

Chapter 7, “Battles Against Domestic and Sexual Violence: (Inter)national Politics and Reality,” addresses how policies emerged to protect women from violence and lead to the creation of organizations like the DIF. It gives an overview of the law amendments regarding women’s legal status since the Mexican Revolution and explains the recent proliferation of laws and policies trying to curb sexual and domestic violence. The latter are presented as the outcome of external pressure on Mexico to modernize, which gave space to the internal growth of the feminist movement. The chapter shows that there is willingness to create change, but that bureaucracy, lack of money for shelters, and corruption often make the women’s rights discourse into hollow rhetoric. The fact that some of these organizations aimed to curb domestic violence is well known and gives them a power that may not be matched by the effectiveness of their actual performance against this form of violence.

Chapter 8, “Migrating to Make a Change and Changing Gender Relationships,” brings to the fore the effects of the policies to protect women, especially in regard to the effects of the men’s ability to be family providers and the presumed connection to violence. Men are motivated to migrate in accordance with hegemonic masculinity. In reality, migration can become a disempowering experience. Earning enough to be the provider in an expensive tourist area is very difficult, especially for the many migrants with little education. Often, men allow their wives to find remunerated employment out of necessity and not out of conviction. Women derive a sense of empowerment from the employment possibilities in the area and from the protection against sexual and domestic violence that governmental and non-governmental organizations promise. For men, these changes may be difficult to deal with. How to do masculinity when the legitimacy of male authority is
called into question? These issues are highlighted via the narratives of two rural migrants. While their narratives show that migration can in effect lead to male disempowerment, they also show that migration’s link with violence is more complex than is often assumed. Access to organizations that help women with domestic violence increases awareness of domestic violence. While many migrant women may have accepted their subordinate position when living in their home regions, they may now learn that they were and still are victims and seek help. For men, this can lead to a disempowering experience. Their authority in their own home is questioned, while at the same time acting violently can now be legally persecuted.

Chapter 9, “Doing Masculinity in a Mexican Prison,” focuses on a specific place where violence is used in the performance of masculinity. Prison is a location where we find a predominantly poor population that has lived a rough life. There are few other locations where the willingness and ability to use violence to show control are as important as in a prison setting. Violence is one of the resources to climb the prison hierarchy and to ensure a measure of personal safety. However, it is also a location that demonstrates how malleable the performance of masculinity is. Once some safety is created, men demonstrate the ability to do masculinity in various non-violent ways. The opportunity to work is an important outlet for doing masculinity, even if the product of that work is a crocheted hat.

Chapter 10, “Conclusion,” presents a summary of the research findings and reflects upon the meanings of this work for the existing theories on violence and gender, and the implications for policy makers that aim to address domestic violence.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Concepts

2.1 Introduction
In this chapter, the concepts of “violence”, “masculinity” and “drug abuse” are introduced and discussed. They constitute the key concepts that will be used to analyze my research findings. The concepts of direct, structural, cultural and symbolic violence are explained as intrinsically linked. Using Galtung’s definition of violence (1969, 1990), I will show how these various forms of violence are connected. Structural violence and symbolic violence are two sides of the same coin. Subsequently, the concept of doing gender will be explained. Gender is not something we have, but something we do. The way we perform gender is more or less bound by rules. We hold each other accountable for doing gender in a certain way. Performances of masculinity and femininity are constructed in interactions with the surrounding structures. The hegemonic masculine performance of machismo is constituted in part by living in circumstances where violence has become normalized. Situations of deprivation also increase the desire to use drugs. However, the dominant discourse of drug use as a disease seeks explanations for drug use within the (diseased) individual. I will argue that this disease approach is a cultural construct that begs deconstruction. Conceptualizing drug use as a disease, that makes people lose control and engage in harmful behavior, can give the individuals who engage in this behavior a certain peace and acceptance of past wrongdoings. However, this disease approach leaves the structural circumstances that play into the desire to use drugs unspoken. Whether the topic under discussion in this book is violence, gender or drug abuse, the need for an integrative approach and the realization that the structural level cannot be separated from the level of the actor is central to my argument. To conceptualize the interaction between structure and action, I will address what has come to be known as “practice theory”, which is the overarching approach I use to analyze my findings.

2.2 Practice Theory
Practice theory looks at the interaction between the individual and the system or structure he or she lives in. As individuals we are part of a larger structure; we are determined by it, but also responsible for its reproduction. At the same time, the structure is not static. It changes, thus evoking questions of individual agency. In her landmark article, Ortner (1984) traces the theoretical roots of practice theory and provides an explanation.
According to Ortner (ibid), until the 1970s, structuralist approaches were paradigmatic within anthropology. While acknowledging multiple variations, the importance of the “structure” (conceptualized as social stratification, social systems, et cetera) for individual actions is central to this paradigm. Action is seen as the execution of rules or norms serving to maintain the structure. Practice approaches arose in opposition to structuralism. Early practice approaches saw the importance of social structures as merely setting the conditions for actions. Later, practice theorists recognized the structure as determining social action, but focused on how actions reproduced the structure and how change could occur within the system. Action is not considered to serve the structure, but it is also not free or unrestricted. Within practice theory, action is often considered as pragmatic choice and decision-making. Perhaps, due to the focus on change, the unreflexive part of action (in my study: violence that is normalized) generally receives little attention.

According to Ortner (ibid), Bourdieu and Giddens (two of the best-known practice theorists), recognize the role of routinized behavior in the reproduction of the system. In line with Bourdieu and Giddens, I demonstrate that structures of domination are internalized and unconsciously reproduced. An example of this process is the way we reproduce male/female inequality when “doing gender.” According to Bourdieu (1990), social structures become embodied through practice in the “habitus”, a concept introduced by Bourdieu, which forms our dispositions. Through this unconscious process of embodiment, structures become durable. Thus, practice theory accounts for change and explains the longevity of certain practices; structures of power become embodied by those who dominate and those who are oppressed alike. When certain aspects of the power structure change, practices that supported the previous power structure may linger. In my study it will be investigated how domestic violence laws affect the normalized performance of violence.

2.3 A Holistic Approach to Violence

The starting point for my reflection on violence is Galtung’s (1969) work on violence, especially his notion of structural violence. Galtung defines violence as, “the cause of the difference between the actual and the potential” (1969: 168). He makes a distinction between “direct violence”, also called interpersonal violence, and “structural violence.” Direct violence can occur between individuals or between groups. The common denominator is a direct subject-object relationship. In structural violence, the presence of an actor is not relevant; violence emanates from the structures of inequality (ibid: 171). For example, there is structural violence when a life expectancy is twice as high for the upper classes than for the lower classes (ibid: 171). There is no direct
perpetrator; the life expectancy of the lower classes is reduced by inequality. Structural violence is recognizable in the Mexican situation where 9.9% of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, and 26.3% of the population lives on less than 2 dollars a day (ECLAC 2005: 32) — yet, Mexico is a rich country. Mexico’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ranks 12th on the world list and the GDP per capita is 15,100 dollars. In other words, using Galtung’s definition, more than a quarter of the population (26.3%) lacks the income to meet their potential. Two dollars a day is not enough to pay for medication, education, et cetera. Galtung (ibid) argues that large-scale perpetration of domestic violence can also be analyzed as a form of “structural violence”—when one man beats his wife it is “direct violence”, when a million do so we can speak of structural violence (ibid: 171).

Galtung (1990) explains the durability of processes of violence through the introduction of yet another form of violence — cultural violence. He defines cultural violence as “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language, art, and science – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence” (ibid: 292). Cultural violence refers to processes that are so much part of our life world that we do not even notice them. Galtung (1990) proposes that violence breeds violence and that direct, structural and cultural violence are connected through a causal connection, which he envisions as a violence triangle: “Generally, a causal flow from cultural via structural to direct violence can be identified. The culture preaches, teaches…and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural” (ibid: 295). These three forms of violence each have their own temporal aspect: direct violence is an event, structural violence is a process and cultural violence is a permanence (ibid: 294).

To me the idea of various forms of violence reproducing each other is important. However, to conceptualize the durability of processes of violence, I use Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence instead of Galtung’s cultural violence, because symbolic violence more aptly points at the internalization of structures of oppression. Symbolic violence is the violence that is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167). Bourdieu (2001) stresses that symbolic violence does not mean that people willfully subject themselves to structures of dominance, thus, we

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should be careful not to blame the victim. Also, symbolic violence is not a process of free or deliberate submission to dominance (ibid: 37); it cannot simply be eradicated by creating awareness. Symbolic violence is the embodiment of structures of oppression, thus creating what Galtung (1990) calls cultural violence — the symbolic sphere that legitimizes our social structures. Bourdieu (1992) argues that male domination is the most paradigmatic form of symbolic violence. Male dominance is so deeply ingrained in the structures of society that it needs no justification; it is self-evident. Male domination is in large part not a conscious process, but rather a process that has become ingrained in our embodied practices (ibid: 171). According to Burawoy (2008), Bourdieu opposes the idea that is commonly held within Marxist thinking that structures of oppression can be broken by raising consciousness. Bourdieu (2001) refers to the feminist movement’s actions that do not easily change women’s participation in their own submission, because structures of oppression are embodied and therefore durable. Only a radical break with the structures of oppression will bring durable change (ibid: 41-42). Following Bourdieu’s argument we can conclude that structural violence and symbolic violence are two sides of the same coin. We cannot separate people from the structures they are socialized in; social structures become embodied and are thus reproduced. Our involvement in the reproduction of harmful structures can be defined as symbolic violence.

After having clarified the connection between structural violence and its internalized form, symbolic violence, I argue that the connection between the various forms and levels of violence can be conceptualized as more general. Galtung’s definition of violence as “the cause of the difference between the actual and the potential” bridges the perceived dichotomies between physical or non-physical, actor-induced or structure-induced violence. Galtung’s conceptualization of violence allows us to see how various forms of violence are interconnected and reproduce each other. The idea of violence as self-reproductive is not new, but the focus has generally been on direct violence.

In the field of psychology, in particular, the effects of experiencing and/or witnessing direct violence has received much attention. Garbarino (2001) explains that children build up conceptual frameworks of the world around them. To make sense of the world, these frameworks match their daily reality, even if it is a violent reality. Children can adapt their expectations of their own lives to the most violent situations. If there are no adults to help the children process the dangers around them and teach them a sense of morality, children will come to accept violence as normal. Behavior and personality
accommodate to the circumstances and post-traumatic stress disorder can be part of that process (ibid: 369). Repeated exposure to violence, whether on television or through real life experiences creates desensitization towards violence, resulting in numbness to the experience of violence (Bandura 1987). The idea that young people can actually accommodate to the experience of violence opposes theories that argue that children break down under violence (Ng-Mak et al. 2002).

Desensitization goes hand in hand with an increased likelihood to use violence, a process that is known as a pathological adaptation (ibid). This pathological adaptation process has also been called the normalization of violence (ibid: 95) which means that over-exposure to violence has created a loss of sensitivity towards violence. Normalization of violence is needed to frame reality in such a way that it becomes predictable and meaningful. This might mean mitigating, justifying or denying the violence that is happening and/or blaming oneself (Ng-Mak 2002). The process of normalization not only means that the violence that one is exposed to becomes mitigated and justified as acceptable, but so does the violence one enacts (ibid: 97).

The normalization of violence shows how the societal structure becomes internalized in the beings of the actors and thus becomes reproduced. This reproduction means that violence becomes omnipresent. Within the lives of my informants, structural violence, domestic and other forms of direct violence were present and reproduced each other, thus creating a life world in which violence was normalized. Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1996, 2004) has coined the term “everyday violence” for those daily occurrences of violence that have become so normal that no one really takes notice of them anymore. These “small wars” as she calls them can vary from domestic violence, gang violence and police brutality to the practice of the malnourishment of babies who do not have “the knack for living” (Scheper-Hughes 2003: 168).

To conclude this section, let me clarify how I use the concepts of violence against women, domestic violence and family violence in this book. Violence against women was put on the political and scientific agenda in the 1970s by the feminist movement. Special attention was drawn to the unequal power structure and patriarchy as main causal determinants of violence against women (see e.g. Dobash and Dobash 1979). The attention for violence within the household focused on violence against women (VAW) perpetrated by an intimate male partner. This kind of violence was often simply referred to as VAW (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Walker 1979). Subsequent research (see e.g.
Straus et al. 1996) showed that men were also victims of spousal violence, therefore the term VAW was conceived as inadequate and was gradually replaced with spousal violence or domestic violence. In this book, I will use the term domestic violence to refer to violence between spouses. In addition, I will use the term family violence when it concerns other members of the family. Within the Mexican law, for example, violence that members of the family act out against one another falls under the family violence law.\textsuperscript{12} Finally, the term violence against women is used to refer to violence perpetrated against women outside the domestic realm.

\subsection*{2.4 Gender: The Creation of Difference}

Until the 1980s, role theory had been the paradigmatic approach to gender. This theory focused on social cohesion. Changing practices over time and place and deviant behavior could not be accounted for. Moreover role theory does not explain women’s subjugation and men’s dominance (Connell 1987; West

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\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{12} Código Penal Federal Artículo 343 bis.- Por violencia familiar se considera el uso de la fuerza física o moral así como la omisión grave, que de manera reiterada se ejerce en contra de un miembro de la familia por otro integrante de la misma contra su integridad física, psíquica o ambas, independientemente de que pueda producir o no lesiones. Comete el delito de violencia familiar el cónyuge, concubina o concubinario; pariente consanguíneo en línea recta ascendente o descendente sin limitación de grado; pariente colateral consanguíneo o afín hasta el cuarto grado, adoptante o adoptado, que habite en la misma casa de la víctima. A quien comete el delito de violencia familiar se le impondrá de seis meses a cuatro años de prisión y perderá el derecho de pensión alimenticia. Asimismo se le sujetará a tratamiento psicológico especializado. Este delito se perseguirá por querella de la parte ofendida, salvo que la víctima sea menor de edad o incapaz, en que se perseguirá de oficio. http://mexico.justia.com/federales/codigos/codigo-penal-federal/libro-segundo/titulo-decimonoveno/capitulo-octavo/ (last viewed 2-1-2013) (Family violence is considered as the use of physical force as well as grave neglect, exercised in a repeated manner against a family member against the other’s physical or psychological integrity, or both, independently if it causes lesions or not. The crime of family violence is committed by the husband, the partner, family member by birth, or adopted family that resides in the same house as the victim. Those who commit family violence will be imposed with six months to four years imprisonment and lose the right to alimony. Similarly he will be subjected to specialized psychological treatment. This crime is prosecuted upon the complaint of the offended, except when the victim is a minor or incapable, in which case the prosecutor will take on the prosecution of the complaint.)
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and Zimmerman 1987). In 1987, the introduction of the concepts of “doing gender” and hegemonic masculinity were signs of a paradigm shift.

**Doing gender**

Gender used to be explained by making a distinction between sex, our biological status as man or woman based on hormones and anatomy, and gender — our achieved status (West and Zimmerman 1987). West and Zimmerman add a third concept, sex category, which is the sex we identify with or are identified with. Usually our sex and sex category is the same, but some people identify with the sex category that might not be expected on the basis of their biology. How we do gender shows what sex category we identify with. On the basis of how we categorize others, we expect certain behavior; we hold each other “accountable”. Accountability is a key concept as everything we do may be judged by others to assert whether we do what we do according to our sex categorization (ibid). Once we have categorized someone as a man, we expect to see masculine behavior. Doing gender is not optional; even very young children monitor each other’s gendered behavior. Gender is not something we have, rather it is something that comes about through our interactions with others. Gender is learned and embodied from the earliest stages of our lives. West and Zimmerman (ibid) explain the accomplishment of gender through their analysis of a case study of Agnes as described by Garfinkel (1967). Agnes’ sex categorization as a woman did not match her male sex. She went through a transformation process to make her sex category and her sex congruent. Agnes’ transformation started a process of learning what women do to be feminine. Agnes had to struggle to pass as a woman; she had to learn how to sit and walk, but also not to contradict men and not to speak too loudly. Learning to be a woman is to learn about power (West and Zimmerman 1987).

What is exactly done to accomplish gender is a subtle process; women can behave in unfeminine ways without provoking doubt that they are in fact women. This is true for men as well, as we will see in chapter 9. Cooking, cleaning or crocheting do not necessarily make a man effeminate. Doing gender does not only reflect on the activities we do, but also on the way we do them; it is reflected in the way a man stirs a pot, holds a brush or crochet hook. It is hard to learn how to do these activities in a male/female way because we do not consciously learn to do gender; doing gender is partly an embodied practice. Constructed gender differences then become objective facts. Doing gender has become part of what we experience as our natural selves, our essence (West and Zimmerman 1987).
However, West and Zimmerman (1987) do not only consider how we learn to do gender in interaction with others. They also discuss the role of institutions. This is recognition of an implicit practice approach. If we do gender properly, we also sustain and reproduce the institutions based on sex categorization. If we do not do gender properly, the individuals and not the institutions may be held accountable. The social order reinforces and legitimizes sex categorization as natural and normal (ibid). This research was in recurrent confrontation with my informants’ belief in the naturalness of the sex category “men.” My informants associate being a man with domination, giving orders and being the provider. These are considered as the natural attributes of a man. My viewpoint of gender as a cultural construct was not shared by them. As West and Zimmerman (1987) explain, cultural constructs are experienced as natural, objective facts. As we will see below, violent behavior can become part of what is seen as a natural way for men to do gender.

**Hegemonic masculinity and the structure of gendered practices**

To conceptualize the construction of male differences, Connell’s (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity has become the most frequently used tool. The term “hegemony” was coined by Gramsci (1891-1937). It is generally understood as dominance achieved through consensus and not force. Gramsci came from a Marxist tradition and introduced the term hegemony to explain why the predicted revolution of the proletariat was not effectuated in Europe (Gramsci 1971: 80). In other words, Gramsci believed that a dominated class is aware of its domination and resigns itself to it. The Gramscian concept of hegemony easily translates into gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity connects the subjugation of women to the subjugation of subordinate men by dominant others. Hegemonic masculinity indicates that there is a dominant form of masculinity to which both women and men are subordinated. This subordination takes place with the compliance of the subordinated. Violence

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13 The meaning of the concept of symbolic violence is closely related to Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Gramsci, like Bourdieu, was occupied with the analysis of the reproduction of structures of domination. Bourdieu acknowledges the similarity of the two. However, according to Bourdieu the legitimacy of the social order does not lie in determined action as Gramsci argues. Rather, agents perceive the structures of their social world as self-evident. Processes of domination and subjugation are unconsciously produced and reproduced (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 168 footnotes). For a more detailed description of the differences between Gramsci and Bourdieu, see Burawoy’s lecture ‘Durable domination: Gramsci meets Bourdieu’ http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Bourdieu/Lecture%202.pdf
might, but does not need to, take place in this process of domination (Connell 1987). The term hegemony implies a conscious submission of the subordinate to the dominant. From a practice approach, it is argued that submission is in fact not a conscious process, but happens because structures of domination have become naturalized and normalized. However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is valuable because it allows us to think of masculinities in the plural form and as hierarchically ordered. It also allows for thinking of gender in relation to power.

To connect the social structure with gender practices, Connell (1987) applies practice theory to gender relations. He defines structure as the patterns of constraint on social practices. Gender is a structure in itself. According to Connell, our gendered practices are structured by three linked structures: labor, power and cathexis. However, Cornell also acknowledges that there may be others (ibid). Labor relates to the division of housework, the division of labor (male or female) and inequality in payment. The structures of labor and power are closely connected (ibid). For example, the fact that many men in Playa del Carmen and Cancún are in a position to either allow their wives to work or not shows how structures of power and labor are entangled. The relational changes that occur when women have access to remunerated employment are also related to power. A woman’s employment affects her power in the household. It enables her to engage in activities that cost money and enlarges her social life and thus her relationship with her partner as well. Connell (1987: 97) argues that labor and power are two distinct structures because the institutionalization of power has a different historical trajectory than the accumulation of wealth through production, and therefore structures genders differently. The ability to impose ideology and assert hegemony is an important part of power (ibid: 107). Finally, cathexis is described as patterns of emotional attachment. Laws regulate relationship patterns by determining who can or cannot (sexually) relate to one another, prohibit homosexuality and define sexual consent and rape (ibid).

I will not follow Connell by dividing the gender structure in three separate spheres, although they are obviously very important. What I find most significant is the observation that the gender structure has distinct dimensions that may conflict with each other, or be internally contradictory (Connell 1987: 96). In this book, we will see how processes of change and continuity go hand in hand. There are amendments and reforms of the law to empower and protect women from domestic and sexual violence. On the other hand, the informants of my study take up a marginal position in the labor and power
structure, and no efforts are undertaken to change these structures. Physical strength is one of the few ways to gain some power for men whose work consists of low-paid physical labor and who are surrounded by everyday violence. While some gendered aspects of the gender structure may change, and some changes are taking place in the labor structure to open up opportunities for women, other aspects of the gender structure remain intact and play into the hegemony of machismo, which counters efforts to empower women.

Macho and machismo
Masculinity in Mexico has a very well-defined image — macho. Machismo denotes male virility and strength (Mirandé 1997). The word macho has a relatively recent history. Since the 1930s, macho has been a popular way to describe the identity of Mexican and Latin American men within popular discourse as well as among Mexican authors and social scientists (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba 2007; Mirandé 1997; Gutmann 1996). The concept was later adopted outside Latin America and applied to male athletes and other known figures that represented strength, power and hyper masculinity (Mirandé 1997). In Mexico, the identification with machismo is historically linked with the national politics of the post-revolutionary era (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba 2007). The creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario in the 1930s that ruled the country until 2000,¹⁴ was to stop the militarization of the revolutionary government (ibid: 98). The wish to modernize the country meant gaining distance from the revolutionary violent past for which the macho man was seen as an emblem (ibid). The term macho was used to define a performance of masculinity that was no longer desirable in the post-revolutionary era, but the invention of the term had a reverse effect. Instead of opening the way to new expressions of masculinity, Mexican masculinity became equated with the macho.

Hegemonic masculinity is often referred to as if the meaning is self evident, which it is not. On the other hand, when over-defining the concept, we run the risk of creating new unwanted typologies. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that hegemonic masculinity does not stand out as a sharply defined entity, but rather it has overlaps with complicit masculinities. There are multiple forms of hegemonic masculinity with differences determined by class, region, subgroup, time and space (ibid). While I want to highlight that masculinity is constructed in social interaction and therefore variable, my

¹⁴ In chapter 7, the foundation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (English translation) will be elaborated upon.
informants adhered to a performance of masculinity that had significant
commonalities with the stereotypical machismo. Dominant and violent
masculine behavior is partly a reaction to the surrounding everyday violence.
This macho behavior is embodied in the men’s actions, it feels completely
natural, they are just behaving the way a man is supposed to behave.

Essentialist ideas of machismo as natural male behavior are strengthened by
historical explanations of the origins. The roots of machismo are presumed to
be centuries old (Mirandé 1997). The explanations of the idea of Mexican
hyper-masculinity can be divided in three traditions that are not mutually
exclusive (ibid). The first explanation was that the Spanish conquest of Mexico
deeply traumatized Mexicans even to the present day. The Spanish
Conquistador Cortez was given an Indian woman, la Malinche, as a slave. She is
popularly known as la Chingada, from the verb chingar — to “fuck”. This
woman, who was “fucked,” is the mythological mother of the Mexican
mestizos. The male counterpart of this mythical victimized mother is el gran
chignon, the great macho who is powerful and aggressive. Machismo is
presented as a response to the trauma of the conquest, a way of covering up
the weakness experienced in the plunder and rape of the conquest (ibid: 35-
36). The second explanation for the hyper-masculinity of Mexican men was
traced back to the Conquistadores. The conquistadores were valiant but cruel
warriors, real chingones, and as such they were the forefathers of the current
machos (ibid: 48). A third explanation traces Mexican hyper-masculinity back
to the pre-Colombian roots of the Mexicans. The warring and conquering
character of the conquistadores was paralleled by the Aztecs. The Aztec
society was patriarchal; men were foremost warriors, while a woman’s place
was within the household (ibid: 50). These historical explanations of
machismo, although diverse, affirm the long tradition of hyper-masculinity,
and contribute to the idea that machismo is in fact the natural essence of
Mexican males.

Gutmann (1996) points out that the meaning of macho is multiple and
changeable. Gutmann’s work has been very important, at least for social
scientists, in countering ideas of Mexican masculinity in fixed categories, such
as the macho and the maricon (homosexual). The men who participated in my
study demonstrated a variety of visible masculine practices, but when talking
about masculinity, they did not reflect long on the meaning of masculinity. If
specific words were used at all, macho and chignon were two of the few
available words. It is evident that the meanings of these words are flexible as
Gutmann (1996) argued. Some men used the word macho to identify their own
dominant and violent behavior, others used it to describe other men while stressing that they were not like that (anymore). In other interviews, the word *macho* was never mentioned at all. However, it was clear that qualities such as being dominant over others (*ser mandon*) and providing for the household, whether defined with the word *macho* or not, were essential parts of the men’s identity. While hegemonic masculinity is multiple and context dependent, to my informants a hegemonic performance of masculinity stereotypically means being dominant over women and other men and providing for the household according to my informants. I refer to this performance of hegemonic masculinity as *machismo*. In this book, the role of *machismo* within the context of violence will be discussed. *Machismo* is not simply the cause of, but also caused by the violent context in which these informants lived.

### 2.5 The construction of addiction

Most of my informants had lived through (periods of) drunkenness and/or drug use. Some had committed violent crimes while under the influence of drugs, while others had been sober during their violent acts. However, in popular discourse, violence is presumed to have a linear connection with drug use. Being (visibly) under the influence of alcohol or drugs is generally problematized as “drug abuse” or, when it occurs frequently, as an “addiction”.

In the landmark article, “The Discovery of Addiction” (1978), Levine shows that the use of alcohol has been problematized since the 18th century. In colonial America, drunkenness, even habitual drunkenness, was generally not a cause for concern. The tavern was the center of the village, and drinking and getting drunk was part of social life (ibid). During the 18th and early 19th century, the perspective on drunkenness gradually changed as it came to be seen as problematic. Benjamin Rush (1746-1813) developed the idea of habitual drunkenness as an “addiction”—a disease that affects the will. Rush became the founding father of the so-called “Temperance Movement” that propagated abstinence for all alcoholic beverages. Rush’s ideas can be summarized in four main points that still have relevance today: 1) liquor is the cause, not the drunkard, 2) the desire to drink is beyond the control of the will; the use of liquor is compulsive, 3) the drunk suffers from a disease, and 4) the only way to cure this disease is through abstinence (ibid: 8). These ideas were central in the Temperance movement that gained popularity in the 19th century (ibid). Asylums were created to provide treatment for drunkards and temperance literature relating to the drunkard’s struggle to achieve sobriety became
popular (ibid). However, by the late 19th century, the Temperance movement was losing popularity and drunks were gradually seen as deviant social pests instead of victims of liquor.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the Yale Centre of Alcohol Studies revived the disease concept in a slightly different way than the Temperance movement. Alcohol was no longer considered to be at the core of the disease as some people manage to drink occasionally without becoming addicted. In the new addiction concept, the disease is part of the person who cannot control the urge to drink; it is not inherently the alcohol (ibid). Levine (1984: 118) argues that since the 1960s, in addition to the concept of “addiction”, more general temperance ideas became in vogue. Drinking has been problematized since alcohol use is considered to cause poverty and crime and other social problems.

In 1978, Levine predicted the beginning of a “post-addiction” model that would critique the medical model and would also take the social environment into account. The medical “disease model of addiction” has indeed been criticized and Robin Room is an important critic. Room (1983, 2003) argues that the disease model of addiction is in fact a cultural construct. There is no well-defined entity of “alcoholism” that some people have and others do not, and which makes them drink differently than “normal” drinkers (Room 1983). Room argues that there are too many forms of alcoholic behavior to fit one single disease type, he counters the addiction descriptions by Jellinek and AA that depart from one fixed pattern in which the loss of control is central: under the influence of alcohol, an individual engages in (harmful) behaviors that would otherwise be unthinkable, and the individual does not have any control over their intake of alcohol or any other drug that provokes this behavior. Addiction thus explains otherwise inexplicable behavior (ibid). Room (2003) argues that the concept of addiction is very much tied to ways of thinking associated with European cultures, for example it shows our preference for the biological realm. Addiction could be seen as a culture-bound syndrome, although the increasing worldwide spreading of the concept addiction shows that the cultural bounds are breaking.

The medical profession has been important since the beginning of the Temperance movement in spreading the discourse of the use of alcohol as a disease. The founder of the Temperance movement (Rush) and the founder of the AA (Bob Smith) were both doctors. Lately, the neurosciences have provided explanatory models for drug use. In his much-quoted article,
“Addiction is a brain disease, and it matters”, Leshner (1997) explains that drugs alter brain functioning and thus create a diseased individual. However, the neurosciences also show the importance of the social for the individual. Research shows that drugs and social processes use the same systems in the brain (Panksepp 2003). For example, both opiate use and social attachments create feelings of well-being; withdrawal follows the absence of the drug or the social attachment (ibid). Social processes regulate the urge to consume opiates, which may explain why an overlap has been found between opioid addiction and social insecurity and distress, as well as a high prevalence of opiate addiction among the socially disenfranchised (Panksepp 2002). The neurosciences are increasingly able to show the importance of our social connections within individual brains. For example, we now know that physical pain does not necessarily have a physical cause, but can also be caused by social exclusion (Eisenberger and Lieberman 2004; S MacDonald and Leary 2005). This knowledge makes it understandable that opiates soothe both social and physical pain (Eisenberger and Lieberman 2004). Paradoxically the AA propagates the medical disease model while offering a social therapy — joining the group, and becoming part of new social network of abstaining equals. For many alcoholics this social therapy works.

Looking for an individual explanation is understandable in our individualist society, but it is also problematic since addiction does not randomly strike people; the social environment influences both the desire to use drugs and drug effects. Even the use of the label addiction is co-determined by the social environment where the drug use takes place, as Kushner (2010) argues. Wealthy young people who snort cocaine may be considered as giving in to hedonist tendencies, while poor crack smokers will sooner be labeled as addicts (ibid). Doing gender also plays a role in the consumption of drugs and the prevalence of addiction. In Mexico, women are not expected to consume alcohol in large quantities, and female drunkenness is particularly frowned upon (Romero Mendoza 2005). For men however, drinking is an accepted and even desired social activity (Brandes 2002). Therefore, it is more likely that Mexican men rather than women use alcohol and drugs. The image of Mexican men as macho gives legitimacy to male drunken and violent comportment.
2.6 Conclusion
In this chapter, I have laid out the theoretical underpinnings that structure this work. In my discussion of the topics of violence, gender, drug use, I departed from a practice theory approach that points at the embodiment of social structures through practice. We tend to reproduce societal structures, even if these reduce our abilities, and we thus reproduce our own marginal economic or gendered position. How we do gender is not only determined through the interactions between individuals who stimulate certain behaviors and punish others. Doing gender takes shape within the constraints of the societal structures and institutions that give space to certain behavior. As individuals we have agency and can deviate in how we do gender, but this means that we might be held accountable for not doing the right thing. Many do not feel the need to deviate, for the embodiment of practices means that we do what feels right and natural, even if our doing enables our oppression or means we oppress others.

While most of the informants in this book rarely reflected on the meanings of masculinity, they generally attested to the importance of being dominant over women and other men. Coming from backgrounds where violence frequently occurred, has normalized their experience and enactment of violence. How men do masculinity may feel like the natural way of doing things, and research into the presumed historical roots of machismo may have contributed to this feeling. However, I will show that the way men do masculinity is not a natural given, but rather an interaction between the individual and their social context. The violent context the informants live in plays into a macho performance of masculinity. This context also plays into the use of alcohol and drugs that are used to cope with harsh working conditions and escape daily reality. The one-sided view on drug use as a disease tends to obscure the social functions of drug use.
Chapter 3: Issues of Methodology

I have visited the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings a number of times now and I fear that there might be a moment in which they will ask me to take my place at the podium and to give my testimony. I can sense their curiosity about me, I may say I am a researcher, but am I not just another addict in disguise? Someone who has not yet worked up the courage to admit to her addiction, but is looking for a group to be supported? When that moment comes what will I say? Doesn’t their curiosity deserve to be satisfied, if it ever will? I am there when they open up their life stories, why shouldn’t they learn more about mine, if that is what they want? Moreover won’t it make it easier to relate to people if they know more about me?

On busy days I know I will not be asked: for most of the members giving their testimony feels like taking a medicine, they cleanse themselves of their troubles for that day, but today there is hardly anyone and they thus might be tempted to ask me for my testimony. The coordinator of the day reads from the big AA book, when he finishes he asks who wants to starts, when no one answers he looks at me and asks me if I want to start and I reluctantly accept. I have various versions of why I am doing the research that I do, all these versions are true, and some are just more personal than others. As I nervously climb the podium, I try to decide on today’s version.

3.1 Introduction
Doing research among male perpetrators of violence poses two salient problems. The first is who qualifies as a perpetrator of violence. The common way of looking at violence tends to limit it to a physical act. I aim to go beyond the physical/non-physical, and the direct/structural dichotomies in my study of violence, still my informants were those men who identified themselves as physically violent (or were identified as such by others). The second problem is safety. The risk of physical harm made me work through organizations that could put me in contact with perpetrators of violence. While this helped me to have safe access to the men, it sometimes also hindered my work.

In this chapter, I give an overview of the various organizations and fieldwork sites I engaged with and the methods I employed to gather data throughout the multiple field episodes. At the end of the chapter is an appendix with an
overview of each research location and the methods applied to gather data. Eagerness to start my project, even though I had insufficient funding, resulted in the fieldwork being spread out over five phases totaling about 14 months over five years. My first two fieldwork phases were conducted during sabbatical leaves from my work as a psychiatric nurse in a rehabilitation clinic in Amsterdam. The others were undertaken as a fulltime PhD student. Spreading the research over an extensive period of time in multiple fieldwork phases had consequences for the way the data were gathered. On each trip, various methods were applied. There was ample opportunity in between field episodes for reflection on the data I had collected and the research methods; thus, I generated new specific research questions and new ways to gather data over time. In addition, my position changed with every new field trip since I had more knowledge, and knew better how to “play the field.” However, this change also reflected my moving from being a part-time nurse and part-time anthropologist to a full-time anthropologist. After giving a brief summary of the fieldwork phases and sites, I will focus on three particular locations: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) (introduced already in chapter 1), a health center, and the local prison. By writing about these three locations, I will reflect on (the changes in) my position. While doing so, I will relate issues of power and powerlessness in the field and how these issues affected the production of knowledge. Also several ethical dilemmas in data gathered in various locations and the representation thereof in this book, will come to the fore in this chapter.

3.2 Research phases and locations
The first fieldwork phase for this book was conducted with a research grant. From January to March 2005, I was able to take a sabbatical leave from the rehabilitation clinic where I was employed as a psychiatric nurse. In this first phase, I focused on the presumed connection between employment and changing gender relations and I went to the employment agency of one of the large unions, Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos (CROC - Revolutionary Confederation of laborers and Farmers), in Playa del Carmen. I held informal interviews with (mostly) men regarding the prevalence of domestic violence and their perceptions of women’s employment and roles in the household. In the local general hospital in Playa del Carmen, I performed a survey among 54 women with questions about their experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. I started as a volunteer in a health center; I will reflect on this further in a following section. During the first two months, I undertook various trips to the Centre for the Victims of Family Violence (CAVI) in Cancún that is part of the DIF (Integrated Family Development) and I
negotiated access to the therapy group for male perpetrators of violence. In the last month of my stay, I was allowed to enter both the men’s and the women’s group. My contacts with the DIF in Playa del Carmen, the second DIF I worked with, ran smoothly. A social worker took me along on his field trips to families for whom the DIF’s intervention was required because of drug-abusing teenagers. In these families, domestic violence was also an issue.

In December 2005, I returned to the field, again on a leave of absence from my work in the Netherlands. This time I had a grant for six months of fieldwork. In this phase, I started to focus more on the locations where I could specifically find the perpetrators of violence and their victims, instead of talking to the population in general (as I had done in first fieldwork phase). The prison and AA were locations where I thought I could find perpetrators of (domestic) violence. My contact with the health center and CAVI continued. I started giving workshops in the Casa de la Alegría, which is a home for young female runaways, many of whom have been victims of domestic violence at the hand of their spouse, their parents, or both. My research method in this period was mostly participant observation. I was still a psychiatric nurse, and this also gave me access to informants. My presence was useful since I was able to give workshops on alcohol and drugs or psychiatric disorders, and I could counsel inmates, et cetera. Throughout the next sections, I will reflect on the effects on my accumulated knowledge from participating in the field in this way.

February 2007, I returned to the field for a month and this was my first fieldwork phase as a PhD student. I initially went only to consolidate my contacts in the prison, AA, and the various families I had come to know via the DIF by living in the area. In November of the same year, I returned and had had significant time to reflect on my data to learn where the gaps were. I decided that I would only do interviews in this period to complete my existing information. The prison and various locations of AA and a rehabilitation center of another denomination were the locations where I met my research informants. The participatory part of this episode was limited to hanging out with the people I already knew from former research phases. February 2009, I was back in Mexico, not for fieldwork, but rather to visit and to write. However, the idea for a film project came my way and this started a new field phase that was executed in June and December 2009. I followed a migrant back to his homeland in Chiapas (some details of this story follow in the section on prison below), and I interviewed officials from the prosecutor’s office, the DIF, and the office of the governor. The film project gave new
insight into the migrants’ lives, and also the role of researcher. Suddenly, with a camera, I had a whole new position in the intricate power play of the field.

3.3 Positioning in various fields of power

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, finding violent men without becoming object of their violence, was one the challenges in the field. Working through organizations that had some relationship with violent men seemed to be the solution to ensure my safety. I had assumed that it was going to be difficult to talk to men about their violent acts, and I expected that I would find “kindred spirits” within the organizations that were actively working with perpetrators of domestic violence. I did not have a local contact who was familiar with violence to prepare me for the hierarchy that I was going to have to manage while working with those organizations, and to warn me about my naive assumptions. To some extent, my previous work as a psychiatric nurse had accustomed me to working with violent people. However, I was not at all used to working with organizations that were as hierarchically structured as the one I had contacted. Trying to work with these organizations brought me into situations that were not of my own making and sometimes even ethically dubious. I had to learn the intricacies of the field by doing. Working through organizations gave me safe access, but it also meant I had to learn to understand the power play of each organization. I had to come to an understanding of why they had given me access and which role I was to play in order to work with them.

My first encounters with the field were quite overwhelming. I was afraid of not getting enough data or the right data. I moved along with whatever came up, without feeling I had much control. Bourdieu (1996: 609) argues that in interview situations, it is the investigator who starts the game and sets the rules; this asymmetric power relationship is deepened when the researcher possesses more cultural capital and ranks higher in the social hierarchy. Even though I agree that the researcher starts the game, I generally felt that I did not invent the rules, not even in interview settings. Especially in the beginning, I could not even play the game because I did not even understand what the rules were in the first place. I agree with Nencel (2005) who argues that power relations are constantly negotiated and researchers may in fact not have much control within their research setting. Bourdieu’s idea of the social scientists as someone in power creating the rules of the game, contradicts with his own concept of habitus. The embodiment of practices, our habitus, is connected to the field we are accustomed to move in. The rules of the game are not explicit, but rather are embodied by daily practices, which are largely unconscious.
(Bourdieu 1990). As anthropologists, we usually work in fields far away from where our own habitus was created. In the beginning, it may be difficult to understand what is happening, and many things are not explained in words because they are embodied in the practices of our informants. This meant that I often felt that by the time my experience had taught me to understand some of the rules, many games were already lost. In the following sections, I will show how I positioned myself within the various fields that were most important to this research: the health center, AA, and prison.

3.4 The health center
The first organization that welcomed me was a health center. My first acquaintance with the health center occurred coincidentally. I had an interview appointment with a former politician, who had a weekly radio show and was known for her actions against domestic violence. She happened to also be the president of the health center, and worked as a psychologist there. After the interview, she brought me to the health center. It wasn’t my anthropology degree, but rather my qualifications as a psychiatric nurse with years of experience working with addicted patients that gave me access to the health center. Several of the workers in the center had no formal training in the profession they were working in. My training and experience as a psychiatric nurse could be beneficial, but I was not expected to simply come in for interviews, instead, I was to give something if I was going to get something. A worker from the health center took me to meet the families in the neighborhood that had lived through domestic violence. I had expected to make an appointment for a talk, but I was introduced as the psychologist who was to give them counseling. I ended up in the middle of a two conflictive family situations where I was expected to help out.

My role made me feel extremely uncomfortable. Although I wanted to hear people’s stories, I didn’t want to pose as a psychologist. My worries did not primarily concern the influence my role would have on my data, because as researchers we always play a part in the production of knowledge. What made me more uncomfortable was that I didn’t feel I could give advice while I was still trying to understand the local situation. Moreover, I was afraid that the people involved didn’t really understand that I was going to use their stories to write a book. Even though I did tell them that I was writing a book, I wondered whether people truly understood the implications since they were in the midst of family problems and most likely had no conception of academic research. How informed is informed consent when the research participants have no idea of what anthropology or even a university really is? I finally negotiated a
small role conducting a number of group talks about the position of women, and worked as a volunteer in the health center’s surgical projects. This way, my position became more comfortable.

3.5 Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
Since there was such a persistent idea that alcohol and substance use were related to violence, AA in Cancún became one of my most important research locations. Normally the AA group in Cancún welcomed visitors for a one-time visit in which the regular members direct their testimony to the visitor. However, in principle the group has meetings for those who consider themselves as addicted.15 Although I fell outside this category, the group gave me permission to do research among them and return to their group time and time again while not becoming a member.

Within AA, as in the health center, the relativity of informed consent came to the fore. Despite giving me permission to be present as a researcher, many people within AA seemed to think I was addicted since I spent so much time within the group. “La drogadicta” (drug addict), Miguel playfully called out to me after coming back from a year’s absence from the field. His joke made me feel uncertain about whether what it was that I was doing was understood even though I had stood on the AA podium twice and explained both my work and my personal life. I had told the group of the role that alcohol had played in my family’s malfunction, and how later alcoholism seemed to form a red thread in my professional life. Alcoholism, in one form or another, always popped back up in my professional life seemingly without my choosing for it to do so. Still, the AA members may have assumed that I was an addict in denial. The presence of people who are not yet ready to work on their addiction in AA is much more common than a researcher. The proselytizing character of AA makes it difficult for members to refuse people in their midst, so my research permission may in fact have been granted due to the inability to refuse my presence. The AA members did seem to appreciate that I had shown some of myself, and this diminished some of the distance between us; however, it didn’t really bridge the gap and generally I took the role of a silent observer. If I wasn’t called upon, I did not actively interfere in the all-male group process, and I wasn’t usually invited to do so. A few people extended a warm welcome to me each time I came, but for many my presence was met with indifference.

15 Personal communication Sean O’Halloran
In most other locations, my access was granted with more difficulty. Some people felt that working together could enforce our mutual interests and might be an enriching experience, however, for others it was experienced as a liability. Only in AA did I feel that I would not be denied access at any moment. Later, I understood what made AA so different than the other organizations I worked with. There are no official leading positions and everyone is formally equal so no one has a personal stake in my being there. In addition, I could not cause personal harm. Over the course of the various fieldwork phases, I conducted participant observation at 24 AA meetings, and held taped interviews with three members of this group.

Aside from me, the AA group usually consisted of only men. Being in the group allowed me to watch men in their varying masculine performances. As I will discuss in chapter 5, men’s interactions and testimonies on the podium did not only describe their state of being in regard to their addiction, but also served to position themselves towards each other. My own marginal position as observer allowed me to witness open displays of anger, violence and vulnerability.

3.6 Prison
Research in prison started during my second fieldwork phase. Here, I was also welcomed for my nursing degree. The then active director seemed happy to offer the prisoners someone who could listen to them. What I didn’t know when I started my work in prison was that the prison director needed to carefully negotiate his own position in the prison environment. Prison is a location where power is constantly contested between the prisoners, the prison administration and the police officers that guard the prison. This intricate power play in prison and its consequences for male violent behavior will be thoroughly discussed in chapter 8. In terms of access, it meant I was considered as someone who could help, rather than hinder, the director’s position. I was referred to as the psychologist. Apart from conducting two taped group and three taped individual interviews under the supervision of the prison director, it was decided (among the director, the prisoners and me), that I would take the role as counselor for four inmates. I would enter prison as regular visitor; this had the benefit that I did not need to address the hierarchical prison administration.

In the prison setting, my role as a counselor did not feel awkward; the men I talked with were adequately educated to understand that I would also use the data for my research. For all of these men, counseling meant they gave
unsolicited ample descriptions of their families. Their urge to go back in the past was probably brought about by familiarity with therapy models. Three of them had been to AA therapy sessions. My position as a counselor meant that I engaged in longer lasting relationships with these men. I did not take the neutral position of the interviewer. I listened to their stories, but also tried to give them advice and at times also judged their behavior. With these men, I was engaged in an emphatic relationship. Positioning myself as a counselor gave these men (who had all lived rough lives), the space to show their pain. Their softer, more vulnerable sides were allowed to surface. Sometimes this occurred to the point that it seemed like their rough aspects that had placed them in prison in the first place were not allowed to come to the fore. Over time, the therapeutic aspect of these relationships with them faded and our interaction evolved into “hanging out together”, talking and watching prison life, while allowing for mutual conversations.

When I came back to the field after a period in the Netherlands, I encountered a new director. In the meantime, my own position had also changed since I was no longer a nurse doing a PhD research on the side. I was now a salaried PhD student. These changes and my own growing familiarity with the field meant I experienced my position as being in significantly more control than in earlier fieldwork phases. I now positioned myself foremost as a researcher who came to do interviews and no longer engaged in complex counseling relationships. The new director gave me full cooperation and thus my “selling myself” as a person with some power also created a degree of control. Being clear about what I wanted gave me the access I wanted. In this three-month period, I had set a goal to have at least 15 taped interviews with violent men, which I succeeded in doing. Additionally, in this phase, I interviewed 13 men in prison where I could not use a tape recorder. These men seemed to be happy to share their stories and have someone just listen even without receiving counseling.

February 2009, when I had finished my fieldwork, I approached the prison director with a plan to make a documentary with a Mexican lawyer and filmmaker, Layda Negrete, about innocently incarcerated people. To my great surprise, the project proposal was received with enthusiasm. The director helped me to select a protagonist, Izmael, a former interviewee whom we both believed was innocent and had been incarcerated without a trial for almost three years. Izmael was a poor Mayan man, and when we first met he had been incarcerated for two years for “dishonest abuse” without a trial. His alleged offense could result in 25 years imprisonment.
I started filming in prison with my simple handicam and agreed with the director if Izmael was ever released, I would come back to film the occasion. The director predicted that Izmael’s release was imminent. I was afraid that I would miss his release, thus I called him every week so I would not be left out of the loop. In May 2009, I received an email from the director that Izmael had been released and was waiting for me in Playa del Carmen. The director had photographed the release, and I rushed to Playa del Carmen with my colleague to start filming. The process of making the film required reconstructing Izmael’s case, his imprisonment and release, and traveling back with him to his homeland in Chiapas. As we talked to Izmael and finally got access to his case file, doubts arose about the truthfulness of his interviews with me. At the same time, we learned that each time I had called the director he had called the judge, and in the end the judge had apparently felt pressured to give Izmael absolution. For fear of being called corrupt, Mexican judges rarely give this verdict. However, the presumed power of the camera seemed to have led to this outcome.

Izmael had recognized me as someone powerful, who might move his case forward and as someone who might help him get to a lawyer. In the end, I had become his lawyer (although unintentionally) and had to come to terms with someone being released as an unintended consequence of my actions. For me, the power of the camera was so new that I couldn’t manipulate it; the power just came to me. Being a researcher with a camera again gave me a new position in the field with new rules that were not yet part of my habitus.

3.7 Learning to function in the organizational hierarchy
Working together with Mexican organizations acquainted me with their hierarchical structures. Great importance is given to the status of one’s job position. The titles that mark job status are referred to when meeting officials. This open display of power and status hides the fact that job positions are in fact quite unstable in Mexico. This instability can lead to fierce competition to not lose one’s job, or to be eligible for promotion. Job positions in governmental organizations, like the CAVI, or within the Playa del Carmen Prison, are particularly vulnerable to change since they are linked to the political administration. Jobs in the higher echelons of governmental organizations are allocated by the political administration and may change after each election. I will discuss this political system and the consequences in more detail in chapter 6. Job volatility keeps people on their toes at all times; they are never sure of their position. Whether or not a researcher is allowed to
work with them depends on whether the official believes this action might strengthen their position or whether they see cooperation as a potential liability. This tacit information was only disclosed by my working together with officials, and it was often hard to see what exactly my position was. How could I be of benefit to an official or how could I be a hindrance to someone’s position? Not having this information made negotiating my position difficult; I was constantly worrying whether my access to a certain field placement would continue.

The difficulties I encountered are part of living in Mexico and dealing with local organizations. Interestingly, but perhaps not so surprisingly, I found that working with CAVI, an organization battling domestic violence generated similar knowledge about hierarchical power plays as working with the prison administration did. After lengthy negotiations with the various members of the CAVI team, I was allowed to conduct participant observations in group therapy sessions. I was present at 17 sessions of the men’s group, and seven women’s group sessions, and held two taped interviews with men from the group. Some of the therapists embraced the opportunity of working with me as a potentially mutually enriching experience. Others seemed averse to an outsider looking into their operation, despite or perhaps because of my experience in similar therapeutic settings in the Netherlands. It was too early in my research to grasp the finesse of the internal power struggles and therefore, I couldn’t adequately play the game. When elections came and positions were reshuffled, my participation in the CAVI groups was discontinued.

My vulnerable position within these (governmental) organizations brought me knowledge about the hierarchical relationships that Mexicans are exposed to. One of my informants explained Mexican society as follows:

_Our society is like a stairway; there are people at the first step. Some are positioned where there isn’t even a step they won’t go up that is for sure. What happens is that I am at the third step, and someone comes who wants to climb up. I am not going to let him climb, I am going to kick until he falls; I don’t want the competition. It is a battle between classes, it is a type of violence too this class battle._ (25-01-2008)

This stairway metaphor is quite apt; it shows that every position from high to low is part of the hierarchy. Someone in a high position, like a prison director, might be kicked down just like those who were already on the bottom step; however, for him the fall would be much harder. Becoming accustomed to the
rules of the field made it easier to negotiate my own role. During my fourth fieldwork phase I went back to prison and AA and initiated contact with two residential alcohol and drug programs to request the participation of male interviewees. By then, I had become an official PhD candidate and I was no longer working as a nurse. In the field, this made it easier to position myself since I no longer spoke of my background as a psychiatric nurse, but rather just explained my research to the directors. To my surprise this approach didn’t seem to matter and I began to wonder if it had ever mattered at all. I had to learn how to use my cultural capital and stress my own status. More important than being a nurse or anthropologist was learning how to position myself within the hierarchy of the various organizations.

3.8 Research among the lower social classes
Searching for respondents through organizations meant that I mainly found people from lower social classes. On the one hand, this was because the free social services given by organizations like health centers and the DIF are meant to help people with few means. People with some money are more likely to request help from private health care workers. On the other hand, money and power influence the interventions of governmental institutions. Cacho (2005) argues in her book, Demonios del Eden (Demons of Eden), that the DIF and the police do not respond to (sexual) violence when the perpetrators are wealthy because they have the money and connections to make complaints disappear. This argument seems supported by the fact that the inmates in the local prison are generally from the lower classes; as the director said, “You only find poor Indians here!”

I had not planned to work with people who were poor. However, once I started to do so, I realized that it was not methodologically neutral. Living in poverty is living a more exposed life than living in wealth and hiding in gated communities. The houses of the lower social classes are not fenced off from the streets; life happens in open courtyards or on the streets. The poorest people live in makeshift housing that provides little protection from the dangers of burglaries, bad weather conditions and public scrutiny. Therefore, as a researcher, it was much easier to gain access to poorer people than to wealthier people. Furthermore, my power position was relatively strong in relation to poorer people. For people from the lower social levels, a woman from a Western country with good education who shows interest in their stories was quite special, whereas wealthier people might not have been so impressed. The distance between our lives also meant that it was quite a
challenge to make poor people understand what I was doing and to ensure that their informed consent was truly informed.

Working with people from the lower social classes made me aware of the significant inequality in Mexican society. This is something that might otherwise have remained an abstraction. Through the poor people, I became aware that domestic violence could not be seen as separate from the conditions of structural violence that they lived in. However, many people in the field did not experience social asymmetry and their own poverty as violent. Only few respondents qualified their position as oppressed. For example, in prison many men talked about the inequalities of the justice system and this became blatantly obvious. It was obvious to most people that if they’d had money, they would not have been in prison, but rather could have bought themselves out. However, only a few men openly linked these legal injustices to the inequality of social structures in general. Most situations of structural violence were taken for granted.

The concepts of structural and symbolic violence are essential to this work, but bring representational challenges. These terminologies are scientific interpretations and are not shared with the research participants by definition. Goldstein (2003) discusses the pitfalls that the crisis of representation within anthropology has left us with. When referring to the poor as being accomplices within their own domination, we may fear that we are blaming the victim. Thus, many anthropologists refrain from writing about distant “others” like the poor. In Goldstein’s eyes, giving “voice” to the poor is too important to give up despite methodological challenges (2003:42-45). Harding (1987) and Haraway (1988) have debated the epistemological consequences of doing research among the oppressed. Harding argues for a standpoint epistemology. The argument is in accordance with Marxist ideas that oppressed groups obtain a better knowledge of social reality than the non-oppressed by struggling against domination (1987: 185). Doing research among oppressed groups, like women or the poor, gives insight into the dynamics of oppression that remain uncovered when researching dominant groups. Harding adds that a standpoint differs from a perspective. To obtain a certain standpoint one must engage in political and intellectual struggle. It is this experience that gives the poor a consciousness of oppression that the wealthy lack (Harding 1987: 185).

Haraway (1988) criticizes Harding’s standpoint epistemology: “The standpoints of the subjugated are not “innocent” positions...They are savvy to modes of denial through repression, forgetting and disappearing acts — ways of being nowhere while claiming to see comprehensively” (ibid: 191). I agree with
Haraway’s argument that people from the lower social classes may not challenge the structures of inequality since these have become embodied and normalized. As a researcher and outsider it may be easier to see processes of oppression exactly because they do not form part of the researcher’s “habitus”. Bringing structures of inequality to light is important even though they may not be experienced exactly as such by the informants.

3.9 Challenges for a woman researching violent men
There were certain difficulties related to my being a woman conducting research on masculinities. Safety was one difficulty and the separation of male and female life spheres was another. Young middle-class Mexicans may have friends of either sex. However, for most of my poor respondents, contact with women is either professional or is assumed to involve sexual undertones. Working through NGOs and governmental organizations enabled me to establish contacts with many men. However, the men who agreed to participate in my study were generally those who were not currently in a sexual relationship. My interviews with some male respondents occasionally led to the their female partners becoming suspicious. For example, the girlfriend of one of the informants in prison sent me multiple e-mails questioning the nature of my relationship with her partner.

The separation of male and female worlds meant that I was cut off from a large part of men’s social world. Men often hang out together without the women being present. Bars and cantinas are popular places for male socialization. The cantina is a strictly male environment where men watch stripteases in the company of other men. Men would not invite me to their homes. The extent to which I was barred from male reality at times became clear when I was sitting in the backseat of a taxi. I was filming Izmael who was explaining to the taxi driver that he had just been declared not guilty of sexually molesting his step-daughter. The taxi driver responded: “Yeah, all these women in Playa, they don’t even wear panties.” A courthouse guard had given a similar response after Izmael told his story; the guard laughed and said: “Now you are probably cured!” Both men assumed right away that Izmael was guilty. Moreover, they seemed to find rape a normal, understandable act since if women in Playa are not wearing panties, they must be “asking for it.” After three years in prison, Izmael must have learned that he had better not do this again. Although the normalcy of using violence was often conveyed to me, the fact that men would harbor the idea that women were asking for it was never mentioned to me directly. These were revealing moments. Throughout this book I will relate the
attention that the subject of violence against women is receiving in the state of Quintana Roo, and the effects this has on gender relations. One of the effects became apparent in these two experiences with Izmael and another male. The fact that men expressed themselves so differently when they were among only men than they did with me showed that they must have been aware of the political incorrectness of their remarks. However, it did not seem to be awareness they had internalized, and when they were with only men, they could let go of their political correctness and complain about women who asked for it.

Even though I only had access to certain parts of the male life world, I didn’t feel that being a woman was a disadvantage in this research. As will be discussed in later chapters, how to be a man is negotiated in hierarchical relationships with other men. Men didn’t have to compete with a woman, thus making contact with me more open. While some things were not disclosed, the men often openly shared their life stories. They could tell me things that would probably not have been possible had I been a man because of the risk of being considered unmanly. My contact with some of the men in this research was ambiguous. I was hoping to find honest accounts about the violence the men had committed against women, while at the same time I couldn’t really cope when the impact of their violent acts became palpable. In the two cases when I met women through their violent partner, my contact ultimately was more with the women than their partners. I had a hard time prolonging my contact with these two men. After actually witnessing the women’s suffering at the hands of their male partners, it proved impossible for me to still have an open and friendly attitude towards the men. To a lesser extent, this happened in interview situations. However, there were occasions when men were very explicit about the violence they had used against women. My sympathy would go out to their victims and I sometimes had to battle not to show my loathing. Initial rapport was sometimes lost when revelations were too crude.

3.10 Various ways of generating knowledge

As I explained earlier, this research took place over multiple field phases during which I employed various research methods. Initially I took the time to get to know the field and the people in it. In prison particularly, I spent quite some time hanging out, just watching life as it occurred. In the fourth fieldwork phase, I only conducted interviews, and in the last phase I made a documentary. I conducted interviews and followed one of the inmates from prison back to his home in Chiapas. Each of these various research methods brought specific knowledge. To some extent, we will always have a reduced
vision of the other (Schinkel 2005). In an interview situation, one’s aspects that are being shown are evoked by words, intonation and non-verbal expressions of the interviewee. The story of the interviewee is to create a certain image in the mind of the interviewer. The production of knowledge is always a joint process in which both interviewee and interviewer play a part in the knowledge that is produced. I experienced that how we (as researchers) phrase our questions, look, introduce ourselves as researchers, and relate to our research topics have significant influence on the answers that we are given. Participant observation, during which the informant is in the presence of the researcher in his or her daily context, is such a beloved instrument of anthropologists because it allows the researcher to discover how various contexts bring about distinct aspects of our informants. In an interview situation, an informant has more control over the image he or she creates of him- or herself than in situations of participant observation. Participant observation allowed me to see more of the aspects of the respondent. It then became much harder for an informant to show just one side of him- or herself. Observing former interviewees during participant observation was sometimes revealing. Aspects of the person surfaced that had been hidden in an interview, and the image that was co-created fell apart. Occasionally, I was suddenly confronted with feelings of anger or even loathing for someone I had previously felt sympathy for.

At the start of this research, my initial lack of interview subjects frustrated me. I sometimes felt that my participation in the health center and my counseling activities took too much time, and I lacked the focused knowledge that interviews might give me. In retrospect, I am happy with the time spent counseling, volunteering, hanging around and making a documentary, since all these ways of working showed various aspects of my research informants and the field sites.

3.11 Conclusion
Researching violence was challenging in many ways. There are certain consequences involved in working through governmental and non-governmental organizations; this work is about people from the poorer segments of society who make use of the interventions from these organizations. The issues that I will raise in this book regarding structural violence and symbolic violence come from a feeling of empathy with my informants’ positions, but at the same time distance me from those positions. A representational issue of another level is the possibility that the people who make use of these organizations are not representational of the group as a
whole. Moreover, the way in which people relate their background and the violence they have committed becomes colored through the discourse of the organization.

Seeking the cooperation with various governmental and non-governmental organizations acquainted me with the hierarchal structure of Mexican society. In the beginning, the fieldwork was overwhelming. I did not understand the tacit rules of the field and couldn’t adequately respond. I positioned myself in the way I thought would give me access to a particular field site. Uncomfortable as it was, my vulnerable position did give me valuable information about the hierarchy of the various organizations I worked with and along with the hierarchy of the political administration. This hierarchy was something that not only I, but also all the players in the field subjected to. It wasn’t until I had enough experience in the field to understand how power games were played and understood more about my own role in these complex relationships that I began to feel as if I had some control.

The basis of this research lays in multiple fieldwork phases over the course of five years. What perhaps began as a handicap ultimately worked to my advantage. I experienced the field in many positions and thus I was able to compare data obtained through a variety of research positions. Participant observation enabled me to see the informants within various contexts. Multiple aspects of the informants came to light as the informant has less control over what information was disclosed. As a female researcher, I could not be a fly on the wall, and I could not gather information while pretending to be just one of the guys. However, because I am a woman and not part of male competition, the men opened up to me in ways I had not expected. Men spoke to me about the hurt they had suffered as well as the hurt they had caused. For me, this sometimes meant that stories of violence became too real and their degrading attitudes towards women became palpable. At times I had to battle against my own dislike of the informants for revealing what I had wanted to know. Despite all my ambivalence, I am grateful for the men’s trust, and I share the knowledge that they gave me in the next chapters.
Chapter 4: The Chain of Violence

4.1 Introduction
This chapter sketches the violent backgrounds of the men who engaged in violence and who were the informants for this book. In-depth interviews were conducted with 33 men. These interviews related their lives in Playa del Carmen and Cancún as well as their life histories. Twenty-one of the men narrated their own experiences with severe violence during their childhood. Some had gone through incidental traumas like rape, and for many, their experiences with violence were part of their everyday lives.

This chapter unravels the effects that living in situations of poverty and everyday violence have on the lives of the research informants. It links their violent conduct to their own violent experiences within and outside the home where they grew up, and it demonstrates how violence has become normalized for them. The process of normalization of violence enables them both to endure violence and to reproduce it. The causes behind the reproduction of violence become obscured by the popular discourse of machismo that takes the dominance of men as a natural given. Through the narratives of several of my informants, this chapter illustrates the processes that generate violence. These narratives are illustrative of the adaptation to experiences of violence that results in the reproduction of violence. In practice, they demonstrate Galtung’s (1969, 1990) theory about the connection between direct, structural and symbolic violence.

4.2 A life story of violence
The key narrative that runs throughout the chapter is Ramon’s, he is a man from a poor urban background; his childhood was marked by poverty, domestic violence, and neglect. When Ramon was 13, he started working in the streets, became acquainted with gang and drug life and started his own violent trajectory. Ramon was 29 when I met him for our interview (almost two hours). I interviewed Ramon in an anexo (a rehabilitation program) where he had been coming for a month (see the next chapter for information about the functioning of an anexo). Within the anexo, there are several group meetings and the members have to climb to a podium and speak to their companions. Many of these testimonies followed a similar pattern; the men started with stories from their childhood, often traumatic, and linked these with their present drug abuse. Ramon and others who have been in a rehabilitation program build their narratives in the interview sessions as informed by their
experiences of hearing and telling life stories in the group sessions. Many started their stories with traumas from their childhood following with stories of the violent acts they had later inflicted upon others. Ramon’s story is an example.

*I remember my father. He hit us a lot, but not in a normal way. He brought us to the forest and hung us on a tree. He burned a paper and blistered our feet with it. I cried so hard, hanging there. I think from then on I adapted. My father often hit my mother, especially when she became pregnant, because he said it wasn’t his. My mom worked, my father didn’t. She did the laundry for other people. She had rheumatism from all that washing. She used to buy alcohol, put marihuana in it, and soak bandages in it that she wrapped around her bones taking away the pain. My dad sometimes drank her alcohol, and smoked her marihuana.*

*My father didn’t want my mother to work, but my mother said: “Luis, if you don’t want me to work, than go and work yourself.” My mother also had a tiny shop with some vegetables, some beans, some sugar, and while my mother was out doing the laundry, my father was supposed to attend to customers, but he was so rebellious, he drank, he once sold a whole crate of beans for a beer! One day my mother got home from work very tired and she said, “Luis can you put the bandages around my bones?” Luis: “I will do it for a beer.” Mother said, “Luis, I am in pain!” So he started to do the bandaging, but he was drunk, stoned, and angry for not getting another beer and while winding the alcohol soaked bandages he lit up a cigarette. My mother was set on fire. My mom was screaming, my brothers and I were crying, and the neighbors were yelling, “That crazy one is burning his wife!” The neighbors tried to stop the fire by covering her. My mother was brought to the hospital hovering somewhere between life and dead. Thank God she lived and the baby too. From the waist down my mother was burned. My father ran off hiding from the police and we didn’t see him anymore, my brothers and I were brought to an orphanage of the DIF where we stayed for a long time. My mother had to work, and now she had four children. At some point she had a new partner, he didn’t like for her to be separated from her children, so he got us out of the home.*
I didn’t like school and because I was the oldest one I helped my mother doing laundry. I told her to buy me a box of chewing gum and some cookies, and I started to sell those on the street, giving the money to my mother. Working in the streets I joined a gang, I was 13 then and I started using thinner and Resistol.\(^1\) Resistol is expensive! So I had to steal, the gang taught me how: we used to go to the supermarkets, we stole shampoo, perfumes and clothes and sold them for drugs.

I got together with Lydia when I was 15. I had known her from since we were kids, but her mother had sent her to live with her grandma. When she came back to the neighborhood I started whistling after her. She already had a boyfriend and scolded me, but I liked her, and she liked me. Her mother didn’t want her to be involved with me, she said to Lydia, “If you are going to hang out with those next door I am going to break your face, I will hit you hard!” One day she caught us making out and she got a stick and started hitting Lydia in the face. I wanted to intervene, but my mother said, “Let it be, it is her daughter!” Lydia ran away from home, she rented a room with a friend of hers, and I decided to stay with her. I had other girls in the gang, but Lydia wasn’t from the gang, she was different. In the gang, sex was without respect, between us we shared girlfriends. But Lydia was different, she loved me. She was a virgin still, she was going to get married with the other guy, but somehow she wanted to be with me... I stuck to the gang, I didn’t work, I kept on using drugs, and I took her money for drugs. Still, she loved me! Lydia worked, she gave me food, clothes. She became pregnant. After three months of pregnancy, my mother-in-law found out where we were staying. She arrived furiously, she took out a knife but I stopped her, telling her she was going to become a grandmother! She started sobbing, and asked us to come home. Lydia’s mother bought us a little piece of land; a piece of a new land invasion doesn’t cost much. She bought us some gas, a bed, and told me to get to work.

I always said when I grow up and have a wife I am going to work and take care of my children, I won’t drink, and I will never beat them. Yet I have done all the things I said I would never do and I don’t know why... I think I was worse than my father, I didn’t burn her or anything, but I hit her hard! She said, “Stop it, you are hurting me!” But I kept on hitting her with a stick or a broom. I had such fury within me... I hit her

\(^1\) Thinner is a solvent, and Resistol is a glue. Both are used as cheap, inhalable drugs.
for nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing more than just liking it. I arrived home late, drunk and stoned and I liked it. Nothing really mattered to me, not if she was hurt, or not hurt, I just wanted to satisfy myself, getting rid of my anger. The next day I felt sorry for what I had done, seeing my wife her face bruised, her arms black and blue, I would cry like a fag, a wimp, “Don’t go, don’t go, I will never hit you again!”

For every little thing I hit her because I liked it. Sometimes she had gone to see her mom, or her sister, and I was thinking she went to see some other guy. Sometimes she wouldn’t listen to me; I told her to do this, or the other, or don’t go, and she went anyway. So when she came back I didn’t give a fuck about her, I was stoned and drunk and didn’t get it. So when she came home with the baby, I smacked her. I never told her, “Why did you go?” Or simply, “Yeah sure go!” Fuck, I was always closed up. Ignorant, macho that I was, sometimes I went while she didn’t have money for breakfast, or lunch until I came back from work. Then she went to the shop to buy rice, and beans, and I got mad about it, and she would say, “What are the kids going to eat?” When my daughter was born, I forbade her to work. My friends told me, “You have to work, only you! If you send your wife out to work, she is going to find another man!” They told me, “At times you have to hit your wife to make her listen to you. To listen to your orders you sometimes have to hit her!” That is what they did in their homes.

Lydia’s mother had moved to Cancún, she sent Lydia money and told her, “Leave that guy, he is going to kill you, come here with the kids!” My mother said to me, “Let her go, you are abusing her, let her be!” I was like, “Good riddance!” But after three months I went to look for her at her mother’s house in Cancún where she supposedly was hiding from me. My mother-in-law opened the door for me! Why did she do that? She said to me “There you are, you dog! And she just accepted me!”

Joan: Your mother-in-law was a woman who used a lot of violence herself wasn’t she?
Ramon: Yeah, and she knew I hit her daughter. Sometimes she was drunk and she would say, “Go for it, hit her! The fucking bitch! She is not listening to you, hit her!”
When I came here, I wanted to tell her that I was going to change, that I would look for a job. I wouldn’t drink anymore because I was at the point of dying, I had drank so much, but it was already too late, my wife had another man. I saw them together in town, I wanted to kill them both, her first. I had a knife and was going to kill her, but the police intervened. The cop told me to go and look for another woman. From then onwards things went from bad to worse, I started doing crack and I didn’t rob any shampoo no more. I went to prison, got out, robbed, went to prison again, all in all seven times. It has been purely prison since I have been here. (26-1-08)

4.3 The violence of poverty
Like most of the informants of this book, Ramon comes from a very poor family. Mexico is not a poor country, but the country’s income inequality rate ranks among the highest in the world.\(^{17}\) The gap between the income of the rich of the country and the poor has only increased over the years.\(^{18}\)

The poverty of Ramon’s family can be seen as a form of structural violence; their destitution could be avoided, as Galtung (1969) would argue, if wealth was more evenly distributed. Doing laundry and selling vegetables were ways that Ramon’s mother tried to keep her family from starvation. These are examples of informal jobs that earn very little money, have no security, and ultimately do not bring in enough money to make improvements in a family’s livelihood. Ramon’s life course shows how living in poverty can create a spiral of violent situations. Not only is his home environment violent, but also after his mother was hospitalized he lived in a DIF orphanage. Although Ramon did not reflect upon his experiences in the orphanage, it is not uncommon that in such places, the children’s difficult behavior is rewarded with violence by the

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\(^{17}\) Inequality in income or wealth is often displayed by the Gini coefficient, which is a number between 0 and 1. The smaller the number the less inequality exists. In 1992 when Ramon was 13, two years before the financial crisis hit Mexico, the Gini index was 0.4749. In this year, 54.18% of the countries income was earned by the richest 20% of the country, while the poorest 20% earned 4.28% percent of the country’s income (2002 Aguirre Reveles, R. and A. Sandovan Terán).


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personnel. Ramon’s life, and many other research participants, can be described as including everyday violence; structural violence, domestic, gang and other forms of direct violence were all present and reproducing each other. The omnipresence of violence leads to a process of the normalization of violence.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2005: X1X) finds that poverty in Latin America has a tendency to perpetuate:

> People who live in poverty see that their children have little access to suitable health and education services or, in many cases, to an adequate supply of food. As a consequence of all these factors, there is a high probability that the children of poor households will fail to obtain quality employment and will remain in that position when they reach adulthood. This situation is one of the major manifestations of the vicious circle of poverty.

The creation of a perpetuating pattern of poverty becomes visible in Ramon’s life. When Ramon started his own family with Lydia at the age of 15, they didn’t have the resources to pull themselves out of poverty. Ramon recreates the pattern he experienced growing up. Like his father, he became addicted. As will be further explored in chapter 5, poverty, violence, and drug abuse have their own complex connection. Ramon’s drug abuse may relieve him of feeling his daily hardships, but it also relieves him of the little money that comes in. Ramon’s children grow up in the same impoverished and violent circumstances that he grew up in.

### 4.4 Growing up: Learning to think of violence as a normal
The acts of extreme violence were clearly continuing to be difficult for Ramon, but they were not out of the ordinary when compared to the other informants’ narratives. His father’s violent behavior, “but not in a normal way” was telling of his experiences with violence; violence is part of everyday existence and is a normal occurrence. Ramon did not find his father hitting him as bad, rather it was the excessive beating that was not normal and this was traumatic for him. Children adapt their expectations of life to the reality they experience. If they

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19 Personal communication with the director of one such children’s home (16-12-2005). At the time of this writing, the local newspaper reported a cellar 2x3 meters was found in one of the DIF’s orphanages in Cancún. It was used to punish children. [http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2010/08/16/el-gobierno-de-quintana-roo-se-ve-afectado-por-denuncias-de-abuso-infantil](http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2010/08/16/el-gobierno-de-quintana-roo-se-ve-afectado-por-denuncias-de-abuso-infantil) (last viewed 2-1-2012).
are not taught an alternate, non-violent, morality as a child, they can come to accept the most violent circumstances as normal (Garbarino 2001). The experience of violence leads to a process of pathological adaptation, in which the child mitigates, denies or justifies the experienced violence and the violence this reproduces (Ng-Mak et al. 2002). In other words, violence becomes normalized. Ramon recalls the day that his father hung him to a tree, burned his feet and left him hanging there crying. For him this was a decisive moment. As he said: “from then on, I conformed”, apparently referring to this process of normalization. He adjusted his expectations to the violent reality he was living in, making him less vulnerable but more violent. Ramon’s narrative shows how his whole environment is as desensitized to violence as he is. The neighbors know about the violence that is taking place in the household. His mother-in-law is one of these neighbors. She is very abusive. Neither she nor other neighbors intervene when Ramon, his siblings or his mother are beaten. Ramon’s mother is not violent, but for her the use of violence is normal also. She does not interfere when Ramon’s girlfriend is beaten up by her mother because “it is her daughter”, thus justifying the use of violence.

Korbin (1998) argues that social contacts are often wrongfully considered to be a positive factor in the prevention of child maltreatment. As obvious in Ramon’s environment, normalization of violence is a general pattern within the entire network. The individuals within a network may be abusive and may reinforce instead of impede abusive behavior. Abusive parents may take solace from the fact that their social contacts are just as abusive and therefore, they are not “bad” parents, they are just like everyone else. The normalization of violence while growing up recurred in most informants’ narratives, although often only implicitly. Some of the informants justified or mitigated the violence they had been exposed to or that they had put others through. Emilio, for example, described his family as quite harmonious; only he did not fit in, because unlike his siblings, he had no interest in school. When I asked him if he was disciplined for this reason, he said he was severely beaten and belted to make him go to school. Apparently these violent acts were so normal that they did not conflict with his idea of a harmonious family. Similarly, he told me he did not take his gang life home with him; he did not beat women.

Emilio: *I never beat a woman, I never mistreated a woman, you don’t beat women. What I do in the streets [gang fights] I leave there, I don’t unburden myself at home from the things that happen in the streets... You cannot beat a woman like you can beat a man, yes, I sometimes got upset at home, and I smacked*
her, but then I left, better go and drink and forget my anger, but I never hit her sadistically, no.

Joan: Just sometimes a smack?
Emilio: Yes, when she yelled at me, she cannot do that, or when I came home and she wasn’t there, I smacked her so she would learn not to leave without my permission. I didn’t know where she was and I got upset, when she got back I smacked her, yes, that happened. (interview 10-2-2008)

Emilio differentiates between the beatings he performed in the streets, the beltings he received at home and the smacks he gave his partner. For Emilio, smacking his partner is normal; it is what needs to be done to teach her to listen, just like his parents taught him by using a belt to make him listen.

Some of the informants had gone through transformations in their lives that enabled them to reflexively account for how normal violence had been to them. One of them is Mateo.

We lived in such an ignorant village. Izamal is such an ignorant place when it comes to that. All the neighbors do it too, so it becomes something so normal. People’s minds are closed, only the people who have an education who read, they do take notice. But in the neighborhood it was all people of the same sort, as we say here. For example it was normal that our father was beating us in the street, and that he dragged us around by our hair and it wasn’t strange to see the neighbor dragging his child by the hair through the park. (5-3-2007).

For Mateo attending the AA groups had helped him realize the role violence had had in his life, how normal it had been, and how the normalcy of violence had eventually led him to become a violent person.

4.5 The reproduction of violence throughout men’s lives
The normalization of violence explains why men like Ramon display the same violence in their adult life, as they had to endure and witness during their own childhood. Ramon never thought he would repeat his father’s cruelty, but now he has to admit that he is as violent as his father. Within Ramon’s environment, he is coaxed in his own violent behavior. His mother-in-law provokes the violence against her daughter, and his friends coax each other to use violence to maintain control over their partners. Ramon does not receive incentives to behave differently from his own social environment. Lydia’s own
experiences with her mother’s violence and alcohol abuse may have desensitized her to violence, possibly mitigating the violence that Ramon exercises upon her and giving her a high threshold of acceptance. After every violent outburst, Ramon hugged, kissed and convinced his wife that he would never be violent again. For eight years, Lydia stayed with Ramon before she finally fled to Cancún where her mother was living.

I frequently heard stories of continuing violence during this research study. Fredo vowed to never be like his father, a cruel man heavily addicted to crack: “My father hit me and my brother, but most of all he hit my mother, he broke her jaw and her nose. We saw it all, we hugged my mother, and cried, but we couldn’t do anything.” Fredo’s narrative is filled with love for his mother, and his inability to protect her from the violence of his father. Yet, when Fredo became an adolescent, he joined a gang with his brother; they started smoking marihuana and inhaling solvents and he no longer accepted his mother’s reproaches to behave differently from his father.

“You should not become like your father,” my mother said. My mother doesn’t hit me just to hit me, like my father did, my mother tried to make me listen. But I got mad with her, my mom tried to lock me up in the house so I wouldn’t go out to use drugs, but I was not so small anymore, I was mad and grabbed her by her hair and I started pulling, she screamed and I asked her for forgiveness. (Fredo, 23-1-06)

Mateo reflects on his continuing violence as follows.

I feel that it was because of a grudge that I started to drink and developed all these emotions. I began to treat my wife and my child in the same way as I was treated by my father. I understand now that there was no other way, I didn’t know, I never saw anything to motivate me to behave in another way; I always saw the same thing here and there. And from the moment I started drinking it went from bad to worse, it fed my character, my character became more violent. When I wanted to play, my father rejected me, and when I saw that my daughter started to play, I started to hit her, because I didn’t want her to play.

For both Fredo and Mateo, being exposed to violence led to adaptation and their sensitivity to the experience of violence was lost, as was an inhibition to
use violence. The effects of violence are mitigated; violence has become a normal everyday occurrence.

4.6 The relatedness of various forms of violence
The intergenerational continuation of violence can be conceptualized as a chain of violence. The normalization of violence explains how direct violence is passed on creating a chain of violent eruptions. The narratives of Ramon, Pedro, Mateo and most other informants illustrate that poverty plays a complex role in this reproduction of direct violence. Galtung (1990) theorizes that direct and structural violence flow into each other. Ramon’s narrative is illustrative of this process. While Ramon’s father didn’t contribute to the family income, Ramon helped his mother with the family’s survival. Instead of going to school, he worked in the streets. His impoverished and violent background thus impeded the possibility to develop himself through education. By working on the streets, he became acquainted with the local gangs. He found solace with local gangs and gang life further enmeshed him in a life of violence. In his gang life, he also became acquainted with the use of cheap drugs that can have devastating physical consequences (see chapter 5), thus further reducing his development and choices in life. Like his father, he becomes a violent man, who exercises his violence both inside and outside the domestic atmosphere. Ramon squanders the family income with his drug use and doesn’t contribute to the wellbeing of his family.

The poverty of Ramon and his family can be seen as a form of structural violence. It occurs in a society where next to immense poverty there is enormous wealth. The lack of jobs pushes his mother into the informal sector where she works all day without a decent income. A lack of social services contributes to his mother’s dependency on her violent husband and makes it possible for a 13-year-old boy to work in the streets. Yet, Ramon’s narrative can also be read as the story of an addicted individual, who becomes destitute because of the choices he makes in life as his father had done before him. He does not go to school, but rather he hangs out in the streets and joins the gangs. Instead of having protected sex, he burdens both himself and his girlfriend with adolescent parenthood. He does not work and sustain his family, but rather he steals his girlfriend’s money to get high. This raises the question of whether or not the violent social structures are responsible for Ramon’s destitution and what is his agency.

Gigengack (2006) writes about young street people in Mexico City and reflects on the question I just raised. He argues that street children embrace what they
deem to be inevitable in a society where they are socially “dead.” They take destruction into their own hands. “The victimhood and the self-destructive agency of young street people are two sides of the same coin” (ibid: 33). Not being able to live up to your potential, enduring the violence of social inequality, creates a disposition to reenact this violence. Despite these dispositions, people still have agency. I would not want to argue that everyone reproduces the violence (structural or direct) they have lived through. However, I specifically sought out the perpetrators of violence and for them the relationship between the violence experienced and reenacted was clear.

Experiencing every-day violence can be a reason to treat children violently in order to prepare them for the life ahead of them, as Goldstein (2003) argues, thus reinforcing the chain of violence. Goldstein (2003, 1998) relates about a family in a Brazilian favela (slum). The mother has to go through great trouble to provide for the many children living in her household. She brings the children up with an iron discipline and sometimes, outright cruelty. Her harsh way of dealing with her children should keep them on a straight path, away from crimes and the gangs. Goldstein urges to take into account the context of parenting, especially the context of poverty, to avoid running the risk of blaming the victim: “conditions of poverty and the lack of options make extreme forms of discipline and punishment fall within a continuum of acceptable behavior” (ibid: 392).

Maltreatment of children to prepare them for the roughness of life was also recognizable in one family I visited regularly over the course of two years. The family was under control of the governmental organization DIF because the adolescent children were problematic drug users. Much to his dismay, the father Alfonso felt that the interference of the DIF prevented him from disciplining his children with physical punishment. According to Alfonso, not using physical punishment would undermine his authority over his children:

> If you are sweet with them they are never going to do what you want, you have to be firm. Tell me, did you do your homework if your parents weren’t strict with you? Nothing will happen if you are sweet. Do you think I will work if my boss is nice to me? Of course not, if my boss is not strict, I won’t do anything.

Alfonso is a poor man, who works as a construction worker, and while he is conscious of his own subjugation he does not oppose it, but rather legitimizes his subjugation. Moreover, he has come to expect that hierarchical
relationships are enforced by violence. Like his boss who abuses him, he reproduces the abuse in the way he maintains the hierarchy in his household. His oldest son Pablo has borne the brunt of his father’s physical violence and in turn he shows his youngest brother a love of the toughest kind. When I visit, Pablo is playing with his 2-year-old brother. He alternates hugging him with giving slow motion punches while mimicking beating the little boy. Pablo explains his way of playing with his brother: “In this life he has to be strong, he has to learn to defend himself” (17-3-2005). Exposing his little brother to experience physical violence in a controlled way is to teach him how to cope with the harshness of life, and to physically defend himself. Violence is assumed to be a normal part of life by the adolescent brother, and like his father, he has learned to adapt to his violent surroundings through behaving violently, thus continuing the chain of violence.

According to Ng-Mak et al. (2002) (see also chapter 2) boys are more likely to respond to their violent surroundings by reproducing violence, than girls. The authors do not give a reason for this gender disparity In all likelihood, the way boys are coaxed to become strong men who do not cry but defend themselves plays a part in later reproduction of violence, just like Pablo and his little brother in the diary transcript above. According to Gabarino (2009), girls’ violent behavior is generally more restrained than that of boys. Girls receive messages that they shouldn’t hit, whereas boys’ violence is legitimized and even provoked (ibid). Scheper-Hughes (1996) argues that children, particularly boys, in the Brazilian favelas are toughed up by their mothers. Violent treatment should prepare them for the harsh life they are bound to live in the favela (ibid: 896). Thus, parents and siblings translate various forms of violence into an abusive form of parenting to create rough men who can survive the violence of everyday life. Gender disparity plays an important part in this reproduction of violence. This is an aspect of the chain of violence that Galtung does not account for in his theory about violence and the reproduction of violence.

4.7 The male breadwinner ideology: a myth creating female vulnerability

The fact that men are deemed to be essential to the household as providers contributes to the existing tolerance for their enactment of violence. Ramon’s mother was the actual provider of the family, yet there was still an idea that the family’s survival was dependent on having a man in the household. The presence of Ramon’s father, no matter how violent and drunk, meant that

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20 As mentioned in chapter 2
Ramon’s mother felt she could leave her children and go out working. Once her husband was gone, she had to let go of her children until she found another partner. This perceived dependency on a man’s presence in the household was quite common and resulted in the acceptance of violent behavior. Fredo’s addicted father lost his job as a primary school teacher; his mother had no education, but she earned some money by preparing and selling food. She hid the family earnings, otherwise his father used all the money on alcohol and drugs. Yet, Fredo explains his mother’s inability to leave his father as related to needing him as a provider. Fredo said, “Many times my mother escaped home with us, but after a while she came back, because, eh, well she needed someone, no? Where is she going to get money from?”

The belief that survival depends on a man’s presence to provide for the family was persistent in both male and female discourses. “Quien me mantenga?” (Who is going to provide for me?), some women responded when asked why they didn’t leave their violent husbands. In her book, The Myth of the Male Breadwinner, Safa (1995) reflects on the ideology of men as breadwinners in Latin America and the Caribbean. This ideology is persistent despite the fact that many women work and many are the sole providers for their families. Throughout her book, we can see that being a provider is an essential part of a male identity, an identification that is not necessarily based upon the actual division of labor within the household.

Mexico has a long tradition of women who work. In the early 19th century, women made up a third of the Mexican labor force; these were especially poor, single women (Janssens 1997: 8). Lewis’ (1959) account of five lower-class families in the 1950s in Mexico City gives insight into the division of labor within Mexican households at the time, and the complex relationship between ideology and practice. Some of the women Lewis described worked, but these women were either single, in unstable relationships or “second” or “third wives.” Some of the men portrayed by Lewis had created multiple households. A man’s second household was popularly called the casa chica (the small house) as opposed to the casa grande (the main household). Men thus created a situation in which they lived in serial monogamy with two or sometimes even more women (Gutmann 1997). For men from the lower social classes it is difficult to provide for a single, much less multiple, households, thus stimulating women’s labor. Women’s work does not necessarily mean that the model of the male breadwinner is challenged. Women can work and still identify with their roles as mothers and housewives (Safa 1996), just like men can continue to identify with their role as a provider while they are
unemployed (Fuller 2003). Even so, in Mexico, many women are currently actively negotiating the right to work, because of the freedom and fulfillment it represents (Gates 2002).

Ramon’s narrative reflects the complexities and paradoxes of the breadwinner ideology. Ramon lives off Lydia’s income when they are together, but when she becomes pregnant, he forbids her to work. Her pregnancy changes their relationship status and makes him want to stress his position as a provider, even though in reality he does not perform this role. Adherence to the male breadwinner ideology makes women dependent on men. The women believe that they cannot take care of themselves or that they should obey their husband and this prevents them from escaping harmful situations. Thus enabling the chain of violent circumstances and events to happen in the lives of men and women like Ramon and Lydia.

4.8 Violence as a component of the performance of masculinity
The idea of the man as breadwinner and head of the household is one of the aspects of male dominance that most of the men in this research gave great importance to. Ramon explains the violence he used against his partner with a discourse of male dominance. Calling himself a stupid macho, he explained that he wanted to control his wife’s moves. He forbade her to work outdoors, or even go to her mother out of jealousy and fear of losing her. His mother-in-law and co-workers use this discourse of male dominance to provoke Ramon’s violence towards his wife — he should make her listen! The way that Ramon and the people in his surroundings comply with the hegemonic masculinity of machismo legitimates the use of violence.

The men in this research expect to be able to enforce their male dominance. Their roughness and willingness to exercise violence is expressed as part of their masculinity. A lack of roughness is expressed as lacking masculinity, which is deeply frowned upon and associated with being effeminate. Both the violent altercations with other men, as well as the violence against a man’s spouse are often framed as ways to show who is the boss — who is the one to give orders. Ramon beat his wife when she wouldn’t listen, and he wanted to teach her to obey him. Likewise he engaged in bar fights when he felt provoked, because he felt he had to show who is the boss.

Ramon: *I encountered other drunks, if they looked at me I said, “What are you looking at? Hey what’s up?” And then pam, pam, pam, we started beating each other. I liked it.*
Joan: What was the violence all about?
Ramon: Because of, because nothing, because of drunkenness, because of a look, because he would pass and push: don’t touch me!!

Ramon is unable to express what his public display of violence is about; it is something so normal. A wrong look or touch can be adequate provocation to trigger a violent outburst. Within this research, the overlap between perpetrating physical domestic violence and engaging in overall physically violent behavior or violent crimes was salient. Of the 24 perpetrators of domestic violence with whom in-depth interview were conducted, only three did not engage in overall violent behavior. Over the years in which domestic violence research has been conducted, several typologies have been offered for the perpetrators of violence (Johnson 1995; Gottman et al. 1995; Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart 1994; Hamberger et al.’s (1996). Cavanaugh and Gelles (2005) offer a synthesis of these typologies. Approximately 50% of the domestic violence could be typified as non-severe marital violence comparable to what Johnson (1995) named as common couple violence. The perpetrators of non-severe violence generally do not engage in violence outside the marital environment. The other 50% are perpetrators of moderate to severe violence, like those identified by Johnson as perpetrating intimate terrorism.  These perpetrators also engage in violent behavior outside the domestic environment (Cavanaugh and Gelles 2005: 162). Perpetrators of both domestic and public violence are typified as having psychological and personality disorders (Gottman et al. 1995; Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart 1994; Hamberger et al. 1996). While it is quite likely that some of the informants of this research might be diagnosed as having an anti-social personality disorder (or other personality or psychiatric disorders), the focus on psychiatric diagnoses tends to reduce the perpetrator’s violent behaviors to individual malfunctioning. Analyses of violence need to take into account the societal context in which violent behavior is (re) produced.

There is a public aspect to using violence; it is meant to show both the direct opponent and bystanders who is in charge. The element of public competition is important in the performance of hegemonic masculinity. Alejandro, another informant from an anexo commented:

I loved it when they beat me, and I would beat them. I loved it we would get drunk, grab each other, fall on the floor fighting, who is

21 In chapter 6, Johnson’s (1995) the differentiation between common couple violence and intimate terrorism will be explained.
going to win? Ha, ha, let’s see who is going to win. If you hit me I respect you, if I hit you, you won’t be hitting me again! Ha, ha, if he won I wouldn’t be messing with him no more, you are more of a man (chignon) than I am, I will back off! (29-1-08)

Alejandro engaged in bar brawls regularly, they were part of his drinking on Saturdays. It was just “fun,” a way to measure who is more chignon (more manly) than the other. Violence among men, like these kind of bar brawls, gang violence and also domestic violence are displays of hegemonic masculinity. Similar to a psychiatric discourse, using the concepts of macho or chignon as explanations for violent behavior within and outside a domestic atmosphere has the effect of covering up the mechanisms behind the production of violence. It is the omnipresence of violence that has led to the process of normalization of violence in which violence becomes mitigated, justified and reproduced. This normalization of violence is translated into a gendered discourse of hegemonic masculinity, thus violence is legitimized as a show of male domination (Hume 2008: 62). The division of power between men and women can be seen as a form of symbolic violence, it becomes what is normal and natural (ibid 62). Both the subjugated and the dominant are “victims” of symbolic violence. Bourdieu calls this aspect of symbolic violence, “the domination of the dominant by his domination” (2004: 273). Both men and women find men’s dominance natural, and Bourdieu says, “Men have to live up to the dominant idea of men” (ibid 273). The narratives show that the men in this study believed they had to live up to this idea of dominance. They were required to put on a public display of power, and when they failed to display their dominance, they were afraid of being judged as not being real men.

Fights with spouses can also serve the public purpose of showing others that you are in fact a real man and in control of your wife. In the CAVI therapy group for perpetrators of violence (see chapter 1), one of the group members talked about the complicated relationship with his wife who earned more, and had more power to make decisions within the household. Some of the other men whispered that he was a mandillon (a man who is effeminate; the word mandillon is derived from the Spanish word apron). The therapist tried to bring the discussion of being considered effeminate to the group as a whole. One man stated, “I don’t like it when my wife gives me orders!” Another one of the group members responds to this by saying, “The other day we were at a party and my wife said ‘let’s go’ when she wanted to go home.” A fight had followed this exchange. To other group members and even to the male therapist, the
man’s indignation is completely understandable. The man’s authority had been publicly challenged, and a fight with his wife shows both the public and his wife that he will not accept this challenge (2-3-2005).

4.9 Conclusion

Ramon’s narratives, like those of other men who enacted domestic violence, illustrate how these violent acts are embedded within a context of continuing violence. Being exposed as a child to violence generates a process of the normalization of violence. From a young age, the informants were socialized to cope with and use violence. Children adapt to experiencing violence; it becomes normal. Their sensitivity to violence diminishes, and their inhibition to use violence is reduced. The relationship between violence and poverty is complex. The poverty of the research informants is partly maintained by structures of inequality. Living in a situation of structural violence makes one vulnerable for being exposed to direct violence, whether in the form of gang violence, family violence or domestic violence. On the other hand, Ramon and other informants have their own responsibility in perpetuating their impoverished situation. People are never completely without agency. The informants in this research used their agency in a (self) destructive manner.

Hegemonic forms or masculinity such as machismo are reproduced by the normalization of violence; roughness and the ability to defend oneself become integrated in perceptions of masculinity. Most informants complied with hegemonic ideals of men’s masculinity being macho or chignon. Notions that men are the ones who order and are macho and dominant legitimize the use of violence both in- and outside the domestic realm. Moreover, the belief that men are needed in the household as providers, whether they actually comply with this role or not, make women accept domestic violence. The popular discourse of men as naturally dominant and macho blurs the societal processes behind the construction of hegemonic masculinity. In a similar way, typifying men with a generally violent behavioral pattern as suffering from a psychiatric or personality disorder, stresses the individual aspect of behavior and downplays the influence of social structures. This chapter has shown how growing up in poor and violent circumstances affects individual (violent) behavior. The way violence has been made part of an addiction that is perceived as a disease, and the consequences this conception has for the legitimation of violence is the central theme of the next chapter.
Chapter 5: The Legitimation of Violence within Alcoholics Anonymous in Cancún

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Chapter 6: Violence as a Relational Process

6.1 Introduction
The previous two chapters focused on the backgrounds of the perpetrators of violence. I have argued that their violent behavior was embedded in past experiences of violence and poverty. Violence had become normalized and the popularity of the Alcoholics Anonymous discourse contributed to this normalization. In this chapter, I will focus on the dynamics of violent spousal relationships. Domestic violence has gained political and research attention since the 1970s, and this attention can largely be accredited to the feminist movement. The feminist viewpoint at the time considered structures of gender inequality as the cause of domestic violence (Dobash and Dobash 1979, 1992; Walker 1979). Within this perspective, domestic violence is by definition an unequal, asymmetrical occurrence from men to women. This feminist viewpoint was much criticized by those who consider domestic violence to be equally enacted by both men and women. The latter has become known as the family violence perspective. Collins (2008) offers a new way of looking at domestic violence that takes us away from the controversy over the presumed causes of violence, he urges researchers to find explanations for violence within the micro level of the violent situation. In this chapter, I aim to find these explanations by focusing on the micro level in Javier and Lisa’s narratives. However, I will also argue that the resulting micro-sociological analysis of a relationship fails to explain how larger societal structures, such as gender, play a role in relational power dynamics. This chapter confirms that we need a practice approach to fully understand the why and how of domestic violence.

6.2 Controversies of domestic violence
The feminist movement has put domestic violence on the political and academic agenda since the 1970s. The point of departure for feminist research is the notion that domestic violence stems from asymmetrical patriarchal power relations between marital partners. (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Stark 2007; Walker 1979). These researchers base their findings about domestic violence not only on quantitative data regarding the general population, but also on qualitative research among battered women. The researchers argue that it is nearly always women who are the victims of the violent behavior of a husband and if a woman acts out violently, it usually is in retaliation or self-defense.
Other researchers claim that domestic violence is perpetrated equally by men and women, which has come to be known as the family violence perspective. Many of the latter base their viewpoint upon Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) surveys. Straus created the CTS in the 1970s as an instrument designed to measure the extent to which partners engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other. Based on the CTS outcomes, Straus and Gelles (1986) argue that violence is perpetrated equally by men and women, although women are more likely to use violence in retaliation and the effects of their violence are likely to be less harmful.

Since 1972, more than 70,000 people have been surveyed globally by several researchers using the CTS (Straus et al. 1996). Controversy has arisen over the apparent gender symmetry in the outcomes of these surveys. Dobash and Dobash (1992, 2004) have strong methodological objections to the family violence researchers who base their data solely on surveys regarding violent acts. This approach does not take the context into account, or whether the act was committed in retaliation or in self-defense. The nature and consequences of the violence, according to Dobash and Dobash, cannot be measured simply by measuring violent “acts.”

Johnson (1995) makes an important effort to bridge the gap between the feminist research tradition and the family violence perspective by suggesting that these two perspectives talk about distinct types of violence. Researchers from the feminist tradition collect their data in shelters, police stations, hospitals, and other locations where the victims of the severest forms of violence go for help. In these locations, women are the predominant victims, and the violence they suffer is usually severe and not reciprocal. Johnson calls this type of violence “patriarchal terrorism” since it is motivated by a man’s desire to control the woman. Patriarchal terrorism does not only involve physical violence, but also involves control tactics such economic subordination, threats and isolation. This is usually a one-sided form of violence. Research in shelters shows that only a small percentage of the women fight back. Patriarchal terrorism occurs on average more than once a week and escalates in seriousness over time. Victims of patriarchal terrorism

28 Straus and Gelles conducted two large scale National Family Violence Surveys in the US. The first in 1975 and the second in 1985 among 2,143 and 3,520 families, respectively. The CTS makes a distinction between overall violence and severe violence. The latter has a high probability of injury. Both National Family Violence Surveys show about equal use of overall violence and severe violence by both husbands and wives (Straus and Gelles 1986).
are likely to be underrepresented in large surveys and over represented in surveys that solely research in shelters and locations where victims of severe violence go for help (ibid). In CTS surveys, another kind of violence is prevalent, which Johnson calls “common couple violence.” This type of violence is more egalitarian, has fewer episodes, and a lower risk of causing injuries than patriarchal terrorism.

In a study among couples that have been part of a criminal justice intervention program for domestic violence within their relationship, Dobash and Dobash (2004) try to unearth whether domestic violence could be symmetrical. Women are more likely to acknowledge their own use of violence than their male partners are to report them as violent. The women were also more inclined to label their partner’s behavior as violent than their partners did. Men and women also reacted differently to violence enacted against them. The women felt frightened, helpless, alone, trapped, abused, bitter and angry, while the men seemed little affected by the violence that the women expressed against them. Some men laughed at the violence their wives enacted, and some even admired them for standing up for themselves:

*Who hit first?* Me likely. *And what did you think about her being violent to you?* I just laughed, probably laughing and joking about it. She trying to hit me? Like trying to hurt me? [incredulous] (man 0.58)

*What would you do or say (when she hit you)?* If she hit us, I would say “Is that the best you can do?” she’d hit me again and I’d say something like “Oh (Betty) for god’s sake just pack it in.” *So, you’d make fun of her?* “I would laugh at her, you know, just laugh at her, (saying) ‘you’re mental!’” (man 0.55)” (ibid: 340)

The women in the study by Dobash and Dobash had all been long-time victims of emotional and physical violence. Only half of them had retaliated, and the mostly with non-severe violence. The women had not used coercion or intimidation. The men who had been subjected to this violence had called it “inconsequential” since it had not affected their sense of wellbeing and safety (ibid: 343). Dobash and Dobash conclude that these findings make it impossible to argue that violence is in fact reciprocal. While Dobash and Dobash set out to show that there is no symmetry, their results show that even if men and women enact completely similar violent acts, these would still be perceived as distinct by men and women. What is missing in the authors’ analysis is gender. Gender is central for understanding the emotional impact of
violence. Anderson (2007) critiques most domestic violence researchers for the scant attention paid to how gender shapes experiences and perceptions of violence. Johnson (1995), for instance, claims that common couple violence is, “less a product of patriarchy, and more a product of the less gendered causal processes” (p.285), as if relational processes could not be gendered. Similarly Anderson (2007) critiques the sexual symmetry researchers when treating gender as a mere variable within their research. The effects of gender on the experience of violence and on the way gender structures the opportunities and rewards for using violence are not recognized (Anderson 2007).

To understand the gendered nature of experiencing violence, Stark (2006) stresses that physical violence is not the central component of wife abuse, but rather it is coercive control. According to Stark, 90% of the battered women who call the police or visit emergency rooms do not have physical injuries. Stark uses the term “coercive control,” rather than “patriarchal terrorism”. Wife abuse does not necessarily consist of the frequent and severe assaults that Johnson (1995) describes; the victims may be more harmed by their entrapment than by the actual physical injuries. Isolation is a key tactic for control; it can be achieved by not allowing women to work, imposing rigid sex-role expectations, and not allowing free coming and going. Stark calls this the micro regulation of women’s lives. This micro regulation builds on gendered stereotypes, which makes it hard to distinguish from accepted gendered behavior. Since the explanation of coercive control originates in gender inequality (and by definition is asymmetrical), there is no way that men can be unequal to women—as women are to men (ibid 1021-1022). Building on Stark’s work, Anderson (2009:1448) argues that even if men and women deployed the exact same coercive behaviors, they would still not carry the same meanings. Beliefs about how women should perform femininity shape the way their behaviors are interpreted. Therefore, even if a woman’s actual behavior is directed towards obtaining control, it would still be interpreted as less threatening than male coercive behavior (ibid). Acting dominantly and exerting control are such normal ways to perform masculinity that actually distinguishing coercive control is difficult. When does protectiveness become coercion? When does an intense interest become stalking and wanting to control a woman’s every move (ibid)? The institutional and ideological levels of the gender structure give men power and control over women. On an individual level, women have come to expect being dominated and often do not even recognize domination. The notion of symbolic violence relates to this process, as discussed in chapter 4. When violence becomes normal and women accept their own subjugation, the legitimacy of female subjugation is
often translated into a discourse of men being naturally strong and dominant. This legitimizes violence as a consequence of gender inequality. However, the narratives of my informants show that a change is occurring in what is considered to be normal dominant behavior and what is considered to be abuse.

6.3 A micro-sociological approach to domestic violence

The rift between the feminist perspective and the family-violence perspective has not been bridged, but Johnson’s work is quite influential. It has become commonplace to think of domestic violence as occurring in various forms. However, the narratives in this chapter will show that the complex reality is hard to capture in terms of either common couple violence or patriarchal terror. Collins (2008) proposes an alternative perspective of violence that also questions the existence of various types of violence as Johnson (1995) has suggested. Collins argues that violence researchers will never find conclusive explanations for violence within the perpetrators’ background or within societal structures; the explanation for violence should be sought within the violent situation. Diverse variables such as poverty, employment, abuse, and family disintegration will never provide a definitive answer as to why some people are violent and others are not. “Some background conditions may be necessary or at least strongly predisposing, but they certainly are not sufficient; situational conditions are always necessary, and sometimes they are sufficient, giving violence a much more emergent quality than any other kind of human behavior” (ibid:20). Collins calls for a micro-sociology of violence that seeks explanations within the power play of the relationship. Central within the situational, micro-sociological violence are two key elements: confrontational tension and emotional entrainment, and I will explain these in the following two sections.

Collins argues that confrontational tension relates to the tension that people experience when their interactions with others become antagonistic. This is because antagonism goes against people’s tendency to seek harmony and be in-sync with each other. At a high level, this confrontational tension turns into fear. People tend to avoid tension and violence. To use violence, we first have to overcome our fear. Violence goes against our normal interactional behavior and is not as easy to accomplish as is often thought. It usually occurs in a moment of “forward panic,” a moment when one person shows a (emotional) weakness that allows the other’s fear to subside; violence then spills out with overkill (ibid).
Entrainment is the process of drawing the other along with oneself — to share each other’s emotions and rhythms. Collins (2008:150) explains it as follows, “Pairs of individuals ... develop a pathway together in which both work through the tension/fear and channel it into a particular scenario of violence... Obviously, some of these ‘techniques’ are not in the interest of the individual who thereby has violence performed upon them, but they are two-sided, interactional accomplishments nevertheless”. Within the process of entrainment, the aggressor and the victim learn a pattern of behavior together whereby the aggressor feeds off the process of entrainment with the victim and derives power from it. The partners of the aggressor play their part in this entrainment process by learning to give the aggressor space to act out the violent behavior (ibid: 153). However, some women also manage to stop the process of entrainment and the subsequent violence. Collins wonders whether there is a fundamental difference between patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence as Johnson (1995) proposes. Are the two in fact not the same, with the difference being that one of the partners manages to stop the process of entrainment before it can become the more severe patriarchal terror (ibid: 153)? In the following ethnographic section of this chapter, the questions that Collins brings to the fore will be related to the violent reality of the relationship between Javier and Lisa, as well as the women in the CAVI therapy group. Furthermore, the role of the process of entrainment within Javier and Lisa’s relationship will be discussed.

6.4 Encounters with a violent family
During my first three-month research phase, a DIF social worker took me around a poor neighborhood in Playa del Carmen to meet with families where violence and drug abuse played a predominant role. My contact with one family was prolonged, and through them I met their neighbor Javier, his wife Lisa and their daughter Elisa in March 2005. Javier had asked his neighbor to send me around to help him, “I have the illness violence; I am violent against my wife.” I agreed on having a couple of therapeutic conversations with him, but soon our contact became an informal one. Every once in a while, I dropped by the grocery store they ran to see how the family was doing. Eventually, I saw Lisa and Elisa most often.

The first meeting with Javier took place in their shop, while his wife was attending to customers. Javier told me he had nervios, a condition that is associated within the local context with being nervous, but also with being aggressive. His nervios resulted in violence against his wife, “I want things to be done my way, and if they don’t, I get nervous. Customers say things that make
me angry, my anger builds up and I become violent.” Javier’s violence against his wife was not a recent occurrence. Since they had been together, there were episodes of violence, but there had been months when he didn’t use violence. Now his violent outburst had become more frequent and occurred every 15 or 20 days. Silly discussions over nothing could trigger a violent outburst. In the neighborhood where Javier lived with his family, violence quite frequently occurred. The makeshift *palapas* made domestic violence a public affair. Moreover, as grocery vendors they were always up to date on the latest gossip. I asked him what happened with a neighboring couple that had had a domestic fight causing quite a stir among the neighbors, because it was followed by the wife’s suicide attempt.

Javier: They are doing well now, they are really together, they were buying something here; he was really nice to her. What madness after all that has happened!

Joan: Did it remind you of you?

Javier: Yes, Lisa would be with her face black and blue and I would buy her chocolates and flowers”

*Cycles of violence*

At times Javier seemed to be able to see the absurdity of his own behavior. However, the ability to reflect on his behavior was often absent. During our talks, Javier described the violent episodes that came and went. In her book, *The Battered Woman*, Walker (1979) describes domestic violence as forming a cyclical pattern. These episodes of violence have three phases: tension building, the explosion, and calm loving respite (ibid: 55). This way of conceptualizing violence has become very popular, and was also used in the CAVI’s women’s group to educate the women about the process of violence they were experiencing. Walker describes the relationship between the batterer and partner as entwined in a symbiotic relationship in which they hold each other captive. After a violent episode, batterers often plead with their victims not to leave them, since they can’t live without them. The battered woman believes that she and her own behavior are responsible for her partner’s battering. Batterers frequently commit suicide after a break up. The batterer may promise to seek help to change, but they rarely do so as long as the relationship is intact. Most batterers only go into therapy after a break up hoping to thus restore the relationship (ibid: 55-69). A batterer’s remorse after a violent explosion is genuine, and can be conveyed so convincingly that both the battered woman and the batterer truly believe it will never again happen. Together they move into the phase of loving respite. After a while, tensions
build up again. The battered wife goes out of her way not to provoke her partner but eventually (and this can be after a long or a very short period of time) another explosion occurs, followed by intense remorse and attempts to make up for the damages again (ibid).

**Coercion and control**

Stark (2009) criticizes Walker’s notion of violence as a cyclical process, since it focuses attention on outbursts of physical violence and thereby decreases the importance of the episodes of non-physical violence. Looking at Javier and Lisa’s relationship, it becomes apparent that violent explosions are set within a complex of controlling behaviors that isolate Lisa. Lisa narrates:

> He has changed so much over the years. I used to work on the fifth avenue, it was so much fun. But he wanted me to stop working, he is so jealous. Because many women find other men during their work he thinks I am like that too. He used to drink a lot, but then he wasn’t so aggressive, but now... I do really love him, but with all the beatings, I don’t know, we have been together for 10 years, but at some point you just have had enough [she starts crying]. He had another woman until about eight months ago, so he also thinks that I will take revenge on him. That is another reason why he is so jealous and won’t let me go anywhere. Even if I go somewhere, I am afraid because I know what will happen when I come back. And I must say, sometimes I will start an argument with him too, because I am so tired of everything.

Javier’s controlling behavior was framed in the discourse of a jealous husband. The alleged promiscuity of many women legitimized his controlling behavior in Lisa’s eyes. This attitude, as Stark (2006) argues, makes a partner’s controlling behavior difficult to discern from the “normal” dominant performance of masculinity. On the other hand, Lisa’s own display of anger was not the behavior that she was expected to perform. She blamed herself for starting an argument with Javier and therefore being responsible for Javier’s violence.

**Violence as an embodied process**

Javier’s decision to contact me to help him stop his violent behavior was possibly inspired by his fear of losing Lisa if he didn’t learn to change. The fact that he, not Lisa, solicited my help may have been a token of his good will to Lisa after his violent outbursts. In fact, Javier and Lisa did seem to enter into a calmer phase once I started talking with them — threats of physical outbursts waned for a moment. However, reaching out for help was not just a token to
appease Lisa, it also showed how little control Javier had over his violence. His remark when we first met, that he had the illness violence, seemed to be more than simply an echo of the popular AA discourse. His violence was something that also seemed to make him suffer, and he felt helpless to do anything about it. He did not willingly choose to have another violent episode, but he described it as a bodily experience. Before an outburst, his body became tense and warm and his head ached. A violent outburst made him feel good; he released stress. However, the next day he was confronted with the damage he had done and regret came over him. The men in the CAVI group had similar accounts of the bodily symptoms of a pending violent explosion: a tingling feeling in the body, a rise in blood pressure, a feeling in the head like it was about to burst, and sweaty hands (18-1-2006).

Collins (2009) ascribes an accelerated heartbeat and pumping adrenaline to physiological signs of experiencing fear, not anger. This fear arises because we are geared towards being in tune with each other and not to be antagonistic. Collins uses this analysis to strengthen his argument that violence is actually something that is difficult to achieve. To be violent, fear needs to be overcome. I note that fear is not an unequivocal negative emotion that people simply want to avoid. If this were fear, no one would go bungee jumping or watch horror movies. Apparently fear is more complex, and overcoming fear has its own attraction. Independent of labeling, physiological symptoms caused by either fear or anger clearly signal an approaching violent outburst. My talks with Javier were focused on learning to recognize these bodily symptoms and analyzing the processes that preceded them. Javier seemed willing to reflect on his own behavior and for a while he tried to express his feelings at the moment they arose. Instead of preventing Lisa from visiting her family in Tabasco, or even taking a walk outside, he now tried to verbally express his fear of being alone and that she would find someone else. These were fears that Javier normally translated into controlling every move Lisa made.

The love has gone
Javier managed to control his physical violence for a time, and the couple seemed to be confident in their future together. As a proof of their recuperation, they decided to take part in the governmental program INFONAVIT29 as a family. This enabled them to buy a house that was going to

29 INFONAVIT- Instituto Nacional para el Fomento de la Vivienda de los Trabajadores, The National Workers Housing Fund Institute is a governmental subsidy that allows workers to buy a house. Five percent of the worker’s income goes to the fund as a
be built in one of the new suburbs of Playa del Carmen. However, the tranquility did not last. In February 2006, about a year after I had met Javier and Lisa, their relationship was in another tense phase. Lisa’s brother had come from Tabasco with his wife and child. The bad economic situation there had made them decide to try to make a living in Playa del Carmen. Javier and Lisa’s new house was still unfinished, so her brother and sister-in-law moved in with them in their small palapa. Javier decided to rent a second space to open up a second grocery store, a smaller one, where he (Javier) and his sister-in-law could work while leaving Lisa alone in the old store. Lisa was very unhappy with the situation.

Lisa: The other store is very small, not like this one, I need help here.
Joan: Why don’t you tell this to Javier?
Lisa: I told him but he doesn’t listen.
Joan: But you have to set limits, if you only complain but at the same time do everything, he is not going to change.
Lisa: No, but I don’t want us to fall into the same as before.
Joan: I thought things had changed?
Lisa: It is just that he isn’t violent anymore, but otherwise no. I don’t want the violence anymore, so I shut up, I don’t want it anymore.
Joan: And what does your brother say?
Lisa: He is very worried about me, he doesn’t want Javier to abuse me, but he doesn’t want to interfere, I don’t want them to argue either.
Joan: What do you want?
Lisa: I want for him to have his shop, and for me to have mine, I like my shop.
Joan: So this shop is in your name?
Lisa: No it is all his, he doesn’t give me money, he doesn’t care about my clothes, nothing, nothing, he just yells at me. I am here from early in the morning until late at night, while he sleeps in until 11.
Joan: You have to set some boundaries.
Lisa: No it is better that I shut up. Before he would pull me by my hair, push me to the wall. I don’t want that anymore, I am afraid. He has told me he will kill me if I will leave him.

http://www.window.state.tx.us/border/ch07/worker.html (last viewed 2-1-2013)
Javier comes in to greet me and says he is not doing well.

Javier: *I can feel it coming back in my body.*

Joan: *What do you feel coming back?*

Javier: *The violence.* (7-2-2006)

Lisa’s behavior, like that of many of the women given voice by Walker (1979) and Dobash and Dobash (1979), is geared toward preventing another violent episode. Since speaking up could trigger violence, she preferred to keep quiet. However, since Lisa puts no limits on Javier’s behavior, this may have averted his physical outbursts, while also allowing his psychological terror to increase. The more subjugated Lisa becomes, the more Javier can exert his power over her. As Stark (2006) notes, the absence of physical violence by no means indicates the absence of coercion. Using threats, Javier maintains his control over Lisa, and as Lisa remarked, nothing had really changed between them.

In the months that followed, Javier and Lisa’s relationship went from bad to worse. The situation escalated into a total family crisis when Lisa found Javier in bed with her sister-in-law. Lisa’s brother blamed Lisa for not preventing this from happening. Lisa’s family was her safe haven, now Javier had caused a rift in the family and increased her isolation. Lisa seemed severely depressed, she did not pay attention to her appearance anymore, she had gained weight, her clothes no longer fit, her zipper had broken. She complained about the way Javier treated her, “*Javier takes all the money from the shop, and takes other women out, I saw him in his car with a girl. It is my money he uses to have fun, I, what have I got? I am so angry, Joan what am I going to do?”* Lisa seemed to have become the complete defeated victim, *pisoteada* or down trodden as the Mexicans say. On the other hand, Javier seemed younger than before. He paid more attention to himself; he got a new haircut and bought a car. Seemingly, Javier derived a sense of power from Lisa’s downtrodden position. Although he didn’t use physical violence, he openly engaged in love affairs. Lisa’s depression made her lose interest in everything, including taking care of herself. It is possible that this made it even easier for Javier to push her down. They both seem so wrapped up in their own processes that neither was paying attention to their nine-year-old daughter Elisa, who regularly missed school and watched TV all night.

*The relationship falling apart, a two-sided account*
In February 2007, I was back for a month in the field and went to see Javier, Lisa and their daughter Elisa. How they both accounted for the situation they found themselves in at that moment, shows how gender shaped their performances and experiences. Javier enthusiastically greeted me. Woken by the noise, Lisa came from behind the store where she had been asleep. She looked worse than I had ever seen her. Her clothes were too tight and she had a desperate look in her eyes. As soon as she saw me, she fell in my arms crying, “I don’t feel good.” Javier left to go to the back of the store and gave Lisa the space to tell me what was going on.

He has another woman. He already took his clothes to her place, most nights I am alone in our new house. I want him to go, but no, he goes to her and afterwards he comes back to me, hugging me. I don’t want it. He doesn’t know what he wants; he is coming and going between my house and hers. Joana, I can’t anymore, I don’t want it anymore, what am I going to do? I told him to leave me alone, but he said he doesn’t want to because he loves me, but this isn’t love. He is not going to let me go, I told him to leave me this store and to keep the other one, but he said “no”. Maybe I will go to Tabasco, close the shop, take the key, I don’t know. I want for him to leave me alone, we had a big fight yesterday, he wanted to hit me, but I cried out: “don’t you hit me.” I am not going to let him hit me. He doesn’t know what he wants, he is coming and going, he says he is not going to let me go, he is the one who orders, he says he wants for people to see that he is my husband... I am so tired, I want for someone to take care of me, to hold me. He wants to hold me, but I don’t want it, I don’t have any love for him anymore, I loved him so much but now I feel nothing anymore. The other day he came back home at seven in the morning and started kissing and hugging me. I told him to go away. I don’t want to live anymore, I don’t sleep anymore; I am alone in that big house.

As I had done the year before, I urged Lisa to go to the DIF to obtain information about her rights to the ownership of the shop should she decide to get a divorce and not to let Javier decide what her rights were. In the meantime, Javier returned from the back of the shop and wanted to give his account of the recent happenings. Javier adhered to the performance of a dominant masculinity whereby the man makes all decisions. This pattern is so engrained in him that he did not even reflect on the consequences his decision-making might have for his wife and child. In the following excerpt from my field notes it becomes clear that while Javier’s violence had been the
reason for our therapeutic relationship I sometimes could not hide my anger over his blatant lack of empathy.

Javier: *Did she tell you about the other woman?*
Joan: *Yes*
Javier: *Joan, I don’t know what to do, I can’t chose, I am so confused, I already told Lisa that I am here for her, I am going to help her.*
Joan: *Help her, how?*
Javier: *I am not going to leave her!*
Joan: *And that is what you call help? You have another woman and you tell Lisa you won’t leave her, and that is help? This can’t be, don’t you see you are hurting Lisa?*
Javier: *Yes, I know, it is really bad, really bad.*
Joan: *Are you in love with the other woman?*
Javier: *I don’t think so, I don’t really know her that well, we are getting to know each other.*
Joan: *You want a divorce?*
Javier: *No, not right now, I want to think about it for some time, maybe some months.*
Joan: *So how are you going to arrange that, you are going to go for some months, then you come back and Lisa has to accept it all?*
Javier: *I want to go to Tabasco. Before I go, I will work here (the shop) for some time and I will take the money.*
Joan: *So Lisa has to pay so that you can think it over? You have to talk to her and not decide everything for yourself.*
Javier: *You are right; we are going to the DIF tomorrow.*
Joan: *And why don’t you leave Lisa the shop and you take the other one?*
Javier: *I can’t.*
Joan: *You can’t, but you are not asking Lisa anything about what she wants and you are off on your motorbike to Tabasco.*
Javier: *No, I will leave the motorbike, I don’t want it anymore, I can’t either, it is in Lisa’s name, she can sell it if she wants, or keep it and continue to pay for it.*
Joan: *So you will leave her a motorbike that she can’t drive?*
Javier: *I am really grateful to you, I learned a lot from you, thanks to you I am not violent.*
Joan: *Physical violence is not the only thing.*
Javier: *No, I know there is also psychological violence.* (19-2-2007)
Javier’s narrative showed awareness of the popular discourse regarding domestic violence as undesirable behavior. Just as he had earlier identified his own violent behavior as unwanted — an “illness” — he now showed awareness of violence as something that was more than physical. However, his awareness of these discourses, and even his seeming accord with them, did not alter his behavior. His violent practices were not easily overturned; they were embodied in his performances. Possibly Javier was so convinced of the legitimacy of his dominance that he could not yet conceive that he really needed to change if he wanted to save his relationship. Perhaps by so openly taking Lisa’s side, I had unwittingly affirmed Javier’s dominance and Lisa’s subjugation. In the next section, I will reflect on my own role in the way their relationship came undone.

The divorce
Javier thought that Lisa would never leave him, and without the help of the DIF she might not have. However, once she went to the DIF, matters changed completely. I saw Lisa again two weeks later. I found out that she had decided to go to the DIF and she was just about to leave to have another meeting there. On her earlier meeting, Javier refused to accompany her, and she was told that they would file a complaint against him with the public prosecutor (MP)30 if he failed to come next time. On what grounds she would file was not clear, but the threat against Javier clearly seemed to have an empowering effect on Lisa.

Joan: What are you going to do at the DIF now?
Lisa: If Javier is not coming we are going to the MP. Javier says he is going to demand half of everything, but that can’t be, I have to take care of Elisa, he is crazy, I really think he is ill in his head! We had an argument yesterday, he was ordering me around, but that can’t be, do this, do that! He wanted for me to make him food, he wanted to kiss me. I told him you can’t order me, have another woman, come back and order me! He said: “We are married so I am the one to order!” He says he wants to be with me but also with the other! (2-3-2007)

30 The Mexican term Ministerio Publico can be translated with public prosecutor’s office, I will henceforth use the term MP and the office’s function will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.
Lisa had to leave for her meeting with the DIF and I came back the next day to see how it had gone. She gave me the following account:

*Javier didn’t come along, but they [the DIF] told me it didn’t matter, a next step could be the MP, but Javier signed the papers that I brought. I am now the owner of the house and the store. And now Javier comes to ask for forgiveness, he wanted to kiss me, hug me, but no, I don’t want anything to do with him! He says we can be friends, but I don’t want to be his friend. He was asking me if he could still work for me, but no, I don’t want him to, he’d better go away and find himself a job… Yesterday, I opened the windows of my house, the wind came in, I slept well and felt a little better when I woke up…*(3-3-2007)

In the time after the separation, Lisa seemed to find some tranquility in her life. She sometimes complained about loneliness with Javier gone, but she managed without him. On the other hand, Javier no longer has access to the money the shop generated and didn’t seem to be able to make an income. He regularly asked Lisa for money. Even when his new partner was having his baby, Javier asked Lisa for help to bring the woman to the hospital. Within his new relationship, Javier behaved in a physically violent manner again. On one occasion, his new partner called the police and Javier was brought to prison. While in prison, Javier sent word to Lisa asking her to send him water and food.

Sanctions against the perpetrators of domestic violence, and safe places for their victims are essential elements to eradicate domestic violence (Campbell 1999). In Lisa’s case it became obvious how the DIF’s interventions empowered her. When she felt she had a powerful agent (the DIF), on her side, and they threatened to activate an even more powerful agent (the MP), Lisa managed to step out of the entrainment process she had created with Javier. Collins (2008) describes how the process of entrainment is something the partners learn to do, and they can therefore also unlearn it. Through the DIF interventions Lisa managed to change her relationship pattern. She no longer gave Javier the space to feed on their entrainment. She stepped out of the destructive interaction, leaving Javier completely powerless and confused. Javier needed Lisa’s powerlessness to feel powerful.

What was my own role in the entrainment of Javier and Lisa? Although it was Javier who had solicited my help, most of my attention had gone to Lisa almost from the beginning. To me, Lisa was the one who needed the most help. Just
as the DIF, I wanted to jump to her rescue, without much consideration of her possible agency in the relationship. My empathy for her position and anger towards Javier may actually have deepened their entrainment initially, for it was a confirmation of their mutual positions — Lisa the subjugated victim and Javier the dominator. My presence as a researcher in Mexico was too haphazard to give Lisa more than a momentary sense of power, while the DIF could give her a longer lasting sense of power. Lisa had not always been in the position of a victim. She had told me stories of how she had gone to Veracruz, leaving Javier behind some years before. She laughed when telling me that Javier called her many times a day asking her to return. She would lie and tell him that she couldn’t come back because there were no more bus tickets available. Javier’s desperate pleas had made her feel wanted and powerful. However, this kind of power play from her side seemed absent by the time that I got to know the couple. It did not return until Lisa’s divorce. Lisa’s self-neglect could be seen as a defiance of her performance of femininity and it may have been a silent provocation of Javier. However, I never experienced this behavior as a display of her agency. In the years I knew Javier and Lisa as a couple, I generally felt Lisa’s desperation. In light of the process of entrainment, it may not be surprising that it was hard to see Lisa’s agency. Entrainment is like the suspension of your own agency to synchronize with the other. Once the entrainment is broken, agency will once again be visible, and then sometimes with a vengeance.

6.5 El hombre llega hasta donde la mujer quiere (a man gets as far as a woman lets him)

The process of empowerment through the help of an external agent was also visible with the women from the CAVI, and some of them had similar accounts of the effects of disrupted processes of entrainment. “El hombre llega hasta donde la mujer quiere,” a woman at the CAVI told me when she introduced herself. It is a much-used proverb, and can be explained in multiple ways. Literally, it means a man gets as far as a woman wants him to. The proverb is used to blame female victims of sexual abuse, and to explain that a man can only do what he does if a woman wants him to. However, the proverb is also used to signify a woman’s agency, meaning that a woman can stop male unwanted sexual behavior or violence. To this particular woman, it was like her own recent personal revelation. Finally, after years of abuse, she had decided to look for help at the CAVI and was contemplating a divorce. When she did get a divorce, her husband’s behavior suddenly changed completely: “I have put up with his violence, his insults, all of that. How come that now that I told him that I have had it, that I don’t want him anymore, he finally treats me like a
queen?" (9-12-2005). Lisa’s going to the CAVI is part of the process of breaking the entrainment with her husband that she had never even consciously experienced. At the moment she stepped out, her husband became desperate and treated her like a queen to get her back and to continue on the path that gave him so much power. Another woman in the group describes this process of stepping out of the process of entrainment and the subsequent crumbling of her husband’s power vividly:

I have lived through so much violence, insults, and beatings, everything. The last years the violence wasn’t so bad because I don’t accept it anymore since the kids are grown up. Before, I felt I had to be quiet, I was also afraid of my own violence if I would have retaliated. But not anymore, now my husband lives in the kitchen, I don’t take him into account in any way. I don’t know how he can stand living like this, I show him no respect at all, I would not want to live like he does... He tells me to take care of myself, to buy clothes, paint my nails, but I don’t because it is him who wants it. Sometimes I want to go to church but I don’t go because I know he would want to join me. (6-1-2006)

The narratives show how the process of entrainment can evolve, once the victim manages to break the entrainment and the aggressor is deprived of his power. The partners had built up a pattern together — he needs her to feel powerful and he will treat her like a queen to draw her back in. For many women this would be hard to resist, after having put so much time and effort into finding ways to cope with violence within their relationships, life may feel very empty and lonely once the relationships are really terminated. If women choose to get back together with their husbands, they easily recreate the pattern of entrainment that they had jointly created before. The last narrative shows that it is not only possible to step out of a pattern of entrainment, but also how an abusive relationship can transform. This affirms Collins’ (2008) idea that there may be a continuum between patriarchal terror and common couple violence. For this woman, the patriarchal terror has ended and she and her husband have landed in a mutually disrespectful relationship. After a life of being battered, it is this woman who is abusive. However, what she experiences as her own abuse is not acts of coercion or physical violence, rather it is the moments when she defies the gendered performance that is expected of her. The moments are when she doesn’t show her husband respect, dress up or take care of herself, and refuses to join her husband to church. This couple may land in a situation where both partners are mutually abusive, without their abuse becoming so severe that one of them lives in a
state of terror. We can call this common couple violence, but that does not make their abuse equal. Gender mediates what is experienced as abuse and how it affects each partner. As long as dominance is a key aspect of the hegemonic performance of masculinity, much male coercion and control will go unnoticed. While at the same time, women’s refusal to obey their husbands may be labeled both by men and women as disrespectful or even a provocation of the husband’s violence.

6.6 Conclusion
Much of the controversy regarding domestic violence in the literature is whether domestic violence is asymmetrical or whether both men and women are equally violent towards each other. Most researchers engaged in this debate, or in trying to resolve it, focus on the frequency and severity of the violent outbursts. Gender enters the debate as a causal factor or to dispute causality. Gender is a structure with multiple levels with various temporal dimensions, which means that structures of male dominance may no longer be sustained institutionally. The structures are internalized and determine how domestic violence is experienced on an individual level. This approach is often overlooked, even within the feminist perspective on domestic violence.

Javier and Lisa had been in a relationship for 10 years and gradually his abuse had increased. However, much of Javier’s control was not exercised by physical violence, and could be labeled as normal practices of hegemonic masculinity. He no longer allowed Lisa to work outside their shop; he often did not even let her go out for a walk. Lisa legitimized his controlling behavior by explaining it as jealousy caused by the promiscuity of many working women. Javier’s control isolated her and made her vulnerable. She had no access to money and became increasingly alienated from her family. She had no escape from Javier’s violence. Lisa’s subjugation fed Javier’s power — the more downtrodden she became, the more invigorated he seemed to be.

Javier appeared to be aware of the popular discourse regarding domestic violence and could recognize his own behavior as both physically and psychologically abusive. Interventions by the police and DIF on behalf of victims may have instilled in Javier a fear of losing his wife. His call for help could be interpreted as a wish to keep the entrainment with Lisa going, but it also seemed to display a genuine inability to control his violence. Unfortunately, when his physical violence stopped for a period of time, the non-physical abuse continued.
Lisa and the women from the CAVI derive a sense of empowerment from the interventions of the DIF/CAVI that allow them to step out of a process of entrainment and stop the battering. Without these outside interventions, the women may not have had this possibility. They may break the entrainment without leaving the relationship, and a relationship of patriarchal terror may then become a mutually abusive relationship. However, even if both partners were abusive, even if they were to use exactly the same violent tactics, gender would still structure the impact of their violent actions. Collins’ (2008, 2009) plea to analyze violence from the micro-sociology of a violent relationship gives valuable insight into the way partners jointly craft a violent relationship. However, to explain what happens within a violent relationship we also need to look at the context. Collins fails to address the role that gender plays within the process of domestic violence. Most likely, women are more often the enablers within the process of entrainment and unconsciously allow male oppression to occur. The hegemony of machismo will sooner make the women victims within this violent entrainment than men.

The interference of the DIF is directed at women, and allows them to step out of the entrainment processes they have co-created. The power game played out between Javier and Lisa in a sense became replicated when Lisa went to the DIF. A new game was being played, but now it was the DIF threatening Javier with filing a complaint with the MP. The DIF has a powerful reputation and their threats work. Now it is Javier’s gullibility and lack of knowledge of the law that gives them power and makes Javier sign all the paper work. The question is, what would have happened if Javier had called their bluff and had not signed the papers? A complicated legal battle might have followed that could have laid bare the inefficiencies of the DIF, and might have brought Lisa back under Javier’s control.

I will argue in the next chapters that the particular context of this research is changing quickly, and these changes affect the perceptions, experiences and enactments of domestic violence. Many men feel it is their right and duty to have a dominant position within the household, and many women do not oppose their own subjugated position and the violence they endure. However, the Javier and Lisa’s narrative shows that efforts by (non) governmental organizations to curb domestic violence are starting to affect the way that women experience violence. In women’s eyes, domestic violence may no longer be normal and acceptable and their changed perception of violence changes the relationship dynamics.
Chapter 7: Battles Against Domestic and Sexual Violence: (Inter)national Politics and Reality

I have to wait a little longer for the vegetable saleswoman to appear from the back of her house. When she comes outside to sell her produce she excuses herself: “I was watching that of Kalimba.” Without further introduction to the topic she adds, “he didn’t do it, or otherwise she wouldn’t have brought him to the airport afterwards, or would she?!”

It is the 23rd of January 2011; my vegetable saleswoman is referring to the arrest of the popular singer Kalimba, who has been accused of raping 17-year-old Daiana. On December 19th, Kalimba was performing in the Buda Bar in Chetumal where Daiana was contracted to dance. Afterwards, both Kalimba and Daiana went to a hotel in the company of a group of other people, among others, Daiana’s 16-year-old friend Thaily. According to Thaily’s initial account, she had also had sex with Kalimba that same night, although in her case it was consensual. The various versions of what happened afterwards were constantly discussed on national TV, newspapers and social media over the weeks that followed. Kalimba first denied having had sex with Daiana, but later claimed to have had consensual sex with her. On the basis of the testimony and Daiana’s medical examination, the prosecutor Francisco Alor Quesada, former mayor of Cancún (2005-2008), 31 started a criminal investigation against Kalimba. On January 10th, the judge signed the arrest warrant. Kalimba was arrested on January 20th as he was trying to cross the border to El Paso, Texas, and was brought to prison in Chetumal.

The vegetable saleswoman, like the rest of the country, has been glued to her television set, following what is happening. Seemingly disapproving she comments: “The laws are like this at the moment, even prostitutes can accuse someone of rape. You can’t force anyone,

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31 Alor Quesada is suspected of corruption during his term as a mayor, his successor Gregory Sanchez was going to look into the allegations, but he too was detained for corruption and ties with the mafia. (Velediáz 22-12-2010) http://www.animalpolitico.com/2010/12/francisco-alar-quesada-investigado-por-corrupcion/ (last viewed 02-1-2012)
not even in your marriage, that is how it is right now!” As I am going to get water afterwards, the owner of the mini-market appears to be watching the same show. “It is all politics,” he says as a comment on Kalimba’s arrest, “Elections are coming up; the governor needs to show he is enforcing the law, all of it is politics!”

7.1 Introduction
In the previous chapter, I discussed the DIF’s efforts to help Lisa end her violent marriage. This chapter will situate the existence of organizations like the DIF within the implementation of laws for the protection of women from domestic and sexual violence. Over the last decade, various laws have been accepted to eradicate violence against women. I will show how the acceptance of these laws was a response to both internal demands of the feminist movement and international pressure. To clarify Mexico’s position within international politics, I will first elaborate on the history of the current political parties and the place of women’s rights in their policies, starting from the Mexican revolution. The first half of the last century, women’s votes were feared by the anti-clerical politics of the Partido Revolucionario Institutional PRI. However, in the second half of the century, Mexico’s democratization process motivated parties to seek allegiances with social movements like the women’s movement and women’s votes became important. The democratization process was instigated by pressure from the international community. Mexico’s participation in conferences on the status of women and ratification of international treaties to protect women from violence can be seen as a way to show a modern and democratic face to the international community. However, the implementation of these laws fails in various ways. I will illustrate this failure by focusing on the work of a number of governmental organizations.

The organizational field is changing so fast that any account will probably be outdated by the time this is written. Therefore, this chapter aims to give an impression of the existing organizations in the field, and the tensions in their work, but not an exhaustive overview. I will discuss the work of the governmental organization DIF, founded at the time to address population politics, but not an important group in the eradication of violence against women. Although the law stipulates the construction of shelters for women, the only existing shelters are non-governmental. The work of the shelters of two nongovernmental organizations (NGO), Centro Integral A Mujeres y sus Hijos (CIAM- Integrated Centre for Women and their Children) and the Casa de Alegría (House of Happiness), comes to the fore. Furthermore, as an example
of NGO activities on behalf of women, the women’s self-esteem group at the Angel Notion clinic is also discussed. It will be demonstrated that these organizations are hindered by inefficiency, political changes, a lack of money, and corruption. Yet, despite these obstacles, they have managed to affect the discourse and practices of the population in the area. The fact that the public knows about the laws that protect women from violence is an important achievement. It has become normal to call the police to intervene when domestic violence occurs, and the police seem to respond promptly. As the vegetable saleswoman said: “You can’t force anyone to have sex nowadays,” and these laws might perhaps even apply if you are as rich and famous like Kalimba.

7.2 Mexican politics and the recognition of women’s rights
The creation of a multitude of laws and law amendments to protect women has to be seen in light of Mexican history over the last century. I will explain how the laws came about as a result of outside pressure to democratize Mexico’s authoritarian, PRI-ruled, regime.

1917-2000
The current Mexican constitution was drawn up after the revolution in 1917. At the time, the constitution improved women’s rights in the household. Women received custody rights, the right to own property, they could file for divorce, and if they were the “innocent party” then they had rights to alimony. However, women’s importance during the revolution was not rewarded with the right to vote (Craske 2005). Withholding women’s voting rights was not only inspired by patriarchal ideology, but also by the fear of women’s votes. The Revolution had been fueled by deeply anticlerical feelings and women’s clerical sympathies were suspect. Tensions between the clergy and revolutionaries led to a counterrevolution, “the Cristero war”, when president Calles (1924-1928) proposed a draconian law to curb the influence of the church.32 After his presidency, Calles founded the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, which was later known as the PRI.33 This party ruled Mexico

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32 The ‘Calles laws’ required the clergy to apply for a state license. In protest, the church decided to suspend public worship and hold no Sunday masses. A war broke out between the Cristiada cult and the Federal state. The war ended in 1929 with a truce between the state and the church (Butler 2006).

33 The party has had two name changes since it began in 1929. It wasn’t named Partido Revolucionario Institutional (PRI) until 1946, however, for the sake of clarity, I will only use the name PRI.
from 1929 until 2000. Despite a truce between the church and the government, many Mexicans remained unhappy about the secular politics of post-revolutionary Mexico. In 1939, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) was founded as a response to the anti-clerical politics of the PRI (Craske 2005).

Meanwhile, many feminist groups continued to fight for the right to vote, and in 1953, women received full voting rights. However, women had to wait two more decades to receive equal rights. Outside pressure to democratize Mexico in the 1970s coincided with the strengthening of the women’s movement. President Echeverría (1970-1976) began the slow process of democratization by allowing opposition parties and social movements. This gave space to the growth of the women’s movement whose main issues were sexual violence, freedom of sexual choice, and voluntary maternity (Frias 2008:145). Since 1966, US aid policy for “third world” countries was linked to programs for family planning. The UN followed, connecting aid to population politics. Against this background of external pressures and an internally growing feminist movement, President Echeverría created a family planning program. Much against the will of the church, the prohibition on the production and distribution of contraceptives was lifted (Lang 2002:40-41). Policies that began from the idea that the population needed to be controlled led to greater self-determination for women.

In 1974, the Mexican constitution was changed to give women equal rights with men. This was an astounding constitutional change at the time, and was explained by Echeverría as following the UN antidiscrimination policy of 1967 (Lang 2002:41). Echeverría was quite open about his aspirations to become Secretary General of the UN. Mexico hosted the first UN world conference on the status of women in 1975, and it was probably due to the personal
aspirations of the President that the amendment for women’s equal rights was pushed through (Olcott 2010). Under the presidency of Lopes Portillo (1976-1982), population politics (including family planning) continued to be high on the political agenda. The creation of the Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF - the National System for the Integrated Development of the Family), in 1977, was part of governmental family politics. The wife of the President presides over the DIF and is responsible for the implementation of governmental programs for the protection of the family (Lang 2002: 43).

Law reform usually took place at the instigation of the Mexican president. In breach with this custom, the Mexican women’s movement started a procedure in the 1980s to amend the law to augment punishment and deny bail for perpetrators of rape. When this law was finally passed in 1991, it marked an important development within the democratization process in Mexican politics (Lang 2002:50-51). Slowly the road was being paved towards family violence legislation, which was a legally much more difficult issue than rape. The rape law did not include marital rape at the time. Domestic violence, including marital rape, was the concern of the family and was therefore regarded as a private matter (Frias 2008).

In the 1980s and 90s, Mexico signed important international treaties to strengthen and protect the position of women. Mexico’s support for these conventions needed to show that Mexico was in fact a modern state, thus

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34 The UN Convention of the Elimination of all of forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 and was ratified by Mexico in 1981. http://www.inmujeres.gob.mx/ambito-internacional/cedaw.html (last viewed 2-1-2013) The original CEDAW had no instruments to punish those countries who ratified the agreement, but did not live up to its terms. In 1999, a legal instrument was added that created a procedure to report violations to the CEDAW. Mexico signed this addition (Frias 2008). In 1990, President Salinas set up La Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH). In 1993, the year of the UN international human rights conference, the Mexican CNDH hosted a national meeting in the human rights of women (Lang 2002:61). In 1994, the Organization of American States (OAS) organized the Convención Interamericana para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra la Mujer (the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Sanctioning and Eradication of Violence against Women) which has come to be known as the Belém do Pará Convention. This convention demands that the participating countries take active measures to curb violence against women. From the outset, the convention included sanctions against states that didn’t comply. Mexico is one of the countries that ratified the agreement (Frias 2008).
satisfying external pressure for democratic reforms. Internally the president needed support, and the ratification of the treaties was a way to get the women’s movement on his side (Frias 2008). The ratification of international treaties led to new Mexican laws to protect women. In 1995, The Law of Assistance and Prevention of Domestic Violence was accepted; this law was a purely administrative and dictated which organizations could contest domestic violence, and how they were to create awareness of the issue. The initial absence of penal and civil law amendments demonstrates that domestic violence was not seen as a criminal problem, rather it was understood as a social problem that needed to be eradicated by social policies like prevention programs and assistance (Frias 2010 A). Meanwhile, a group of women from various political parties and feminist organizations, who had fought for the amendment in the rape legislation, were working to include family violence in civil and penal codes. The amendment’s bottleneck was the inclusion of marital rape (Frias 2008:195). The world conference on the status of women in Beijing 1995 was the external factor needed to create the momentum for the feminist endeavors. In 1997, the federal civil and penal codes were amended to include domestic violence, and it became a crime punishable by six months to four years imprisonment and was included in the civil code as a reason for divorce and losing custody rights.

The external pressure on Mexico to democratize and modernize had led to the growth of the women’s movement, because social movements gained importance as political allies that were able to push the implementation of the rape laws and the Family Violence Laws. Afterwards, many of the active feminists continued to pursue their goals within politics or NGOs, but the women’s movement lost significance (Frias 2008).

2000-2007
In 2000 the political hegemony of the PRI was broken when Vincente Fox became the first president of PAN. The democratization process, which had involved looking for internal allegiances with social movements and pursuing international recognition as a modern democratic country, had strengthened the women’s movement and benefited the fight for women’s rights. Paradoxically, the completion of the democratization process, with PAN’s victory, actually threatened the advancement of women’s rights. The PAN is a right-wing party. Its Catholic roots are strong and noticeable in the party’s gender ideology. The party promotes a naturalized conception of gender; women roles are seen to be within biological and social reproduction and the traditional family is idealized (Tarrés 2007). Both within and outside the party,
PAN’s gender ideology is feared. From within the party, gender issues are seen as too advanced, while outside the party, feminists fear that women’s rights of voluntary motherhood, free sexual choice and women’s liberation would not advance. Despite these misgivings, the PAN complied with international conventions and internal pressures, and the National Women’s Institute (*Inmujeres*) was installed (Tarrés 2007). Furthermore, the Law of Women’s General Access to a Life without Violence\(^{35}\), which is to eradicate all types of violence against women from lethal violence to sexual harassment, was adopted.

### 7.3 Domestic violence laws in the state of Quintana Roo

The laws mentioned above are federal laws. In addition to these, each of the 31 states of the federation and the federal district has their own constitution, laws and regulations. The federal law has to be in accord with international treaties and the national constitution (CDH 2003). Local (State) laws should be in accordance with the federal law. In 2001, six years after the creation of the federal law, Quintana Roo adopted the Law of Assistance and Prevention of Domestic Violence. Part of this law is the creation of a council to implement policies to assist victims of violence and prevent violence. The DIF, the public prosecutor, *Inmujeres*, the ministries of health, education and security as well as representatives of five NGOs working with domestic violence were to have a place on the council. The NGOs should have had a tradition in the eradication of domestic violence. However, in reality only three NGOs have taken a place on the council: the Red Cross, the Association of Parents, and the CIAM. I will discuss this last organization in more detail in a later section.

In 2004, seven years after the federal civil law amendment, Quintana Roo amended its civil law to include domestic violence.\(^{36}\) In 2006, almost 10 years after the amendment of the federal law, Quintana Roo’s state penal code was amended and domestic violence became punishable by incarceration from six months to five years; the perpetrator can lose custody and inheritance rights.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{35}\) **LEY GENERAL DE ACCESO DE LAS MUJERES A UNA VIDA LIBRE DE VIOLENCIA**
http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGAMVLV.pdf

\(^{36}\) Article 983 civil code of the state of Quintana Roo
http://info4.juridicas.unam.mx/adprojus/leg/24/892/1002.htm? (last viewed 2-1-2013)

\(^{37}\) Article 176 **Quáter penal** code of the state of Quintana Roo:
*Al que cometa el delito de violencia familiar se le impondrá de seis meses a cinco años de prisión, pérdida de la patria potestad o pérdida de la custodia, de los derechos*
Until 2006, despite the federal penal code, domestic violence was not considered to be a crime in Quintana Roo. The federal law against domestic violence is administrative and although it sets an example for the states to follow, it cannot be applied at local level. Only federal laws for major crimes like drug involvement and kidnapping are applied locally. Before the amendment of the local penal code in 2006, a violent spouse would only be prosecuted for injuries, and providing physical evidence was the only way to prosecute a domestic violence case. Only those injuries that were visible for longer than two weeks were severe enough to lead to imprisonment; anything less was at most punished with a fine.

In 2007, another amendment was passed — the law of Women’s General Access to a Life Without Violence. What does the proliferation of rules, regulations and policies mean for women living in Playa del Carmen or Cancún and experiencing domestic violence? Before addressing this question in a more general way, I will first address how organizations function that are central to the implementation of these laws.

7.4 Organizations implementing the laws protecting women from violence

DIF in Playa del Carmen

The DIF was created in 1977 to implement Lopez Portillo’s population policies and over the last 30 years, it has become a well-known organization throughout the country. Each town has a DIF that provides free medical, psychological and legal services. Central within the DIF’s policies is the protection of the family as a whole. This is a goal that can create a tense relationship with the requirement to prevent family violence as stipulated in the law of Assistance and Prevention of Family Violence. The workers of the

hereditarios y de alimentos, y en su caso a juicio del juez, prohibición de ir a una circunscripción territorial determinada o de residir en ella [Those who commit the crime of family violence receive six months to five years imprisonment, lose parental rights or custody, the rights to inheritance and alimnentation, and the judge may impose the prohibition not to go to or reside in a specific area.

http://info4.juridicas.unam.mx/adprojus/leg/24/896/203.htm? (last viewed 2-1-2013)

38 There is an exception. Once some states have created a state law (against family violence), even if your state has not, you can go to the federal court demanding that other states’ laws also apply to you (personal communication Sonia Frias 25-5-2012).

39 Ingrid Flores of the MP special office for sexual and domestic violence explains this as such (23-12-2010), see also Human Rights Watch (2006, Vol. 18, No 1(B))

40 Chapter IV of the penal code Quintana Roo articles 98-104 Lesiones [Injuries].

http://info4.juridicas.unam.mx/adprojus/leg/24/896/102.htm? (last viewed 22-1-2013)
DIF in Cancún and Playa del Carmen seemed to place their responsibility for the victims of violence before their goal to preserve the family. Unfortunately, this did not necessarily mean that they could effectively protect women against violence.

The DIF is divided in many subdivisions, cases of family violence are directed to the Attorney for the Defense of the Minor and the Family\(^\text{41}\) who gives legal advice, or, in case of suspected child abuse, represents the minor at the MP. When this research started, in January 2005, a general expectation was that the DIF would act on behalf of women in cases of domestic violence. Various people mentioned that the governmental organization, DIF, took action against the perpetrators of family violence and men could therefore no longer act violently at home. However, when I visited the DIF’s Attorney for the Defense of the Minor and the Family, searching for possible cooperation in this research, a more humble picture was painted. While waiting for an interview, an elderly lady shared her sorrow about her battered daughter. The employee who talked to me a moment later revealed that there is in fact little he could do for these victims of domestic violence apart from giving some legal advice, and he suggested that I had better seek the cooperation of the DIF in Cancún where they had a specialized center for the victims of violence — the CAVI.

\begin{quote}
Here, there is a psychologist that people can talk to, but if they want a separation they still have to contract a lawyer, since the DIF in Playa does not provide such a service. There are enough plans, but most of them cannot be finalized due to the bureaucracy. The people don’t actually know how inefficient the DIF really is, that is an advantage the DIF still has.
\end{quote}

In Lisa’s case, described in the previous chapter, a lawyer was not necessary. The DIF’s powerful image was enough to make her abusive husband Javier leave. However, if he had refused to go, or if she had wanted to sue him for alimony, the DIF’s inefficiency may have come to the fore.\(^\text{42}\) Since 2006, the DIF has opened two Women’s Centers (CAM) in Playa del Carmen that specialize in helping the victims of domestic violence. They provide counseling to women, and if a woman wants to press charges, they offer to accompany

\begin{footnotes}
\item[41] The Procuraduría de la Defensa del Menor y la Familia
\item[42] Even years later, the DIF’s efficiency may still not have improved. A woman waiting at the public prosecutor’s office told me that neither the DIF nor the Public Prosecutor wanted to help her with her demand for alimony from her ex-husband, a police commander. They had told her to go look for a job and take care of herself (18-2-09).
\end{footnotes}
her to the MP, but they do not provide shelter. The women’s center coordinator mitigates the need for a shelter (in cases of acute danger). Coordinator: “We help her reach her family, if they are in Chetumal, or if they are in Cancún we contact them.” Joan: “And if there is no family?” Coordinator: “There is always someone in the network that can be contacted: neighbors, friends, family, there is always someone.” (CAM 22-3-2007)

While their practical interventions seem to be deficient, much of the DIF’s power rests on its ability to do prevention work. Cooperation with the adolescent division of the DIF allowed me to participate in some of their prevention programs. In addition to individual counseling, they conducted projects focused on preventing social problems like HIV/AIDS, drug use and sexual violence, and often in cooperation with other (governmental) organizations. For their project on sexual violence they visited the schools in the municipality of Solidaridad.

In the aula [meeting room] of the Cecite High School, about a hundred school kids are brought together to listen to the workshops about various types of sexual violence. The DIF’s psychologist talks about “responsible sexuality.” She quizzes the kids with questions.

\begin{quote}
Psychologist: Are sexuality and love the same? 
Kids: No 
Psychologist: No, love is what you feel for your family, for people you have known for a long time and respect. Love and sexuality are not the same...
\end{quote}

The psychologist continues to talk about sexual transmitted diseases, thinking before doing, and the use of condoms. There is no moral lesson hidden in her talk, no message that love and sex should be experienced simultaneously. Despite being part of an organization that has the family unit as the point of departure, she takes the liberty to talk about sexuality in a way that seems to be close to the adolescents’ experiences.

The project takes place over a few days with various speakers from several disciplines who educate the adolescents on multiple aspects of sexual violence. The next day, the project continues with a young female psychologist who also employs a direct way of talking and educates the kids about saying “no”: “No means no, and you can say ‘no’ at any time you like. Sexuality is supposed to be pleasurable, and if women are having pleasure they will lubricate themselves...
Sexual violence is every act that is done against someone will, either physically or psychologically coerced...” (17-3-2005)

Whether they are inefficient, too bureaucratic or unable to actually do something for those who need assistance, the direct way of speaking allows the DIF’s adolescent section to make sure that Playa’s youngsters know they can say “no.” Their projects target large groups of (young) people, often with the attendance of the local media who cover the projects in the local newspaper. This gives the population the idea that the DIF is a powerful organization that will intervene in cases of domestic violence.

Centre for the Victims of Family Violence (CAVI)
The DIF’s CAVI had started a specialized service of conducting a therapy group for male perpetrators of violence in 2003, when only a few of such groups existed throughout the country. Most of CAVI’s services were for women: therapy groups for victims of domestic violence, individual counseling and legal assistance. Sometimes couples came for counseling or to settle a separation. Both couples counseling and participation in the men’s therapy group could be part of the reconciliation process recommended by the DIF, however, they were not legally mandatory. Male participation in therapy was usually not by their own choice, but rather driven by fear of losing their wife. In the group, no more than 15 men were present. There was no fixed group. Some came almost every Wednesday, but most men attended only once or twice. The newcomers were invited to introduce themselves and give their reason for joining the group. The attending psychologist asked them questions to clarify their story. Some of the more experienced group members followed by commenting on the newcomers, or relating their own experiences. After a number of people had spoken, the psychologist gave general comments to everyone. At times, exercises were given in which situations were played out that enabled the men to experience a subjugated position, similar to that of many women. This was an attempt to raise the men’s consciousness about their own powerful masculine position and to create empathy for women’s positions. Some men in the group mentioned their own violence as a reason for coming, but most denied being violent. In general, reasons for coming to the CAVI were marital problems and some men said their wives had problems with their drinking behavior. For other men, problems with their children were the reason they were seeking help. Strikingly, there was little overt talk of violent behavior within the men’s group; the overall focus was more on cognition and creating awareness about gender relations than on actual behavior.
In one of the sessions, a man comes in half way through and his body language is expressing anger, as if he does not want to be there. When asked to introduce himself, the man tells the group about his extra-marital affair:

Mario: I have been married for 12 years, have two kids, and now I have this other girl as well. I just don’t know what to do, I definitely don’t want to leave my wife, but I don’t want to leave this girl either. What do I do? It is like I am addicted, I know what I do is wrong, but I don’t know how to stop. It hurts too much to have to choose between them, I don’t eat anymore; I don’t sleep very well.

Therapist: I am trying to find out what really is the problem?

Mario: Well, I came here to hopefully bring some peace back into the family. I don’t want to lose my kids, with my eight-year-old I go anywhere, I don’t want to lose that bond, I grew up without parents myself, I don’t want that for them, and then there is that of the violence, I can have a bad temper.

Therapist: Why doesn’t your wife leave you?

Mario: I don’t know, she can go if she wants, there is money, and I am gone to work in the evenings, so she is free to go.

Therapist: Maybe she is afraid?

Mario: Yes, maybe. (7-12-05)

Forty-five minutes before the end of the session, Mario got up, shook everyone’s hand, and said he’d be back next week; but Mario never came back. His wife, Irma, did come to the women’s group two days later, and her account of the relationship was a quite different than Mario’s. Irma was a young woman who was alarmingly skinny. She carried a thin listless child, and in her hands she had a bag of potato chips from which she fed her child a crumb now and then. She made a desperate impression.

I don’t know what I want, the only thing I know is that I want this life to stop, I don’t care about my stuff, the house, anything, I just want it to stop, sometimes I lie in bed and hope I don’t wake up anymore. I am so frightened of my husband; he is so aggressive. He has threatened to hurt my family if I leave. I try not to provoke him, he wants sex every time, even if I have my period, I just let him, if not he might become aggressive.
The CAVI had no shelter to offer her. CAVI’s interventions were focused on making women stronger through therapy, and many women seemed to benefit from the therapy. The attendance at the Saturday afternoons was large, at times as many as 30 women participated. The groups’ success resulted in additional groups on weekdays. However, apart from empowering the women, CAVI had no actual means to protect Irma or other women in danger. They had no means to make her partner come back to the group, and it wasn’t even certain that the men’s therapy group would continue to exist.

Despite the fact that the law requires governmental organizations to make provisions to eradicate domestic violence, CAVI had to struggle for money. The government had initially subsidized a psychologist to start the men’s group, but he had continued his work unpaid. The workers of the women’s group were still on the payroll, but there seemed to be little security about continued financial support for the center. Apart from the collective insecurity of the center as a whole, there was also individual insecurity about job continuation. To some extent, job insecurity comes with being employed in the higher echelons of governmental organizations in Mexico.

Within the Mexican political system, individual reelections do not occur. Even if the same party is reelected, seats will be given to new candidates. After the elections, a new president introduces his own governmental programs and his predecessor’s projects come to an end (Nuyten 1998:304). With every presidential change the positions of high- and mid-level personnel in the governmental bureaucracy will change. This shuffle means that there is little continuation of projects, much job experience evaporates, and new people guide the projects and organizations with new directions after every election. Because the middle and higher echelons of bureaucracy depend on their governmental contacts, much of their time must be spent in reaffirming the right connections (Nuyten 1998). Despite the democratization process, this system has not been overturned. The DIF is a particular case in point. The “First Lady” presides over the DIF at the national level and at the local level the mayor’s wife is the president of the local DIF. After every local election, a new mayor (and the new mayor’s wife) will be instated and certain policies will change. New projects will be taken on and new people will guide those projects. In between my first and second fieldwork phases, local elections had taken place and when I came back to the field, the psychologist, who had always supported my presence in the group, had become coordinator of the DIF’s children’s home (CAT). This promotion meant that he had to manage a poor, ill-equipped home full of abused children, and a staff that didn’t know
how to manage the children’s behavioral problems in a pedagogic way. His coordinating tasks resulted in him arriving late at most meetings of the men’s group and gradually he was replaced by another psychologist. The elections also affected me. I was told that policies had changed and that outsiders were no longer accepted in the therapy groups. As a result of the elections I had lost the contact that was most in favor of my presence in the groups and I had not managed to invest enough in other contacts in CAVI. Thus, the elections meant the end of our cooperation (see chapter 3).

While CAVI offers the much-needed service to both victims and perpetrators of violence that the law requires of them, their continuity is not guaranteed and is vulnerable to political changes. Their ability to reach violent men is limited to those who volunteer to come, and their help to women is limited to counseling and advice. No shelter can be provided for women in imminent danger.

Figure 5. Freedom is not a dream, you have the power, live without violence!!!

The Health Center “Angel Notion”

In addition to the governmental organizations, there are a number of NGOs focused on providing help for women, like CIAM and Casa de Alegría described in the next sections. It is popular to work on women’s issues and some NGOs
have developed activities for women aside from their main work. “Angel Notion” is a health center in Playa del Carmen that at the time of my research (2005-2006) had a self-esteem group for women. Angel Notion had started as a project that provided the poor local population with specialized medical care by volunteer American medical specialists. The success of the project was rewarded by the municipality with a clinic in one of the town’s new popular neighborhoods. With the start of the clinic, a more general health service was provided. A local general practitioner was present several days a week and a local massage therapist gave massages for a small fee. The stable core of the clinic consisted of the women from the local community, who were given jobs as secretaries and maintenance workers.

The vice president of the center was Judith Aguilar. I first met her for an interview in January 2005. Judith is a short blond woman in her late forties and immaculately dressed. She was a former politician who worked for the PRI in the local government in Chetumal. She quickly came to the point and filled me in on the state of affairs in Quintana Roo:

*Things are not going well for women. Violence happens more in Quintana Roo than anywhere else in Mexico according to recent numbers from the Human Rights Committee.*

Later that day I heard Judith repeat those words at a women’s rally in the Plaza Pelicanos, one of the towns shopping malls, where she was trying to get women to vote for the PRI in the next elections.

Since Judith had officially said goodbye to state politics, she worked for the clinic. Although women’s empowerment is not the Health Center’s core business, Judith’s interest in women’s rights had translated into the creation of a self-esteem group for women. Judith was quite well known for her radio shows and her self-esteem group drew several women to the clinic. Although she is trained as a social scientist, Judith is referred to as the psychologist within the clinic. The available therapies in the clinic mirrored the flux of town as therapists came and went. Sometimes, the clinic offered yoga, or reiki, at

*Comission de los Derechos Humanos (CDH)*

*Instituto Quintanaroense de la Mujer, the local institute of the national INMUJERES*
other times they offered fat-reducing massages or iridology. Some therapists
seemed to have little training, but diplomas or references were not requested.
The fact that most therapists were white or came from Westernized countries
seemed enough to render them credibility in the eyes of the staff and the
patients. I was invited to join the Health Center as one of those therapists.

I had given a workshop on alcohol and drug use in the clinic, and most of the
women in my workshop had actually come for Judith’s self-esteem group, but
were too early. Afterwards, Judith invited me to stay for the self-esteem group
that starts with acoustic music: “Close your eyes and feel the vibrations,
imagine geometric figures full of light entering.” After a few minutes of this
guided meditation she asked the women what they saw. A woman, who had
shared her experiences with her violent husband in my workshop, tells Judith
about the beautiful colors and the lights she has seen. Judith: “Do you
remember when you came at first and all was dark?” Judith gave another
meditation exercise, she handed out drawings of colorful geometrical figures,
and the group was requested to concentrate on the figures. Then they were
told to close their eyes, concentrate again on the figures, close eyes, and finally
keep their eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Afterwards, Judith evaluates
the exercise:

This exercise is very effective. We have started working with the
teachers in Cozumel and their lives are so much better now. Teachers
who were on sleeping pills are now off their sleeping pills. Teachers
with depression are not depressed anymore. Because you know what a
depression is? It is a lack of serotonin, and the music will restore your
serotonin... An older lady shows her medication to Judith. In a month’s
time, you won’t need those anymore, you will just sleep.

Another woman said that she was so much more aware since coming to the
group. She was a nurse, and she used to fight to get through the day, that was
her only goal — just getting by. Now she really paid attention to her patients.
She had to use pills for high blood pressure, however, lately she had forgotten
to take her pill, and when she went to the doctor her pressure was just fine.
Judith comments:

It is like an apartment building with 43 floors, the floors represent
levels of consciousness, and you are reaching higher levels of
consciousness. This we also notice while working in Cozumel with the
teachers there, imagine they sometimes see more than 80 kids a day,
40 in the morning 40 in the afternoon, imagine how tired they were, but with the music they are coping better, and sleeping better.

The woman’s problems with her abusive alcoholic husband that she mentioned in the alcohol and drugs workshop were not referred to now. Judith showed a picture of bodies full of light with the chakras made visible and two figures on each side of the body:

We all have two angels accompanying us, one on the left and one on the right side of us, all we have to do is call them if we need their help, if we don’t feel their presence, it is because we don’t invoke their help. Next week we will talk about mother Maria, everyone should take pencils so we can make drawings. (24-2-05)

The abusive situations the women lived through, whether they came from their work situations or their families, were not topic of discussion. The therapeutic essence consisted of giving attention. The women did seem content with the group, but I wondered whether the group’s goal of gaining self-esteem would be met with this therapy. Apparently, in individual sessions, domestic violence did come to the fore. While seeing a patient, Judith came looking for me asking me for the number of the CIAM. One of her patients, Celina, a young woman with a traumatic childhood and an abusive husband was in a situation of acute violence and needed shelter. Together with another volunteer, I accompanied Celina and her two small children to the CIAM in Cancún (18-01-06).
Los niños opinan

Lorena Curia para Novedades en la educación.

- Posteriormente los chicos respondieron este cuestionario:
1- ¿Por qué se celebra el Día Internacional de la Mujer?
2- ¿Cómo se respectan los derechos de las mujeres?
3- Si no se respetan, ¿qué harías para cambiar esta situación?

Jesús: “Antes los hombres los tenían más en cuenta”

Luis López Arellano
1- Es un día que conmemora a las mujeres y nos hace recordar cómo eran maltratadas por los hombres en el siglo pasado.
2- No se respetan los derechos de las mujeres, porque algunas mujeres siguen siendo maltratadas por algunos hombres.
3- Hay que hacer que los hombres y mujeres entendan que las mujeres también tienen derechos.

Maritza Witx Xool
2- No se respetan los derechos de las mujeres.
3- Hay que hacer que los hombres se den cuenta de los derechos de las mujeres.

Viviana Catzin Escamilla
2- Las mujeres siguen siendo maltratadas y las hacen trabajar mucho.

Carlos Uc Hidalgo
1- Hace mucho tiempo en la época de los abuelos, las mujeres estaban trabajando y las maltrataban.
2- La mujer no goza de sus derechos porque siguen siendo maltratadas.
3- Yo diría que en la televisión, los programas donde las mujeres son respetadas o dan pautas para que se respeten.

Luis: Las mujeres creen que son más inteligentes y fuertes y que las mujeres solo sirven para lavar y planchar y cuando no hacen las cosas bien son maltratadas.

Carlos: Pero hay no es tan así, son más respetadas, pero todavía hay mujeres maltratadas.

Luis: Si, por ejemplo en Ciudad Juárez, matan a la mujer.

Jesús: Todavía hay asesinatos, violaciones, maltrato. En el barrio de Ciencias dice que quiere en treinta años la mujer sea la que está trabajando y el hombre en casa cuidando a los hijos.

Luis: Yo haría pláticas para que se hable más de la comunicación entre los dos...
The Integrated Women’s Centre (CIAM)
The initiatives and agencies that help the victims of violence have been growing in recent years. However, at this time, the State of Quintana Roo has no state-funded shelters. Only two non-governmental shelters exist: the CIAM and the Casa de Alegría and both are located in Cancún. Even though the CIAM is one of the three NGOs that has a place in the state council for the Assistance and Prevention of Family Violence, this state recognition does not mean that CIAM can do its work for the victims of extreme violence unhindered. CIAM can count on regular media attention, not only because of the shelter and prevention programs for the community, but also because of the activities of Lydia Cacho, one of its founding mothers and president. Cacho is part of a group of feminist activists and journalists whose work is focused on women’s and children’s rights and the need to transform Mexico’s laws and justice system. CIAM is only one part of their work; the other is targeting the media as a vehicle for change.  

Early in 2005, the CIAM workers, and Lydia Cacho specifically, received death threats because they protected a woman who had been transferred from another shelter. The woman had to be transferred when her husband had entered the shelter with a gun and threatened to kill the staff. The death threats continued in Cancún. The case was even more newsworthy because the man was an ex-police officer of an anti-kidnap unit of the Agencia Federal de Investigación (AFI- Federal Investigation Agency). When filing a complaint at the MP in Cancún, Cacho was warned not to get involved in this case because the man was well protected. Cacho and CIAM received no police protection.

By the end of 2005, Lydia Cacho made daily headlines in the newspapers, not only in Quintana Roo but even internationally. In her novel, Los Demonios del Eden (2005), she unraveled a network of pedophiles. In December 2005, one of the alleged pedophiles, José Camel Nacif, a businessman and citizen of Puebla, filed charges against Cacho for slander. The judge in Puebla saw cause for Cacho’s arrest. Cacho was not given a subpoena, but instead a car was sent 2000 kilometers to Cancún to bring her to prison in Puebla. This remarkable

References:
45 CIAM, Investigation
http://www.ciamcancun.org/eng/investigation.html (last viewed 02-1-2013)
46 AFI- the Mexican equivalent of the FBI
47 Amnesty International. Menaces de Mort. Lydia Cacho Ribeiro
arrest had been possible because of Nacif’s close relationship with the governor of Puebla, Mario Marín. After these extraordinary facts, a tape of a telephone conversation between Nacif and Mario Marín was made public in which Nacif called the governor: “Mi hero, mi gober precioso” [my hero, my precious governor] and asked him where he could send the bottle of cognac to thank him. Another tape, with the voice of Nacif saying he ordered Puebla’s prison director to lock up Cacho with madwomen and lesbians, was made public. After 24 hours, Cacho was released on bail, but she still had to report to the court in Puebla every week. In 2007, the charges against Cacho were dropped. The public outcry did not lead to the governor’s resignation or his prosecution, and he served until the end of his term. Thus, Cacho became a victim of the system that she and her organization were trying to convert.

Despite the threats and dangers that surround CIAM, it is centrally located in a normal middle-class neighborhood in Cancún. There is no secrecy about the location. The house does not have a guard, only an iron gate like most other houses in this type of neighborhood. In May 2010, CIAM was besieged again by municipal police officers, when the wife and small children of a police officer were seeking refuge in the center. The police officer and his colleagues demanded entry into CIAM to arrest Lydia Cacho for kidnapping. They refused to show identification or an arrest warrant and they banged on CIAM’s door and threatened to kill the inhabitants. This took place while there was an absence in Cancún’s leadership due to the mayor’s incarceration. The police chief refused to answer Cacho’s pleas for help and the governor of Quintana Roo could not spare the resources to protect CIAM. The repeated threats to CIAM, with either the involvement of the government and security forces or by their refusal to intervene, made the CIAM an unsafe place for women and children who flee situations of extreme violence.

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49 This conversation brought national outrage. The tapes can be heard via YouTube uploaded 29-5-2009 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipSdFC_ql7I&NR=1 (last viewed 2-1-2013).
La Ciudad de Alegría

CIAM cannot offer shelter to Celina, who with the help of the Angel Notion clinic had fled Playa del Carmen together with her children. Instead she is referred to the Ciudad de Alegría, situated in a spacious location on the outskirts of town. La Ciudad de Alegría opened its doors in 2003, and the buildings still look fresh and new. In contrast to the cramped city space of CIAM, the Ciudad de Alegría appears to be a sea of tranquility. No iron walls to protect the women. There is one guard outside the premises. Women who are pursued by their violent partners will clearly find no safety here. There are various buildings, surrounded by fields of grass. Each building represents a specific function. There is a house for the elderly, a house for terminal patients, mostly suffering from HIV/AIDS, and there is the Women’s House where Celina and her children are directed. The house is operated by a group of friendly nuns. Celina is shown around the premises. There is a dormitory, a nursery that is operated by young women in turns between school and work. There is a spacious kitchen, a living room, a room with sewing machines and a handicrafts/workshop room. The house provides shelter especially for young mothers (to be) and their young children who have become victims of violence and abuse. Most of the women are between 14 and 20, and approximately 60 women a year who need shelter can find a temporary home within the House.51 Some women leave quite quickly, since they are unable to fit into the safety and structure of life in the house, while others stay for several months. The nuns guide the women through the structure of the day. They are there during the meals to make sure that the women follow their programs and behave themselves in the group. Many of the services available to the women however, are provided by non-clerical professionals. The women receive medical assistance, as well as psychological counseling to try to come to terms with the often-traumatic life events that brought them here. The stay is intended for the women to learn to build a life of their own. The home has connections with various businesses that provide a workplace for the women. Within the house, courses are organized to prepare the women for life outside the home. For young women who are in no immediate danger from a partner or family members, the Casa de Alegría provides a good home where they are taught to live independently, thus enabling them to build a life on their own and not be forced to rely on a violent spouse out of economic necessity. Celine was invited to stay but didn’t seem very relieved. The prospect of eventually having to go to work and leaving her little children behind in the care of other women worried her. She did decide to stay, possibly because she saw no other options, or perhaps because she felt she ought to. However, two days after her

51 www.ciudadAlegría.com Informe Annual 2006 pdf
arrival, her brother came to collect her and take her and her little girls back to her family in Chiapas.

7.5 The laws in practice
As we have seen, the organizations that intended to implement the laws to protect women from violence do not work flawlessly, but together with the media they have brought about an awareness of domestic and sexual violence in the general population of Playa del Carmen and Cancún. Domestic and sexual violence are becoming less “normal” occurrences that women just have to accept as part of their lives. Today, many people call the police to report domestic or sexual violence but then, how are these cases addressed in practice? We will see that rape cases are managed more promptly, but not necessarily more efficiently than cases of domestic violence. Men incarcerated for sexual violence are predominantly poor people. The sad narrative that ends this chapter tells the tale of a man whose awareness of both domestic and sexual violence had been raised. In his case, the law has been followed, however, neither the law nor his awareness could keep him from violating his stepdaughter.

7.6 Family violence laws in practice

January 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2008: I am awoken by a female voice screaming: “Help me, help me”; her terror is palpable. I get out of bed and stand on the veranda trying to locate the screams. Some of my downstairs neighbors are in the garden. “Call the police”, one of them calls out to her boyfriend. Once he has done this, they all start yelling: “We have called the police!” in the direction of the voice that keeps on screaming: “Help”. The voice comes from a room on the second floor of the building next door. On my veranda, I can see a woman fleeing the house. Apparently wanting to protect her, one of my male downstairs neighbors is running towards the back of our house going towards the street. “He is going to kill her”, he shouts. The five of us follow her assailant out on the street; the police arrive at almost the same time. However, their interventions are no longer needed, the woman has managed to escape.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{52} Field notes 2-1-2008
This excerpt from my diary in 2008 shows that both men and women respond to a woman who is being assaulted, and the police arrive promptly when called. In the last seven months of 2008, the alarm number was called 1,300 times in the Playa del Carmen area, as people sought intervention for spousal domestic violence. However, the police cannot always fulfill the expectations that the family violence laws create. The police have no investigative power; they can only act when a crime is occurring and they can catch the perpetrator red-handed. When the perpetrator of domestic violence has fled the premises or when the victim is not able to call right away, no arrest can officially be made. Furthermore, there has to be someone to let them into the building, because the police are not allowed to enter private property without permission. Even if the police are informed about a domestic violence case, they can witness the violence from outside the premises, but they cannot interfere if there is no one to allow them inside. Yet, of the 1,300 phone calls for domestic violence to the alarm number 066, there were 548 arrests made. Possibly the police are too liberal with these rules. A police officer explained that it is the assaulted woman who decides what should happen, and often the victims simply request that the aggressor be removed from the premises. If the woman wants her spouse to be incarcerated, then that is what happens. Once an arrest is made, the prosecutor has 48 hours to gather evidence, but in most cases the victim refrains from pursuing the case; they often even come to the MP requesting that their partner be set free. When a crime has been committed, and there is no longer a chance of catching the perpetrator red-handed, people generally turn to the local MP rather than to the police. Unlike the police, the MP has agents with investigative power, however, in the entire municipality of Solidaridad, there are only 10 active agents. In 2006, all local MPs were expanded with special units to attend to the victims of family

53 Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, coordinación de Análisis y Estadísticas del 066 de Emergencias, Incidentes de Violencia Intrafamiliar Junio 2008 a Septiembre 2009 (statistics of the region of Solidaridad, Tulum Cozumel)
54 Personal communication with procuradora del defenso del menor y de la familia de Quintana Roo 26-1-2010
55 Conversation with an unknown policeman on the topic of the police responding to domestic violence 23-2-2011
56 Solidaridad has a population of 159,310 inhabitants.
http://www.INEGI.org.mx/sistemas/mexicocifras/default.aspx?e=23 (last viewed 2-1-2013)
57 Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado.
http://pgje.qroo.gob.mx/Estadisticas/AnuarioEstadsitico.pdf for a population of 158,571
http://www.solidaridad.gob.mx/index.php/features/poblacion (viewed 3-3-2011)
and sexual violence. These offices are to ensure a more sensitive treatment towards the victims. However, these special offices do not reduce the procedural complexity that preparing a family violence case to be judged in court can take, usually months. The numbers of family violence cases that are officially investigated by the state MP are too low to even be taken into account by statistics. Most women who come to the special unit of the MP for domestic violence do not want to press charges. They seek guidance and help, but usually defer legal interventions. They may be referred to the DIF for counseling, or to the civil judge for a divorce.

The experiences of the MP in Playa del Carmen coincide with a general pattern in other Mexican states as well. Frias (2010b) notes that only a small percentage (22.93%) of women who have experienced domestic violence will actually seek legal intervention. Only 40% of them actually pressed charges.

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58 Personal communication with the juridical department Seguridad Pública Solidaridad 21-2-2011
59 The MP did investigate a large number of cases of women who were victims of injury (990 women versus 1,295 men). Possibly a number these cases stem from domestic violence, but they are not prosecuted as such.
http://pgje.qroo.gob.mx/Estadisticas/AnuarioEstadsitico.pdf
60 Personal communication with Ingrid Flores, head of the special unit for sexual and domestic crimes, 16-2-2011
and in 15% of the cases, the partner was arrested, while 3.3% of the women were granted a protection order. Remarkably, this low level of legal action coincides with a high level of satisfaction with the treatment received at the MP. Apparently, most women do not necessarily seek legal action. Many seem to seek the help of the authorities to tell their partners off and warn them of the possible legal consequences of their violent behavior (ibid). A police official, who formerly worked for the MP explained that the possible financial consequences of filing charges against a violent spouse deters most women. A spouse’s incarceration means that the woman loses the income she depends on. Most women who seek help at the MP are poor and they do not have an income of their own. They would rather suffer more violence than leave their children without food. As long as there are few shelters for these women to enable them to find a safe place to search for work and build a new life, they will remain dependent on their violent husbands. In turn, women’s refusal to file charges creates cynicism in the workers of the police, the DIF and the MP, who may feel as if they are helping women who are not willing to be helped (see also Frias 2010a).61

Figure 8. In another cynical report, Por Esto (13 December 2007, p 6) quotes the popular saying: “Hit me, but do not leave me”, referring to a woman who comes to the defense of her “holy husband” after he has been incarcerated for domestic violence.

7.7 Sexual violence laws in practice
Sexual violence, as long as it does not occur within marriage, is legally a less problematical issue. Sexual violence is described in Quintana Roo’s penal code under the Crimes against Freedom and Sexual Security.62 It includes rape, sexual abuse, sex with minors, and sexual harassment. Rape outside of

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61 Personal communication with a licencia at Seguridad Pública Playa del Carmen, who in addition to her juridical work for the police has worked for the public prosecutor in Cancún (21-2-2011)
62 Delitos contra la Libertad y Seguridad Sexual Art 127-131ter
marriage is punished with a minimum of 10 years imprisonment. However, marital rape is described as “Family Violence”\textsuperscript{63} and is only punishable with six months to five years imprisonment. Frias (2008) argues that the family violence laws, as well as the recognition of marital rape are problematical because they impinge on the privacy of the family. However, the penalty for rape drastically increases when there is abuse of authority involved, especially parental authority whether natural or not.

In 2008, the MP of the municipality of Solidaridad started 159 sex crime investigations.\textsuperscript{64} According to the MP’s special unit, in only 30-40\% of these cases enough evidence could be found to actually bring a case before the court. Retraction of reports is not an issue here, when minors are involved, a retraction is not possible. When someone reports a suspected case of child sex abuse to the DIF or directly to the MP, the presumed victim is taken into temporary custody by the DIF and the case is always investigated. When enough grounds are present to bring a case before a judge, the accused is incarcerated while waiting to be tried. No bail is possible for rape cases, and no time limit is given to the judge to rule. One can be incarcerated pending trial for as long as the maximum sentence would last. One of the informants in the next chapter, Izmael, was accused of attempting to rape his stepdaughter. He spent three years in prison before he was absolved of all charges for lack of evidence. About 20\% of the incarcerated men in Playa del Carmen’s municipal prison are accused of sex crimes. Many of the accused spoke of corruption in the legal apparatus, and an absence of proper procedures. Izmael gave his testimony to the MP without the presence of a translator of his native Indian language, Tzetal, even though he could not speak Spanish. An informant in a wheelchair, whose legs had been severed in an accident years before his alleged crime, spent 20 months in prison for rape and kidnapping. Another was accused of rape by his spouse, however, when she retracted her accusation, she was imprisoned. Even her incarceration did not result in his release. The prosecution seems eager to take on cases of sexual violence, but is not always sufficiently equipped to build a case. Poor people are over-represented in the penal system, as we will also see in chapter 9. They have no resources to hire a private lawyer or to bribe the police to release them.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Violencia Intrafamiliar} Art 176 bis
\textsuperscript{64} \url{http://pgje.qroo.gob.mx/Estadisticas/AnuarioEstadistico.pdf}
7.8 Public awareness of domestic and sexual violence as punishable crimes

The eagerness of the prosecutor to take on cases of sexual abuse reflects the fact that it is a “hot topic” and is illustrated by the following interview with a prisoner, Juan. His narrative is not only a testimony of the awareness that domestic and sexual violence can be reported to the MP, but that filing a report is increasingly becoming the norm. In this case, the education of “good touching” and “bad touching” backfired on the interviewee. The interviewee contrasts the narrative of his own sexual abuse, unconsciously committed under the influence of many substances with a story that portrays him as a man who helps women in cases of domestic violence.

Look, I had been drinking white wine at work. A colleague of mine sent me a message inviting me to get together. I still had a bottle of vodka at home. I had to wait for him where we were supposed to meet and while waiting I saw a fight between a couple. The woman managed to escape with her baby through the window. She was crying for help and I helped her into a taxi. When I got home, to get my bottle of vodka, I ran into the woman again. So I got up to her and told her: “Madam you shouldn’t let him hit you, let’s go to the MP, this is not a game, look at your wounds!” So I brought her to the MP and afterwards I went to my friend’s house. We drank vodka; another friend was there who had cocaine. Later on, I went home, my daughter was sleeping in my bed and I stepped in bed beside her. When I got out of bed to throw up, I saw the police in front of our house, and my daughter was crying. I asked what was going on and my wife said that our daughter had told her I had touched her. My wife said to me: “You have always said to her that she needed to tell us if something like that happened to her.”

Juan said to have no memory of what had occurred, but accepted his daughter’s accusations as the truth. Throughout the interview, he tried to analyze how he had come to sexually molest his daughter. The problem of sexual abuse is very complex, and from this narrative several messages can be deduced. First, it demonstrates that teaching children about “good touching” and “bad touching” is becoming a normal practice. Second, it shows that youngsters are taken seriously even if they testify against their own parents. Finally, this story also shows that certain gendered structures have changed, laws have changed, and awareness is created through government and other media. The police will act on calls about family violence. However, creating awareness does not immediately stop sexual violence, for even those who are aware and believe in women’s rights can use violence against women at the
same time. Individual gendered practices are firmly rooted and changing those practices takes time.

7.9 Conclusion
The advancement of women’s rights was a process linked to the democratization process in Mexico that started in the 1970s. The international community pressured Mexico’s authoritarian regime to democratize. Whereas, the ruling party PRI had stalled women’s voting rights until the 1950s, fearing women’s sympathies with the church, within the democratization process women gained importance as voters. In the 1970s, opposition parties and social movements were no longer banned from participation in politics. The women’s movement flourished. Internally, the regime needed the support from the women’s movement to create legitimacy, and externally to show the international community that Mexico was a democratic and modern country that took women’s issues to heart.

The women’s movement was a collection of diverse groups of women, but they united to change legislation on behalf of women. After successfully amending the rape legislation, they moved forward with family violence legislation, which was a difficult topic since it impinged on the integrity of the family. Mexico supported women’s causes by participating and hosting international conferences on the status of women and signing treaties for the eradication of violence against women. Although the participation in international conferences was inspired by foreign politics and personal aspirations, rather than commitment to women’s issues, it still resulted in amendments to the federal constitution that addressed family violence and even marital rape. However, the fact that political rather than ethical motives resulted in law changes may be the cause of the failing implementation of laws and policies. It took several years before federal laws were implemented at the state level. Even though Quintana Roo has advanced laws to protect women, the execution of these laws fails. The police have no authority to investigate cases, they have no authority to enter the premises where violence is occurring, and they cannot intervene unless they catch a perpetrator of violence in the act. The agents of the MP have investigative power but are understaffed. Many sexual violence cases are prosecuted, but often without proper investigation into the case. Those with the resources can pay the agents to drop their cases, those who do not end up in prison. Domestic violence cases are rarely prosecuted. Many women call the police and many go to the MP to complain about their violent husbands, but most women do not want the partners they are dependent on to go to prison for more than a few hours
to cool down. In the absence of shelters, women may feel they have no options but to stay with their violent spouse.

Activities geared towards the prevention and awareness of domestic violence do seem quite effective. The governmental organization DIF plays an important role herein. In Playa del Carmen, one can choose between the DIF’s two new Centros de Atención a la Mujer (CAM- women’s centers), or the DIF’s Attorney for the Defense of the Minor and the Family, when seeking advice or counseling. The DIF does a successful job bringing the message to the public that violence is not acceptable. The messages of the DIF and that of other organizations and media create a general awareness and sensitivity to the topic of domestic violence. It also creates the impression that the DIF is a powerful organization. However, their practical help fails, neither they nor any other governmental organization in Quintana Roo provide shelter for battered women. In fact, one of the two existing (non-governmental) shelters, CIAM, is severely hindered in its functioning. Tardy amendments to the penal law, years after the administrative law, and the failures in the execution of the laws betray an unwillingness to see domestic violence as a criminal offense instead of a private dispute.

For women like Lisa, who managed to change the marital balance of power through a couple of meetings with the DIF, appointments for counseling or legal advice can be very effective. However, for those women in immediate danger, there are no adequate provisions notwithstanding all the laws and policies of the last decades. Moreover, despite all policies, organizational efforts, and media attention given to the topic of domestic violence, little attention is paid to men. Men, who cause violence, have a right to psychotherapy according to the law, and this is provided to them by the DIF. However, there are no mandatory programs. In an effort to right the wrongs of the past and to balance the existing inequality between men and women, almost all attention is paid to women.

And what happened to the Kalimba case? While the media are very important in getting the message across to women that they can say: “No” to unwanted sexual contact, they have no qualms about using this case as a media show. The popular show, Cosas de la Vida [Things of Life], 65 interviewed Daiana’s friend Thaily. Thaily had made an earlier statement on Daiana’s behalf, but

65 Entrevista de Rocio Sanchez Azuara a Thaily en Cosas de la Vida
Broadcasted 20-1-2011  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gitixtb16wM (last viewed 2-1-2013)
now declared that she did not know anything about a rape having taken place. To give her declarations credit, she was given a lie detector test. At the end of the show, the hostess Rocio Sanchez Azuara promised to help Thaily start her dream career in television in gratitude for her honesty on the show. Thaily and Daiana became enemies in the media. Seventeen-year-old Daiana was branded as an unscrupulous woman out for money. Even the woman who was contacted to be Daiana’s lawyer, Wendolin Gutierez, declared in front of national television,\(^6\) in an apparent breach of lawyer-client confidentiality, that she had found Daiana’s account of what has happened so inconsistent that she did not want to represent her. On January 27\(^{th}\), the judge delivered his verdict. Crime sentences had recently been adapted, and since June 2010, the minimum sentence for rape was 25 years. However, the judge ruled that Kalimba was free to go on the basis of a lack of evidence of force. The prosecutor Alor Quesada, who was criticized by the public for prosecuting this case, was now heavily critiqued by organizations like the Commission of Human Rights for the defeat.\(^6\)

Whether Daiana had consensual sex or was in fact raped, it was clear that no justice was done for the 17-year-old girl. In the end, it seemed like it Daiana was the one who was prosecuted and not Kalimba, even though Kalimba could have been prosecuted for having had consensual sex with a minor (\textit{estupro}).

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In this interview, Gutierez reveals that the real reason for Daiana’s reported rape was the fact that she had come home late and she needed an excuse. She had been thrown out of the house before when one of the family members had sexually molested her and Daiana had told her aunt about it.

Chapter 8: Migrating to Make a Change and Changing Gender Relations

8.1 Introduction

Only a small minority of the residents of Playa del Carmen and Cancún were actually born there. The population in the state of Quintana Roo has undergone an explosive growth since the government decided to convert the fishing village of Benito Juarez into a tourist town. Migration is largely responsible for this growth. Quintana Roo has the highest number of immigrants of any of the Mexican states — 54 % of the population. Most migrants reside in one of the two largest municipalities: Benito Juarez, which includes Cancún, or in Solidaridad, which includes Playa del Carmen. In 2005, Quintana Roo received 100,680 migrants; however, international migrants form only 0.3% of the population (INEGI 2011). Most migrants are Mexicans from the states of Yucatan, Tabasco, Veracruz and Chiapas (INEGI). Quintana Roo has the country’s fourth largest indigenous population (after Oaxaca, Yucatan and Chiapas) and 16.7 % of the population speaks an indigenous language.

The research participants of this project were all migrants. About half of them came from a rural background and had grown up on farms or in small villages. Some migrants stayed only temporarily and planned to move back to their place of origin as soon as possible. Others considered themselves permanent residents of the area. Improvement of one’s economic situation is generally the motivation to migrate to this tourist area. This was the case for the men who participated in my study and for them, moving from place to place was a recurring pattern. Although only occasionally made explicit, for some participants migration was not just to improve their economic status, but also, or more importantly, to flee from the law or people seeking revenge. Tourism has brought a rich club scene to Playa del Carmen and Cancún, and drugs are

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68 INEGI Perspectiva Estadística Quintana Roo, March 2011

http://www.INEGI.org.mx/est/contenidos/espanol/sistemas/perspectivas/perspectiva-
qr.pdf (Viewed 11-04-2011)

69 http://cuentame.INEGI.org.mx/monografias/informacion/qroo/poblacion/m_migrat
orios.aspx?tema=me&e=23(Viewed 11-04-2011)
widely available. The towns are known as places where anything goes — perfect, anonymous fast-pace towns where one can hide.

In this chapter, I focus on the change in gender relationships in the context of social transformations among my study participants who are all migrants. I illustrate the various changes primarily through the stories of two rural migrants: Izmael and Patricia. Their narratives explore the effects of social transformations on gender relations from a male and female perspective. I address the idea of male disempowerment and the perceived connection to violence. I will argue that the migration process can bring feelings of disempowerment, which partly stem from the (relative) protection the laws and governmental organizations give to women in this tourist zone. Whether this leads to an increase of violence against women is an issue that will finally be discussed. I start by giving background information on the gendered aspects of migration.

8.2 Gendered aspects of migration
Patterns of migration are gendered. Men and women have reasons for migration that are not the same. Most rural Mexican women migrate either before getting married or after a separation. Once they are married they are less likely to migrate, irrespective of whether they have children or not. The married females who do migrate usually do so to reunite with their migrant husbands (Kanaiaupuni 2000). Identifying with the role of a “wife” does not usually correspond with migration. However, motherhood does not necessarily deter the migration process.

For many men, migration is the start of the new family that begins with his migratory career. The more children he has the more likely a Mexican man is to migrate, thus fulfilling the role of breadwinner that for many men is essential to being a man (Kanaiaupuni 2000). Broughton (2008) studied how men make sense of the pressure to migrate. He argues that poor rural men have specific migratory motivations, stressing the fluidity of masculine positions. Broughton identifies three migratory stances: adventurer, breadwinner and traditionalist. Men negotiate their migratory motivation or the resistance against migration to fit with the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. The adventurer frames his experience in terms of individual independency and material progression. The breadwinner stresses his moral obligations as a provider for his family members. Those who do not migrate defend their position by arguing that they are needed as head of the household, a masculine position that Broughton identifies as traditionalist (ibid).
I will now narrate the story of Izmael, one of my respondents who I introduced in the third chapter. Statistically, Izmael fitted the profile of the many men who leave when they have just started their own families. He left his home in Chiapas when his fourth child had just been born. However, Izmael did not migrate to provide for his family. He was pursuing an illicit love affair.

8.3 Life at a Rancheria in a time of neo-liberal policies: The case of Izmael
Izmael is an indigenous migrant from Chiapas. He was born in 1970 on a Rancheria, a collective of small-scale landowners. Izmael’s native language is Tzeltal, the most widely spoken indigenous language in his native state.\(^{70}\) Ethnic identity has little meaning to most indigenous people of this region; they identify with their native language. The nearest town to the Rancheria is Ocosingo. It is only an hour away, but in many ways the Rancheria is quite isolated from city life. To buy seeds, pesticides and clothes and to sell their cash crops, the rancheros [farmers] need to visit the town, but they are also quite self-sufficient. The rancheros work on a small plot of land growing corn or other produce like beans or coffee. The Rancheria is also largely self-sufficient in terms of the law. The local authority\(^{71}\) is chosen every year, and is responsible for addressing minor crimes and disputes as they occur at the Rancheria. More serious law offenses are referred to the MP in Ocosingo. The course of life on the Rancheria is dominated by the harvest seasons; otherwise, time is of little interest. Izmael and his family members have a hard time remembering dates and their exact ages.

Izmael has four younger brothers and two sisters. As the oldest son, he should have been the one to take on the family responsibilities, but he grew up as the black sheep of the family. As a young boy, he had few intellectual interests and never managed to finish school. Most of his brothers and sisters learned to speak some Spanish, a language Izmael didn’t learn until life’s events forced him to, as we will see later. Seeing that his son had little talent for school, his father gave Izmael his inheritance, a piece of land, when he was about 17. According to custom, the family’s land is divided among the next generation of


\(^{71}\) The committee consist of six persons: two policemen, two commanders, a substitute agent, and a municipal help agent (interview ex-commander of the Rancheria 8-1-2011)
males; women generally do not inherit land. When Izmael was in his early twenties, he was ready to marry. He was already an experienced farmer by the time he asked his father to arrange a marriage. Times are changing fast, and nowadays many young people choose their own life partners, and go on dates before marriage. However, this was not the case when Izmael got married. Even though Izmael had known the woman his father chose, Anna, his whole life on the Rancheria, they had never dated or even talked to each other before their marriage. Once married, Anna moved in with Izmael and started working on his land. Despite their labor, women are economically dependent on their husbands, giving the men a strong power position within their marriage. Soon after their marriage, Anna became pregnant, and after a few years the couple had four children.

Izmael married in a time of great economic turbulence. The 1990s was a decade of neo-liberal policies. President Salinas (1988-1994) eliminated the minimum price for grains and stopped agricultural subsidies. Under his presidency, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was implemented in 1994, liberalizing trade between the US and Mexico. Cheap US crops like corn, still produced with governmental subsidies, flooded the Mexican market. The prices for crops dropped, making it very hard for small farmers to survive (Broughton 2008). In response to neo-liberal policies the Zapatista movement started a rebellion. On January 1st, 1994, they seized the cities of San Cristobal de las Casas, las Margaritas, Altamirano and Ocosingo (Matias 2007). Izmael and his family were not directly affected by the rebellion; however, government actions to pacify this area did affect Izmael’s life, as I will explain later. Izmael and Anna’s earnings were barely sufficient to keep their growing family alive. Like Izmael, his brothers had a little piece of land bordering their mother’s terrain. They shared the water facilities and helped each other out making ends meet, but one after the other left to escape poverty. One brother had gone to “el Norte”, as migration to the US is called, another brother worked and studied in Mexico City. One of his sisters had even migrated to Veracruz.

Izmael’s motivations for migration could be negotiated with certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, since adultery is popularly taken as a sign of machismo (Gutmann 1997). However, his experiences could not. Men may present their experiences and motivation to migrate as in accordance with an ideal of hegemonic masculinity as Broughton (2008) has argued. However, the migratory experience is likely to contradict these ideals. Life on the Rancheria had confirmed Izmael’s masculinity through his position as landowner,
husband, father, oldest brother, and community member. While his illicit affair and eventual elopement with Sandra may have initially been a confirmation of his manly vigor, it would soon become an experience that threatened to unsettle all the positions that had previously empowered him. Sandra had been Izmael’s neighbor. She was also his uncle’s wife, and the sister-in-law of one of his brothers. Izmael could hardly have started an affair that would have brought more shame upon him. Once he began the affair, he had to leave the Rancheria and start working in Ocosingo as a construction worker. The love affair created a rift in the family. His uncles were furious with him and took part of his inheritance away. Initially Izmael tried to maintain a relationship with his wife and children, but eventually he started a new life in Playa del Carmen with Sandra and her two children, a nine-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, both born out of a relationship Sandra had had prior to her relationship with Izmael’s uncle.

8.4 Men’s difficulty with women’s increasing freedom
The move from Ocosingo to Playa del Carmen was a big step for Izmael. It meant leaving behind the life that he had known for a one that was totally new. Despite his inability to speak Spanish, Izmael quickly found a job in Playa del Carmen as a painter on a construction site. While his earnings were much higher than what he was able to make in Chiapas, it was very hard to make ends meet. Living in the town of Ocosingo in Chiapas had been much more expensive than life on the Rancheria. He now had to pay for the food he used to grow at home and he had to pay rent, whereas at home he had lived on his own land. Still, life in Ocosingo had been cheap compared to life in Playa del Carmen, a tourist zone where most foods are imported and prices are at an international level. In order to make ends meet, Sandra took a job selling newspapers, which Izmael was not happy about.

In this research, many men attested to their difficulties with female employment. While some framed their objections as worries over their children’s care, most objected to their partner’s close contact with other men on a work floor. An interviewee phrased it as follows:

*Oh, there is so much promiscuity here. That is why I don’t let my wife work; women who work cause problems. They just want to go out. It is better if they stay at home. I take care of things, what more could they want? Women have all the freedom at home: they can watch TV and do what they want.* (28/1/2005 CROC).
Various men expressed the feeling that women’s employment caused in them with one word celos, jealousy: “No, I wouldn’t want my wife to work because I am jealous!” (Friday 28/1/2005, interview at the Croc). The expression of jealousy seems to convey the fear of losing control over women. The greater freedom that work provides for women is perceived as problematic, since the women earn the means to go out, which may lead to promiscuity. The expression of male jealousy is quite accepted and to some extent even enjoyed by women, since it can make them feel desired. The lyrics of a popular song: “How wonderful is the jealousy of a man!” attest to this joy, and it also comes to the fore in a narrative of Patricia that is presented later. On the other hand, jealousy is given as a reason to impede women’s freedom of movement, and can lead to women’s deep resentment. The following conversation with two policemen illustrates the argument of restricting women’s movement to prevent promiscuity.

Policeman 1: Many women work and the husbands are given horns [cuckolded, he makes a sign of two horns on his head]. More than anything this has to do with alcoholism, men drink and don’t bring money home, the women have to go out to work. For me, I won’t let my wife go out; I am working, when I come home we can go out together. I am the provider. She has everything she needs. I have seen many times that women go out to the disco with their friends, they meet another man and off they go.

Joan: Women can’t go out without being unfaithful?

Policeman 2: Relationships are formed when people are very young and having a relationship means having a baby. So girls don’t have the opportunity to experiment, they really don’t have a childhood. When they get the opportunity to have their childhood later they will take it.

Joan: What role does money play in relationships?

Policeman 2: Many girls give birth when they are still very young, afterwards it becomes difficult to go to school, and they need a man with money. Money is what keeps a relationship together.

Policeman 1: People here don’t go on dates together, they meet, and after two weeks they live together, they don’t have the opportunity to get to know each other. (5-1-2006)

72 Sonora de Margarita “Que bello son los celos de hombre”
For an indigenous woman like Sandra, early pregnancy and working on her husband’s land was the normal course of life. Before migrating to this tourist area, Sandra may never have considered remunerated employment to be an achievable goal. Before 1998, women in Chiapas were, by law, not allowed to work without their husband’s consent (Frias 2008). However, in their new migratory situation in Playa del Carmen, Izmael could not insist that Sandra stay home, since he needed her financial help to make ends meet. Unfortunately, he could not accept that her work, selling newspapers, required that she talked to her customers.

*She speaks to whatever person, whatever man. She sells newspapers and I see her talking to this, that and the other person. I ask her: “What are you doing? Who are you talking to?” She says: “It is a friend.” [I tell her] I don’t want this. [She says:] “You are jealous!” Yes, I am jealous, you know why? Because I love you! If I didn’t love you, you could talk to whomever you liked!* (6-3-2009)

There are many work opportunities for women, and many ways to spend leisure time. The cost of living forced many men to allow their wives to seek remunerated employment, but at the same time they lamented the effects on family life and their own position in the household. Especially for rural migrants, how gender is performed in this urban tourist zone can conflict with gender expectations that are generally more traditional than those of urban migrants. Women’s work inevitably brings them into contact with other men, something that they had not experienced before. However, the conversation with the two policemen illustrates that the expansion of women’s life worlds and access to their own income does not automatically challenge the ideal of the male breadwinner. As discussed in chapter 4, the adherence to the male breadwinner model persists. Women in this tourist area have a lower educational level and income than men (Lozano Cortés 2009), and this is likely to play into the male breadwinner model. Nonetheless, women may use the freedom they have earned through their work to choose another more desirable breadwinner. Even if many women have no inclination to end their relationships, the fact that many others have, challenges male relational power.

Migration and tourism have created an unstable population in Playa del Carmen and Cancún, thus there is little sense of community. This sphere of anonymity, in the presence of numerous bars and clubs has opened up the possibility to let go and experiment with behavior that was impossible in an
environment of social control. Lax social rules create relational freedom. Many relationships in Cancún are temporary; they are formed for the time being to prevent loneliness and to provide safety (Lozano Cortés 2009). The belief in the male breadwinner model, as well as the need for a sense of belonging in these anonymous surroundings, means that most women still opt to live their lives with a partner. However, the number of female-headed households is increasing steadily. In 2000, 17.3% of the households in Quintana Roo were headed by women. Ten years later, this number is 22.6% (Diario de Yucatan 8-3-2011). In this tourist region, it is no longer a male prerogative to control the formation or continuation of a relationship; relational (in)stability is increasingly in women’s hands. Expressions of jealousy demonstrate underlying feelings of male insecurity and disempowerment.

8.5 An unfamiliar judicial system
In the last decade, many changes have been made in Mexican laws to protect women from violence, as discussed in chapter 7. In most states, family violence is now a crime. In Chiapas, family violence had even been adopted into the penal law before it was adopted in Quintana Roo. However, the general population of Quintana Roo is aware of the topic of violence against women and the existing laws, while in Chiapas this awareness still needs to be created. According to Lozano Cortés’ research among Mayan Indians in Quintana Roo, most violence against women is not physical but rather symbolical. Women have internalized their subjugated position (2009:40). I am not sure if violence was predominantly symbolical on the Rancheria. It is possible that physical violence was normalized, just as women’s subjugated position was. While men in Playa del Carmen easily talked about the topic of violence, this was not the case on the Rancheria where several men said that domestic and sexual violence did not occur. “There is no violence here, we don’t drink, we go to church”, one of them said. When I pressed the subject, he added: “I used to be violent, when I had been drinking, but now I don’t drink anymore.” In 2010, the MP in Ocosingo opened a special office for the victims of sexual and domestic violence, but they generally helped women from the town. To date, they do not have translators who can accommodate the indigenous women. While the local authority of the Rancheria could have dealt with minor cases of domestic abuse, there seemed to be no custom of actually reporting cases to them. It was still rare for a woman from the Rancheria to bring her complaints to the DIF or the public prosecutor (MP) in Ocosingo. Izmael knew the DIF as an

organization that could help with food supplies, but not as one that could interfere with his private domestic affairs.

For rural migrants from Chiapas, the migration to Cancún or Playa del Carmen can mean drastic life changes. Hirsch (1999) argues, in relation to Mexican migrants in the US, that the changes and vulnerabilities men have experienced as migrants makes it extra important for them to continue their gendered identity as Mexican men, and to be the one with *el mando* [the power] to give orders. Interviewees of both Hirsch and Alcalde say (2011) that in contrast to Mexico, migrant women in the US may now call the police to stop their violent spouse. My research shows that with the exception of legal issues, migration from rural areas to urban Quintana Roo brings similar changes as those experienced by migrants in the US. Although the national migrants may expect less change, since they are still within their own country, in Playa del Carmen women can call the police if they feel threatened, just like in the US. For Izmael, the migration from Chiapas to Quintana Roo meant that for the first time he experienced the state’s ability to interfere in his authority over domestic affairs.

Sandra’s work caused arguments with Izmael: “This is where my wife started to hate me. She was mad with me the whole time. I think that is why she got together with the neighbors to file a complaint against me, so she could leave me.” (6-3-2009) According to Izmael, his jealousy and the restrictions he tried to impose on Sandra are the reasons for the events that followed. On May 16th, 2006 when Izmael came home from work he was alone. This had never happened before. His partner was not there and neither were her children. Soon after, the police knocked on his door and took him to the office of the public prosecutor. Izmael explains:

*They beat me, they said I had been raping my girl; there was a complaint from my neighbor. The officers told me if I didn’t sign they were going to kill me. Later they brought me to the DIF, the licenciada there wanted me to sign something but I said I wasn’t going to sign something I didn’t understand. They told me: “If you don’t sign, you won’t get out.” In the end they read me the paper, I signed and was brought to prison.* (13-12-2007)

When I met Izmael for the first time on December 13th, 2007, he had been in prison for a year and eight months without sentencing. He was accused of an attempted rape of his stepdaughter — charges that he categorically denied.
According to Izmael, Sandra’s motive for the accusation was revenge. Initially Sandra had come to visit Izmael in prison. She had contacted Izmael’s family asking for a large amount of money to get him out of prison. Izmael was completely unfamiliar with the way the juridical system worked. His initial inability to speak Spanish exacerbated his vulnerability in the legal system. When Sandra demanded money, he and his family obliged and sold a piece of Izmael’s inheritance. The 1700 dollars were sent to Sandra in Playa del Carmen. However, the money disappeared and so did Sandra along with her daughter, the alleged victim, who still had to undergo a psychological examination as part of the investigation into the case. The fact that Sandra and her daughter left the state meant that the case could not be closed, but that did not mean the case was dropped. As was explained in chapter 7, neither the victim nor the witness needs to press charges in cases of child abuse. The DIF lawyer who filed the complaint against Izmael with the MP explained\(^{74}\) that in most cases, mothers are not willing to file charges against their partners. Therefore, when suspected child abuse is reported, it is the DIF that files the complaint. Once the DIF is handling the case, the one who initially reported the alleged crime is potentially relevant as a witness, but this person does not determine whether a case is brought to the MP or not. While Sandra returned to Chiapas with her children, Izmael was left in prison pending the completion of the investigation.

### 8.6 Experiencing structural violence as an indigenous migrant

On the Rancheria, Izmael had been someone, a part of the community that had given him a sense of belonging. In Playa del Carmen, Izmael was no one, or worse, another Indigenous migrant. In this tourist area, the indigenous population is generally looked down upon by the rest of the population. During the time that Izmael spent in prison, he made a hopeless impression since he was not informed of the proceedings of the case. For all he knew, he might spend the next 20 years incarcerated. Suicidal thoughts occupied his mind. “Sometimes I think bad things. How can I get out? I want to see my children and my mother and I can’t. Sometimes I think of taking my life. But then, no, I have to fight to get out and to see my children again.” Izmael was desperately homesick and wanting to see his mother. He longed to be on his land; the colors and fragrances of his home almost came alive when he spoke of his land. He isolated himself from the rest of the prisoners and tried to find solace in reading the bible. His fellow prisoners mocked him: “He is not a man, he is just crying all the time”, one of them said. To me, Izmael appeared to be a

\(^{74}\) Personal communication (18-12-09)
naive and sweet farmer, and his crying seemed a sign of softness that I found sympathetic. He had a similar effect on the prison director, who affectionately referred to Izmael with the term of endearment “Izmaelito”. The director and I had created an image of Izmael as a sweet and innocent Indian, while well-intended, it was a limited vision that later had to be widened to a more realistic, and perhaps less favorable image.

While his indigenous or Mayan identity had little meaning to Izmael, within public discourse being indigenous is a distinctly negative connotation, in particular for gender relations. In addition to being associated with poverty, indigenous men are thought to mistreat women and sell girls. These ideas are also expressed, in a slightly more nuanced way, in a World Bank report about the Mexican states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca by Cunningham and Cos-Montiel (2002). As discussed in chapter 7, Mexico’s gender laws and policies are co-determined by international politics, and The World Bank plays an important role in this. They finance, for example, certain programs executed by Inmujeres (Cunningham and Cos-Montiel 2002:3-4). Newdick (2005) criticizes The World Bank and the Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for their contribution to a discourse that ranks people on the basis of their human rights and democratic potential. How women are treated is a marker for this ranking system. Violence against women is cast as a cultural problem. This use of the concept of culture obscures related issues such as unequal global power relations (ibid:74). Newdick reacts particularly harshly to the fact that The World Bank report by Cunningham and Cos-Montiel (2002) used the term “selling” women, while admitting that this is not corroborated by the local women who speak of dowry practices.

I did hear women in Chiapas speak of the (sexual) abuse they suffered, and the complex task is to give attention to the marginal position of indigenous women without portraying their abuse as a cultural problem. Just as there is an interest to cast of alcohol and drug abuse as an individual’s disease (as discussed in chapter 5), there is an interest to cast the subjugation of women as a product of indigenous culture, or in a larger context, as a product of machismo. This disowns the problem, and hands it over to the other whose culture is responsible (see also Engle Merry 2003). The way in which larger structures of inequality contribute to violence against women becomes obscured. Many of the problems described in The World Bank report, such as

75 In January 2011, I showed and discussed my documentary “De Tierra y Amor” (Of Ground and Love) to 600 women in Chiapas. The women did speak of abuse, and one woman spoke of being sold to a partner.
migration, lack of agricultural revenue, and drug trafficking can be linked to neo-liberal policies and NAFTA that resulted in the further impoverishment of an already poor population. For men, it has become very difficult to conform to the traditional role of provider without migrating. An image of Mexican Indians as “bride-sellers”, which symbolizes the backwardness of Indigenous culture, is easily created and obscures the factors that have deepened the poverty of the indigenous population and have led to family disintegration.

Issues like the age of consent are addressed in the national law, but are not known to many of the indigenous population. Therefore, some unwittingly live in breach of the national laws. According to the DIF lawyer who brought Izmael’s case to the MP, it is quite common among some migrant cultures for adult men to have sexual relationships with adolescent girls. The head of the MP’s special office for sexual and family violence also voices this opinion:

*What happens is that we are a migrant community and every one carries his own traditions. We have many people from Chiapas or Tabasco; they have certain customs. They don’t see it as something bad to take a minor as their wife because that is the custom in their place of origin, but for us that is in fact a crime.*

In some Tzeltal communities, relationships between older boys or men with adolescent girls frequently occurred. According to Izmael’s brother, it was definitely not the custom in his family or on the Rancheria in general. In fact, Izmael had married when both he and his wife were in their twenties. According to Izmael, the increased freedom that young people nowadays have, makes that some of them start dating early, but this is not the way things traditionally were. At the time of the accusation, it was impossible for Izmael to express this or refute the MP’s preconceptions of his indigenous culture, since he didn’t speak Spanish and didn’t understand the procedures that were going on.

Ironically, and perhaps symbolic of Izmael’s disempowered masculinity, it took the intervention of a woman to liberate him from being incarcerated without a trial. The attention that my (video) interviews had brought to Izmael’s case,

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76 Interview with Ingrid Flores (23-12-2009)
77 According to an unpublished report of the National Committee for the Development of the Indigenous people (CDI), only one of the 257 Indigenous prisoners in Quintana Roo had had access to a translator.
78 See chapter 3
unintentionally urged the judge to give his verdict in May 2009, three years after the incarceration. It was only after the sentence that Izmael got access to his case file. For 250 pesos,\(^79\) he could obtain a copy and finally learn the details of the accusation. The file contained interviews with Sandra, who had declared that she had seen Izmael touching her daughter when she was lying in her hammock, and her daughter who had declared that Izmael had tried to put his penis in her and hurt her. The medical examination of a male doctor employed by the MP declared that the girl’s hymen was intact, but that vaginal irritations were visible. Without the psychological assessment, the judge ruled that the case was incomplete and there was not enough evidence for a conviction. Izmael was absolved.\(^80\)

8.7 Going back home to a household in motion
When Izmael was released, he waited for my film colleagues and me\(^81\) to travel back home to Chiapas. On this 20-hour journey I got to know new aspects of Izmael. The sad, crying man had gone and the closer we came to the Rancheria, the more confident he became. He clutched the case file and was deliberating whether to find Sandra in Chiapas and file a complaint against her for slander. Within his newfound freedom, he also shed new light on his relationship with his first wife.

Joan: Why did you separate?
Izmael: There are so many shortcomings in that family of hers. There were many things in the mother of my children that I did not like.
Joan: Like what?
Izmael: Just different things.
Joan: Like what?
Izmael: How do I put it, sorry, she didn’t wash well.
Joan: She didn’t wash well, was she dirty?

\(^79\) 250 pesos are equivalent to 25 dollars, which is quite a lot of money, especially for someone who has just been released from prison. Many prisoners will not have that kind of money at that time. In Izmael’s case, I had given him the money for a copy.
\(^80\) In Mexico few of the cases that appear before a judge are absolved, and judges fear giving absolution as it is generally perceived to be corruption when someone is acquitted. (Personal communication with lawyer, Layda Negrete 23-5-2009)
\(^81\) In Playa del Carmen, I worked together with lawyer and filmmaker Layda Negrete. The trip to Chiapas was filmed with filmmaker Joffrey van der Vliet.
Izmael: Not very clean, sometimes I would say wash, clean, it is your work. I had to tell her over and over again and I felt bad.
Joan: She wasn’t clean with her body, or the house, or...?
Izmael: The house, her clothes. I was worried about my children. My family is not like this. We are poor but we are clean. Many things like these happened, and I was angry and felt bad... I met this other woman (Sandra) and brought her to Playa. She told me: “My love, I love you, I want you.” I thought it was the truth, but it wasn’t so. When I had money she told me she loved me, when I didn’t have money, she didn’t even want to know me. (25-5-2009)

While Izmael’s relationship with Sandra was portrayed as love and deception, Izmael’s relationship with his first wife was one of (mutual) duties. Her non-compliance was apparently an acceptable reason for abandonment. His return meant he would again be confronted with his first wife who was now living on what used to be his land together with their children. After the initial shock and apparent disbelief of his family and community members, Izmael was welcomed back; chickens were killed and a feast was prepared for his homecoming. Despite seven years of abandonment, his first wife Anna welcomed his return and joined in the preparations. Life had not been easy for her and her children. Their oldest son Rafael reflected upon his father’s absence: “My father was coming and going, and then he really left (to Playa del Carmen). My mother and I moved in with my grandmother, but she didn’t like it that we stayed with her. When my mother had the chance we left.” Since Izmael had left, Anna had been farming alone with the help of her oldest son. Despite the hardship he had put them through, Anna expressed her happiness at Izmael’s return.

Anna: I am happy because the children need clothes, now that Izmael is here he can provide for all of these things.
Joan: So Izmael is going to be the provider?
Anna: Yes.
Joan: And how is he going to take care of the children, what kind of work will he do?
Anna: He is going to work on the land, sowing the coffee the corn, and the beans.
Joan: And right now who is working on the land?
Anna: Me, together with my son.
Anna expects that Izmael will unburden her and fulfill the role of provider and that makes her express her happiness at seeing him return. Izmael seemed equally happy to be back and ready to fulfill his role as husband and head of the family. “I will never leave again, I am the oldest son, I will stay and take care of the family”, he said. Izmael and Anna were the first to leave the festivities that night and they left together. However, their reunion was not simply a getting back to the way things were. Hirsch (1999) points out that when researching migration-related changes, we particularly need to include the historical changes that the sending community experiences. Differences between the Rancheria and Playa del Carmen cannot simply be seen as differences between a traditional way of life and a modern one. The Rancheria is not isolated from social change, and like Playa del Carmen gender relations are changing and government interventions play an important role. According to several informants, the Zapatista rebellion has resulted in extra governmental attention to the region since aid is supposed to appease the population. At this moment, most aid goes to women. Oportunidades (Opportunities) is a Mexican federal government program that gives women in the poorest areas of Mexico 1,020 pesos every two months. At first sight, Izmael’s wife Anna may have seemed like a traditional subjugated wife who accepts her fate as a good wife, when in fact, she was the embodiment of change. She had worked hard to survive with her little children, and the Oportunidades’ contribution that she received together with most other women of the Rancheria was important for their survival. By saving this money and adding it to the proceeds from her crops, Anna had managed to buy her own terrain. “I saved my money, I grew corn, bananas, beans, saved my money and bought a piece of land”, Anna said with a proud smile. She explained that she was the only woman on the Rancheria who had her own land. Ironically, Izmael’s return meant he would now work on Anna’s terrain, because his own land had been taken away.

When I came back a year later, Izmael showed me the new wooden house he had constructed. He explained that is was Anna’s money that had provided the wood, and there was no electricity yet. The floor needed cement, and they still had to cross the road to his mother’s house for water and sanitary provisions. Now that Izmael only had a small piece of land left and the agricultural revenue was low, Anna was the main provider of the family. While Izmael had

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82 About 80 dollars
83 To empower women, the money is given to them and not to men. In exchange for the money, they have to attend workshops given by the program (Personal communication with Victor Hugo Morales of Oportunidades Ocosingo 7-1-2011)
sworn to never leave again, he was planning another stay in Playa del Carmen. This time is migration would be to take on his responsibilities as a provider.

8.8 Disempowerment of men as an explanatory model of violence

Izmael’s story shows that although migration might be cast as an opportunity to conform to ideals of hegemonic masculinity, such as being the provider as Broughton (2008) argues, in reality it more often forms a source of disempowerment on various terrains. While the hegemonic ideal is to command and be in control, migration creates great vulnerability since the status of migrants is low. The vulnerability of indigenous migrants is exacerbated by ethnic discrimination and language difficulties; they are easy targets for the police and MP and have to deal with these challenges alone without the resources their community normally provides. Male disempowerment has been connected to increasing violence against women by various authors in several contexts (Bourgois 1996; Macmillan and Gartner 1999; Shuler 1999; Silberschmidt 2001). Silberschmidt (2001:664) explains that both the men and women she interviewed, attested that men may resort to violence in response to male loss of control within the household, which he feels as a humiliation. Violence was explained as a reestablishing of male authority). Similarly, Hautzinger (2003, 2007), Castro and Casique (2008) and Gutmann (1996) have described the connection between violence and male disempowerment for Brazilian and the Mexican contexts, respectively. According to Gutmann (1996: 213):

One of the reasons the issue of jealousy is so recurrent a theme for these men, I think, is that many men feel they are losing control over their wives in general and over their wives’ sexuality in particular. They have histories of employing violence to try to regain this patriarchal authority. For this reason... violent attacks on women may rise.

While men’s disempowerment due to social transformations is an important issue, the connection that is made with domestic violence is more complex than most literature portrays it to be. For many authors, increasing reports of violence are automatically presumed to be a sign of increasing incidents of violence. Increasing reports of violence are significant. However, we should not forget that domestic violence is not new. Hautzinger (2003) argues that shifting power relations lead to new patterns of domestic violence. Hautzinger’s remark that female power and independence are not irreconcilable with a high registration of domestic violence incidents, as long as violence is not taken as a sign of female victimization (2003:99), is important.
would like to add that registering violence should not be taken as the equivalent of a higher occurrence of violence either. The increasing registration of violence points at the presence of family violence legislation and policies, thus increasing awareness and decreasing symbolic violence. Violence and subjugation are no longer internalized and taken as normal, but are now recognized as an issue. Experiencing victimhood may actually be a sign of social change.

On Izmael’s Rancheria, there was no tradition of reporting domestic and sexual violence to either the local authority or the MP in Ocosingo. However, it would be wrong to assume that domestic violence did not occur. A woman’s position on the Rancheria was generally subjugated. Despite changes in rural areas, domestic violence still is a hidden issue. Once Izmael’s and Sandra moved to the city, their relational dynamic changed. Sandra no longer had to accept the control that Izmael exercised in the name of love and jealousy. Through their neighbors and fellow churchgoers Sandra became acquainted with the DIF and could take action against Izmael.

The awareness of the work of organizations such as the DIF and the MP changes perceptions of violence. Women learn to recognize violence and become less inclined to internalize patterns of subjugation. However, other forms of violence, such as common couple violence, may become more prevalent. Silent subjugation may be replaced with loud physical outburst, but to only count the latter as violence because they get the attention of the police and the public would downplay the violent nature of the former.

The life story of Patricia that will be narrated in the next section shows how migration and societal transformations can change the power dynamics of relationships as well as the processes of violence. Patricia’s narrative will illustrate that women’s strengthened societal position not only provokes outburst of violence, but also simultaneously protects against violence, and paradoxically may add to a feeling of victimhood.

8.9 Patricia: The road to empowerment and victimhood
Patricia is originally from the state of Veracruz where she grew up in a small rural village. She is one of 10 children. “We were not always poor, we had land and animals, but one day my father lost it all gambling. After his loss he left us.” The family fell into poverty. For Patricia this meant the beginning of a childhood full of hardship, and her mother often sent her out to work as a maid in the village. In retrospect, Patricia understands that her mother tried to
save the family from hunger, but during her childhood, her mother came across as harsh. After her father’s departure, Patricia’s mother got together with a man who had little affection for Patricia. Her childhood ended when her mother brought her to the city of Veracruz to be married at the age of 13 to a man in his thirties. She describes this relationship as abusive. She did not care for the man, but had to accept him as her husband. Being young and abandoned by her mother left Patricia with no options and so she was resigned to her situation. Apparently, her husband did not exhibit loud outburst of physical violence, rather, the abuse she suffered were practices of coercion and control that makes up most of the incidences of abuse, according to Stark (2007)84. The abuse Patricia suffered was silent abuse that was not likely to appear in domestic violence statistics.

Patricia has no control over her sexuality and soon three children were born one after the other. As little more than a child herself, Patricia had little idea how to take care of them or herself. She was not allowed to leave the house, and when her mother visited her a few years later, she found her in a state of depression and malnourishment. “My mother came to see me for the first time in years, and she was shocked, I had lost a lot of weight, and I didn’t have any energy. I never left the house; my husband wouldn’t let me. My mother took me and my daughters, and drove us to Merida.”

After her mother facilitated her escape, Patricia moved in with her mother and her mother’s partner in their house in the city of Merida, Yucatan. Unfortunately, another episode of violence led to her next move.

I had the three children with me, something very unpleasant happened, eh…: my stepfather tried to abuse my two-year-old daughter. I was so angry; I wanted to kill him. I followed him around with a machete in my hand (hi, hi). My mom was furious with me, because he was part of her life; she said he couldn’t do something like that. I was so disappointed in her that I decided to bring my children to their grandparents in Veracruz. (22-2-2007)85

At the time when this happened, in the late 1980s, domestic violence and sexual violence in the family realm were not issues that the MP dealt with

84 See Chapter 6
85 Some parts of the text come from an interview with Patricia, but many parts are from my field diaries. They were told to me over the five years of our contact.
vigorously. While Patricia did not passively let her child be molested, she had little means to defend her children either. Leaving her children with the parents of her (abusive) ex-husband seemed the safest option and enabled her to migrate.

In one of the resorts under construction in Cancún’s hotel strip, Patricia found work as a cleaner. She also found her second husband, Jorge, who was the caretaker of an eatery catering to the workers of the hotel zone. Patricia fell head over heels in love with Jorge, and after living together for three years the couple saved enough money to start their own business — a bakery. Patricia became the mother of three more children, two girls, and a little boy who died during the delivery. The business earned a nice income and they were able to buy a house and two cars, which was all they needed economically. However, according to Patricia the money changed Jorge.

Our separation was because of a relationship with another woman, she had been a friend of mine. Afterwards, he did all he could to get me out of his life, and to keep everything for himself — the cars, the business. He kept it all, even though we had worked together. We started up the business, and especially I had denied myself many things. He bought me this little room and told me: “You are going to go there, it is better that we separate, and when you miss me you come to see me, and when I miss you I come to you.” I was very naive, very innocent. “That is okay”, I told him ... For me it was horrible to find out that he was seeing other women. Every time he would say: “Let’s get back together”, I didn’t know with what intentions. When he saw that I wasn’t going to continue with him, he acted like a dog. He came with his car, shouting: “Whore!” (22-2-2007)

Patricia and Jorge’s separation ends in a divorce. Her ex-husband consented to paying for their daughters’ tuition, and allowed Patricia to keep the terrain on which her room was build, situated in a poor Cancún neighborhood. Meanwhile, she lost all the joint assets of 12 years of marriage and the DIF refused to provide any help to her in her alimony dispute.

Despite their unharmonious divorce, Patricia and Jorge got together again several times. Patricia has many stories to tell of how these attempts failed due to Jorge’s infidelities, and how she retaliates with (threats of) physical violence. The following story of Patricia’s furious visit to Jorge’s bakery after learning of his ongoing infidelities is one such story:
I took some stones and threw them at the window. It broke. I couldn’t care less. His employee was counting money and I grabbed the cash register. When I saw Jorge entering the shop, I took a knife, one of those used for cutting pastry. He said: “Woman calm down, what is happening? What have I done to you that you are coming here like this? I didn’t do anything to you.” I held the knife in my hand and threw it at him. I didn’t hit him because he ran out. Then I threw a bottle, but that didn’t hit him either, but I nearly hit a man who was passing by…

My friend came out of her house. She told me: “Do you think he is worth it that you are like this? He doesn’t love you, his mistress comes to the shop. You should take care of your daughters, go home and look for a good job.” This was the last time this happened to me. Afterwards, he did come to see me, but I didn’t believe him anymore. I have my work, my daughters, with my goal on my mind; I have the rooms to rent, it can work out. (22-2-07)

Comparing this relationship with her first marriage, it seems significantly less abusive. There was infidelity and emotional neglect, but there was enough food and the only physical violence that occurred came from her side. Still, Patricia talked about this relationship as an abusive one. Even though the relationship had ended several years ago, she sometimes played with the idea of going back to the DIF to receive a decent alimony: “Things are different now, a licenciada told me I could go to the DIF and sue Jorge.” Seemingly paradoxical to her own growing empowerment and her awareness of the changed legislations, her statement also appears to reflect a sense of victimization.

8.10 Challenging male domination
When I met Patricia for the first time in 2005, she had become the economically independent woman she vowed to be after her divorce. Adjoining her own room, she had four other new rooms built, which she rented out to construction workers. This provided her with a small additional income in addition to her income as a hairdresser at a local salon. She was involved with Pablo, a policeman of the Cancún police force, who had moved in with her and her daughters. In addition to her work, Patricia was catching up on all the activities she couldn’t do as an adolescent. She had returned to high school and tried to enjoy life. For Pablo, Patricia’s freedom was extremely hard to manage. He wanted her to marry him, stop working and stay home, but she was adamant that she would never marry again. Her freedom was hard earned
and she was not going to give it up easily. She claimed she would never again give a man control over her life or her possessions. Her determination made Pablo feel insecure about her and they fought regularly about issues of fidelity and control.

Over the six years that I have known Patricia, a pattern became observable. Arguments would arise over Patricia’s independence and her contacts with other men at work, and these arguments could lead to violent crises. Once Pablo tried to choke Patricia with a clothesline, and despite that fact that he was a policeman, his fellow police officers took him away and put him in prison for the night. Afterwards, Patricia threatened to break up with Pablo. He pleaded with her not to, and after a while Patricia resolved once more to stay in the relationship and things quieted down. Patricia usually downplayed these violent episodes, but she could not handle Pablo’s own infidelities: “As long as there is love I can tolerate abuse, but when he is going with someone else that means the love is gone, and why then tolerate it?” Her remark is reminiscent of the popular proverb, “Hit me but do not leave me,”86 but it also reflects the hurt caused by rejection, which can be experienced as painful as physical violence (Eisenberger and Lieberman 2004).

In their peaceful times, Patricia scheduled her life around Pablo’s work, and when Pablo was home from work, she was there to take care of him. Even so, Pablo would rather that Patricia not leave the house at all. He did not like her working, and it especially bothered him when she went to a club without him. Patricia’s 36th birthday was celebrated in a club while Pablo was at work. She was telling childhood stories while at the same time obsessing over her mobile phone. Pablo was constantly leaving messages, which she read but didn’t answer. At some point, Pablo walked into the club. He had left work, gone home to change into civilian clothes, and came looking for her. Patricia seemed pleased, as if she had won the game. The next time I saw her and asked her how the rest of her birthday had been, she told me that Pablo had destroyed her door to get in. “Doesn’t he have a key?”, I asked. “No, he never needs one because I am always there for him when he gets home”, she answered. Despite Patricia’s empowerment, her life was scheduled around Pablo. Her care and presence were so constant that Pablo had never needed a key to the house.

One day when I was going to Patricia’s house for a surprise visit, Patricia, Pablo and the girls were indoors having what seemed to be a very serious

86 “pégame pero no me dejes” see also chapter 7 newspaper insert
conversation. Patricia called out: “We will talk some other time.” The oldest daughter came up to me and explained that her mother and Pablo had just been in a very ugly fight. A few days later, Patricia and I had a chance to talk about what happened.

Patricia: He thinks I have another lover. He asked me if I liked this John Doe at work, and without thinking about it, I said “yes,” as a joke. I had forgotten all about the question, but apparently in Pablo’s mind this became something really big. So the day before you came by, Pablo went out for a beer with his colleague. I still had a six-pack in the fridge and because he never drinks too much I told him to take one when he came home. So he had three more and he asked me once again whether I had a lover, he was very angry, he was shouting like mad, saying “you don’t love me, the girls don’t love me, you are laughing at me.” The girls were becoming frightened and told him: “If you are hitting mom, we are going to hit you.” Patsy held a broomstick in her hand, and then instead of hitting us, he starts hitting himself like this [she shows how he was beating his head], then he took a knife and started stab himself.

Joan: No! And did you call the police?
Patricia: Yes and when a patrol car came he didn’t want to go, they took him but he tried to escape and hit me. But he didn’t succeed; the policemen took him and threw him in the back. They locked him up for one night and the next day he came to ask me and the girls for forgiveness. He says he loves us but I don’t know, he was really crazy, and what he can do to himself, he can do to us. I told him he could better go and look for his own place to live, and then afterwards we’ll see what happens to us, but he doesn’t want to leave. He thinks that will be the end of the relationship, and maybe he is right… But I told him that we both need space, he too needs it. (Diary 7-4-2006)

Now it was Patricia’s turn to propose a relationship in which they would live separately. She offered Pablo the chance to rent one of her rooms. During the following years, he moved in and out of her quarters. Even in times that they had split up, I would sometimes meet Pablo at Patricia’s house. Pablo would drop by bringing his laundry or asking Patricia to perform some other wifely chore, which she would do for him.
8.11 Conclusion
In this chapter, I have demonstrated that internal migration (from rural areas) to the tourist zone of Cancún and Playa del Carmen can bring challenges to male autonomy and authority. While Broughton (2008) argues that the motives to migrate or to resist migration are presented as fulfilling certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, such as being the provider, in reality, migration can be a disempowering experience. Many male migrants found that their move entailed unanticipated changes in their relationships with women due to the social transformations that are taking place in these tourist towns. The migratory history of Izmael, an indigenous migrant from Chiapas, illustrates the various ways that migration contests male power. On his Rancheria, Izmael derived power from being a small landowner, the oldest son of the family, and being part of his community. Women do not inherit land and have been fully dependent on their partners until recently. Migration stripped Izmael of all his positions of power. Without his land, he had no economic power over his wife, and he lost control over her when she left the house to go to work. This loss of control, which many men experience, is expressed with the word *celos* [jealousy].

Various authors have associated the loss of male power and control with increasing violence against women. With the narratives of Izmael and Patricia, I have demonstrated that our focus should not be on an assumed increase of violence, but rather on the changing process of violence. Due to the changing relational power dynamics, women are learning to speak out against violence. There is no tradition to speak about violence on Izmael’s Rancheria; women’s subjugated position is normalized, just like Patricia silently accepted the abuse of her first marriage. As migrants in Playa del Carmen and Cancún, these women gain independence through their work, which changes the relational power dynamics. Moreover, they learn that the DIF and MP offer a place for them to speak out against violence. I argue that experiencing victimhood is actually a sign of female empowerment, since violence is no longer accepted as normal, and thus symbolic violence is decreasing. On the other hand, common couple violence might be increasing.

Despite the faltering implementation of the laws that have been accepted the last decade to protect women from violence, women’s position has strengthened due to these laws. Hautzinger (2007) remarks that in Brazil, the police have a preventive effect as long as people do not realize how ineffective they really are. This is also applicable to the work of the DIF and the MP (see chapter 7). Women derive power from the presence of the police, the DIF and
the MP, and the narratives of Izmael and Patricia illustrate how these organizations have intervened in domestic disputes. Although Patricia was not helped by the DIF a decade ago, she assumed that they would help her now because she learned that the laws have changed. Patricia’s independence is a major challenge to her partner; however, her narrative shows that men cannot simply react violently to feelings of insecurity. The police did protect her by locking up her partner, even though he was a fellow police officer.

Izmael’s narrative is also a testimony of women’s strengthened position within the law. He spent three years in prison without a trial for suspected child abuse. As an indigenous man, his guilt appeared to be presumed from the moment his partner had made a complaint. While migration from rural to urban areas brings about significant changes, this chapter shows that changing gender relations are not limited to urban areas. The difference between the city and the countryside cannot simply be described as a difference between modern and traditional, since rural transformations affect gender relations as well. In Chiapas, governmental programs focused on empowering women have also brought changes in gender relations. For Izmael, the money that his wife received from Oportunidades meant that he decided to migrate again to comply with the ideal of hegemonic masculinity of being the provider.
Chapter 9: “Doing Masculinity” in a Mexican Prison

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Chapter 10: Conclusions

Underlying the research presented in this book was the assumption that women’s increasing access to remunerated employment would lead to increasing domestic violence through a crisis of masculinity. The tourist towns of Playa del Carmen and Cancún in Quintana Roo, Mexico, with their expanding tourist economy, offer many employment opportunities for both men and women, and there is also a reported high incidence of violence against women. This combination made this location ideal to research the presumed relationship between women’s increased employment and men’s violence. By way of a synthesis of this book, in the following pages I will argue that access to remunerated employment can indeed contribute to an increase of domestic violence but that also the opposite can be true. The relationship between masculinity, (domestic) violence and women’s employment is far more complex than can be deduced from the literature.

Contextualizing violence
National surveys of the last decade (Envim 2003, 2006) and local police reports (Gobierno del Estado de Quintana Roo 2010) show high levels of domestic violence. In order to understand these high levels of domestic violence, as documented, we need to place domestic violence within a variety of risk factors, including other forms of violence. The occurrence of domestic violence in the research context was often one form of violence linked to a complex of other forms of violence and was embedded in structures of socio-economic inequality. Acts of violence against spouses and children did not occur in isolation but co-existed with violence outside the domestic sphere such as in bar brawls or violent crime. The main informants of this research were male migrants from the lower social classes with quite diverse backgrounds. The types of violence they had experienced and perpetrated varied. Informants who had grown up in the city had often become acquainted with gang-related violence, something virtually non-existent in the rural areas where other informants came from. Despite these differences, the men who had perpetrated violence in their adult lives had grown up in circumstances where often some form of violence, such as parental physical and emotional abuse and gang related violence, had been present. To cope with the violent realities of their everyday lives, violence had become downplayed and justified. The frequent exposure to violence created a desensitization to violence. Being exposed to violence as well as perpetrating acts of violence became normalized. For most informants violence was so normalized that some physical acts, such as smacking, were not considered violence.
In this book I use Galtung’s conceptualization of social inequality as structural violence. Galtung coined the term structural violence to indicate that violence is not necessarily perpetrated by a particular actor, but is produced within structures of inequality, of which gender is an example. Consistent with Galtung’s argument this work has shown how direct violence and structural violence are connected. On the one hand social inequality provokes the occurrence of direct violence, for example through gangs and (petty) crime. On the other hand direct violence perpetrated repeatedly among a larger population can be considered structural violence in itself. Thus, the common occurrence of domestic violence can be defined as a form of direct violence but also as structural violence.

The interplay between individual and society
In line with Bourdieu, I use practice theory as the overarching theoretical approach of my research. This theory considers the individual to be both conditioned by the surrounding societal structure and to reproduce that structure. Violent and oppressive societal structures are internalized by the individual; and hence they become normalized. The internalization of structures of oppression has been defined by Bourdieu as a form of violence in itself: symbolic violence. Thus, structural violence and symbolic violence are two sides of the same coin. Both Bourdieu and Galtung stress the durability of these internalized forms of violence (for which Galtung uses the term cultural and not symbolic violence).

In keeping with the practice approach I have looked at alcohol and drug abuse as a way in which individuals respond to the (oppressive) societal structures. Researching alcohol and drug use was essential to this research since violence is commonly related to excessive drinking and drug use within popular discourse. In Mexico, the AA is a very well known therapy model for addiction that has a great influence on the popular discourse on alcohol and drug use. Within the local AA discourse, violent behavior is considered to be part of the disease “addiction”; there is little reflection on the interplay between the social environment and individual (violent) behavior. To consider heavy drinking and drug use as a disease has become as commonplace in Mexico, as in many Western countries.

In the past, neuro-scientific research has been used to support a disease approach to addiction. Much attention has been given to how the brain changes as an effect of drug abuse (Leshner 1997), thus creating the image of a
‘diseased brain’. However, neuro-scientific research of the last few years has shown that the brain not only changes due to individual circumstances or behavior, such as drug abuse, but also constantly changes in response to conditions in the outside world. For example, an individual’s social connections (or lack thereof) affect the functioning of the brain, and pain due to social exclusion (social pain) is visible in the brain just like physical pain, or alcohol or drug abuse. These new findings show the interconnection between the society and the individual. The embodiment of the social structure becomes visible within our brain. Thus a ‘diseased brain’ may be the effect of the interplay between the individual and society.

However, many of the informants in this research have embraced the disease discourse as an explanation of their behavior. Understanding their actions (including the violence they have perpetrated) as part of a disease, enables them to make peace with their past. The prescribed therapy is to attend the group sessions, which may control the disease but does not provide a permanent cure. According to the AA scriptures the disease will always be part of the individual, and the AA program is about taking steps to manage the diseased self. This way of looking at alcohol and drug abuse as originating solely within the individual, as part of a disease, hinders the exploration of the oppressive circumstances men have to cope with, such as their poverty and harsh work conditions and the exploration of constructions of masculinity.

**The context of everyday violence and the hegemony of machismo**

Key to understanding the dynamics of violence is an analysis of gender. Within the Mexican context machismo is frequently seen in a causal relationship to violence; the meaning of this type of masculine behavior within the contemporary context is not analyzed, it is simply taken for granted. Sometimes a historical context is provided that traces the origins of machismo back to the time of the conquest. These historical explanations reinforce the idea that machismo comes naturally to Mexican men. Gutmann (1996) has argued that Mexican masculinities are far too fluid and diverse to simply be categorized as macho, many Mexican men do not adhere to a macho performance of masculinity, but many men in this research do. They explained that those men who are known to help out in the household, who are emotional, or do not demand a dominant position in the household, may be called *mandillones* [sissies]. Violence, on the other hand, can be used as an expression of masculinity (Bourgois 1996, Gutmann 1996, Silberschmidt 2001). Violence can contribute to an image of machismo that may be desired, especially in a context where violence is normalized. For the informants, a
dominant posture, if necessary exercised through violence, is functional given the everyday violence that surrounds them. The need to be tough to deal with the violence of everyday life has attributed to the incorporation of dominance and strength as hegemonic performances of masculinity known as machismo. The hegemony of machismo in turn legitimizes men’s violent behavior. Thus, machismo is not simply a cause, but also a consequence of violence.

Changes in the social context also bring about changes in masculine performances. In the previous chapters the malleability of the performance of masculinity came to the fore. Physical violence, as an expression of masculinity, can decrease if men are given an incentive to restrain themselves, when there is a threat of being arrested, or if men are given an alternative outlet to “do” masculinity. It appeared that men can engage in activities that are typically seen as female without affecting their gender categorization. The men who worked as waiters or cleaners in the restaurants of Cancún, or the men who fold paper wallets or make crochet hats in jail, are not necessarily categorized as less masculine or effeminate. The performance of gender has many different aspects: the work one does, and the violence one engages in, are quite straightforward expressions of gender. However, many of our gendered expressions are more subtle and are connected to our movements, bodily postures, tone of voice, manner of speaking, etcetera. The ways in which we do what we do while doing gender are part of our embodied practices and as such less easy to change, which West and Zimmerman (1987) so aptly made clear. However, the story of Ernesto, situated within the harsh prison environment, shows that even one’s embodied practices can, to a certain extent, change alongside changing behavior. Once Ernesto adopted a more aggressive attitude in order to gain acceptance among his fellow prisoners, his whole demeanor gradually changed. When asking men to account for doing gender in interview situations, perceptions of masculinity appeared to be less flexible. While necessity made practices that would normally be called effeminate acceptable, these practices were molded in a discourse of men as providers of the family, thus continuing the adherence to hegemonic masculinity.

Different views on violence against women: sharing the missing gender link
There has been heated debate over the nature of violence against women. It was the feminist movement that put violence against women on the political agenda in the 1970’s. Within the feminist perspective at the time, violence against women was seen as a consequence of the patriarchal system of male domination; women were the natural victims of male violence (Dobash and
Dobash 1979, Walker 1979). Straus and Gelles (1986) opposed this perspective. Based upon on their nationwide surveys they argued that women and men perpetrated violence with equal frequency, hence men are as much victims of domestic violence as women. This unleashed a huge debate. Johnson (1995) tried to merge the opposing arguments by proposing that there are in fact different forms of violence: patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence. Within these opposing perspectives on domestic violence, too little attention is given to the gendered meanings of violence.

It is normal for men to display coercive and controlling behavior over women (Stark 2007). In the Mexican context male practices of coercion and control are often named jealousy (celos) and are equated with love; betrayal of love is a good reason for violence in the eyes of both men and women. Stark (2007) argues that since control is such a normal way for men to do gender, many male practices of coercion and control are not recognized as violent. These practices are part of the gender structure that dominate women, and that men and women have internalized as normal. This takes us back to the notion of symbolic violence. Bourdieu (1992) calls male domination the most paradigmatic form of symbolic violence, since it is so deeply ingrained in the structures of society and it therefore becomes normalized. This does not mean that women do not suffer from these practices, but rather that they do not challenge the male power that enables their own subjugation. Men, in turn, interpret women’s (violent) behavior related to women’s position of subjugation. Women cannot control or coerce men to the extent that men can, since male violence and coercion build on unequal power relations that are considered normal. Thus as Dobash and Dobash (2004) demonstrate, while female violence does exist, it is less likely to be experienced as actually physically threatening. What we can conclude from these differences in perspective is that what is defined and experienced as violence has to be considered from the gender structure. Even if women were to perpetrate equal acts of violence in equal frequency to men, this still does not make their violence equal. Male physical violence fits within their practices of dominance and control that are normalized.

With his plea for a micro-sociology of violence Collins (2008) brought an extra dimension to the understanding of (domestic) violence. Collins argues that to understand violence we need to bring our attention to the violent situation itself, instead of focusing on the many possible variables of the perpetrator’s background or circumstances. The value of this theory is the possibility to focus on the relational aspect of violence: it is not only the individual’s background
or circumstances, but rather the relational power dynamic that enables this violent behavior to come about. Within the process of entrainment, a couple constructs a violent pattern of behavior together, whereby the aggressor derives power from the victim. Missing in Collin’s theory is an analysis of gender; who has the position of aggressor and who turns out to be the victim is not random. The gender structure plays an essential role in these dynamics, men are more likely to take on the role of aggressor and women that of victim in the process of entrainment. As came to the fore in this research, some women manage to alter the relational power play and step out of the process of entrainment they have developed with their partners. However, societal changes, such as the attention for domestic violence created by the media and governmental interventions, were necessary conditions for them to do so.

**Continuity and change**

Documentation on a large scale on the occurrence of domestic violence in Mexico has begun in the last decade. Because of a lack of reporting before there is no hard evidence that the incidence of domestic violence has substantially increased over the past decades. We cannot know for sure whether what is considered as a high number of violent incidences, is due to an increase of reporting, or whether there is indeed a numerical increase of incidences of domestic violence. What is sure is that the attention for domestic violence has grown over the last decades. This attention has to be seen against the backdrop of complex socio-political changes. Mexico’s democratization process has changed the political structures, giving space to the feminist movement and therewith to new definitions of violence. Women’s rights became a marker for democratization. The many ensuing law amendments that have been implemented since the 1970’s and 80’s to protect women from violence, together with increasing attention from the media, have been responsible for the awareness of violence against women. Male to female coercive behavioral patterns are increasingly seen as violence and are reported to the police. That more and more women are starting to recognize themselves as victims of violence does not necessarily mean that domestic violence actually increases, it does mean that many women no longer take their spouses’ violent acts directed against them for granted.

I have shown that for many men living in Playa del Carmen and Cancún women’s increasing entrance into the labor market can indeed bring about feelings of disempowerment. While some men refuse to allow their spouse to work outside the home, for most men refusal is simply not an option. To survive in this expensive tourist area, they have to allow their partners to
work. Women’s work is often phrased as helping out financially; it is not considered to be equal to a man’s work and does not necessarily challenge the male identification with being the breadwinner. What men experience as particularly problematic is the loss of control over women. The phenomenon of women working outdoors, having co-workers and money to spend, challenges male practices of coercion and control that are still central to doing masculinity. Nevertheless, we cannot automatically infer that these challenges to manhood lead to increasing violence against women. Violence against women was nothing new, but measuring violence against women is (relatively) new. Violence had not started within the generation of my informants (who were roughly within a range from 25 to 45 years old), but what is generally recognized as violence or normal male behavior is changing. Since the governmental gaze is increasingly present in domestic disputes the relational power dynamics are changing, especially in the urban areas. Women may invoke the help of governmental agencies to control their (violent) spouse.

Women now report acts of violence that they would likely not even have recognized as violence a decade or so ago. At the same time it can be inferred from the informants’ testimonies that there are also changes in the incidence of domestic violence. Some men managed to restrain themselves from actually using physical violence and some women managed to step out of the process of entrainment. These data give new insights into the functioning of different levels of violence, direct, symbolic and structural, and their relatedness. They suggest that symbolic violence is diminishing; the normalization of domestic violence is slowly being unsettled. My research shows that in the space of relatively little time changes do occur and both men and women are starting to recognize male acts of dominance and physical violence against women as violence. Moreover it demonstrated that at times violence was stopped because the victim, bystanders and even the (almost) perpetrator managed to put a halt to it. However, according to Bourdieu, a radical break is needed to end symbolic violence. Creating awareness is not enough to reject what has become normalized. This research shows that symbolic violence may not be as durable as Bourdieu explains it to be. Also the ways different forms of violence relate to each other may be more erratic than ‘the causal flow’ that Galtung (1990) describes between different forms of violence. The awareness of domestic violence is created through soap series, newspapers and billboards, together with governmental policies that actually support and empower women. The normalization of domestic violence is diminishing, women are starting to recognize and resist their own subjugation, and thus symbolic violence is diminishing. However the effects of a decreasing symbolic violence
on direct violence are not linear. In fact, the high level of violence as documented in surveys and police reports does not only indicate that for many women domestic violence is no longer internalized as something normal, it also indicates that for many women it does go on; continuity and change occur at the same time. Moreover, once it becomes generally known that organizations like the DIF and the public prosecutor are not as powerful as often thought, the occurrence of family violence may even become more prevalent than it already is today, despite being recognized as a big societal issue.

Although the Mexican democratization process has brought laws and policies to protect women, it has also facilitated unprecedented violence outside the domestic atmosphere. The status quo of the drug organizations was disturbed and unleashed battles for power that cannot be contained since there is no well-functioning judicial system. While Quintana Roo is not a war zone, violence related to the drug trade is present. Particularly in the poorer neighborhoods violence is an everyday event. My work has shown how the normal, everyday occurrence of (drug related) direct violence is related to domestic violence, and in today’s violent era the latter can be expected to increase as well.

Globalization and democratization have brought great changes that affected the gender structure and the ways in which people can do gender. Women’s entry to the labor market has dramatically changed gender relations, and women’s empowerment has led to a questioning of male dominance and machismo. Male violence against women receives increasing attention of policy makers. At the same time, for the men within this research who belong to the lower social classes, and to whom (structural) violence is a normal part of everyday life, the hegemony of machismo is confirmed. To state that male violence against women is increasing as a result of male disempowerment or alcohol and drug use would be a too simple conclusion that neglects to look at the effects of the contexts in which men live their lives, cope with oppressive structures, and do gender.

Given the ways different forms of violence are connected, policies to empower and protect women need to be embedded in policies to end other forms of direct violence and structural violence (poverty/social inequality). Also, perceptions of masculinity need to be addressed in policies. Thus far, policies to protect women have little to offer to men, who in many cases have been acting in a way that seemed normal to them (at least at the time) and in
accordance with expectations so as not be taken for a *mandillon*, a sissy. The existing policies impinge on male violent comportment and as such can even add to feelings of disempowerment. Apart from the male therapy group, with a limited reach, few efforts are made to deconstruct hegemonic masculinity. Men in Playa del Carmen and Cancún showed an awareness of the issue of domestic violence, but even those who had learned to think of (their own) violent behavior as wrong, were left wondering how to change and how to be non-violent while holding on to a dominant position within the household and being recognized by others as a man.

To recapitulate: My research demonstrates that the occurrence of domestic violence is situational and multi-layered. The interplay between structural, symbolic and direct violence is one aspect to be taken into account. The changing gender structure is another issue that should enter into the analysis. Transformations in the socio-political context and their effects on women’s awareness of, and willingness to, denounce violence, are yet another aspect. Drug abuse also plays a role, but again not as a sole determining factor. All these factors influence the occurrence of domestic violence. Thus, we need a more contextualized analysis to understand the theme. Moreover, if we want to design strategies and campaigns to decrease domestic violence, we will need to give attention to the construction of masculinity, especially within this context where the normalization of violence contributes to the hegemony of machismo. Without the inclusion of men, promoting change might in the long run prove to be in vain.
List of acronyms

- DIF - Desarrollo Integral Familiar, Integrated Development of the Family
- CAVI - Centro Atención Violencia familiar, Centre for Attention to Family Violence
- CAM - Centro de Atención a la Mujer, Women’s center
- CIAM - Centro Intergral A Mujeres y sus hijos, Integrated Center for Women and their children
- CDH - Comisión de los Derechos Humanos, Human Rights Committee
- CDI - Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los pueblos Indígenas, National Committee for the Development of the Indigenous people
- CROC - Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos, Revolutionary Confederation of laborours and Farmers
- CTS - Conflict Tactics Scale
- INFONAVIT - Instituto Nacional para el Fomento de la Vivienda de los Trabajadores, The National Workers Housing Fund Institute
- Inmujeres - Instituto Nacional de Las Mujeres, National Women’s Institute
- MP - Ministerio Publico, public prosecutor’s office
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Appendix 1 Research locations and methods

- **AA (Alcoholics Anonymous)**
  Participant observation at 24 meetings of one particular AA group
  3 taped interviews with men of this group

- **Anexos**, AA and Factor X, drug rehabilitation programs where people reside
  12 individual taped interviews

- **DIF - Desarrollo Integral Familiar, Integrated Development of the Family**
  A social worker of the DIF in Playa del Carmen took me around to families with problems of violence and drug use. With one of these families, a contact started that lasted about two years until they returned to their home state. Through this family, I met another family that requested my experience as a counselor, and I am still in touch with the latter.

- **CAVI - Centro Atención Violencia Familiar, Centre for Attention to Family Violence**
  Participant observation at 15 sessions of the men’s therapy group
  Participant observation at 7 sessions of the women’s therapy group
  2 taped interviews with men from the group

- **Ciudad de Alegría**, shelter for battered mothers
  Conducted 4 workshops about gender and sexuality

- **Health center**
  1 workshop, giving alcohol and substance use education
  3 group interviews with women
  Voluntary work translating for a medical specialist

- **CROC Employment Agency - Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos, Revolutionary Confederation of Laborers and Farmers**
  15 informal talks with men
  5 informal talks with women
  Short questionnaire (see below) among 31 men regarding perceptions and experiences with domestic violence (see below). The questionnaire had the purpose to acquaint me with the field, and the male experiences with domestic violence.
• Hospital
  Short questionnaire (see below) among 54 women regarding perceptions and experiences with domestic violence. The questionnaire had the purpose to acquaint me with the field, and the male experiences with domestic violence.

• Prison
  In-depth interviews with 21 men.
  13 men were interviewed once. The other eight were interviewed between two and seven times. I was introduced as psychologist to four of the last eight men and my interviews with them also included a more therapeutic content that was absent in the other (more conventional) interviews.
  In the director’s office where I could use my tape recorder, I conducted two group interviews and three individual interviews. The rest of the interviews were not recorded.

• Newspapers
  Daily reading of the Por Esto (Because of this) or the Novedades de Quintana Roo (News from Quintana Roo).

• Neighborhood
  Through the various activities I undertook and just by living in Playa del Carmen, I met a number of people who became quite important. I conducted three individual taped interviews with men I met in my neighborhood and three with women. Most of my neighborhood contacts were very informative, but were not formalized in a taped interview.
Appendix 2: Questionnaires

Encuesta mujeres

Por favor circula la respuesta correcta

Edad:

Nivel de educación:

Estado civil: soltera, divorciada, casada, unión libre

Si usted no tiene sus origines en Playa del Carmen, desde cuando vive acá:

1.- Usted opina que violencia contra mujeres es un gran problema en este país?
   Si / no

2.- Cuáles son los tipos de violencia contra mujeres que hay?
3.- Usted opina que la violencia intrafamiliar fue un mas gran problema antes que hoy?
   a) Si / no

   - Posible explicación:

4.- Usted opina que el trabajo ayuda a mujeres de fortalecer sus posiciones?
   a) Si / no

   b) Posible explicación:

5.- Su cónyuge le deja trabajar fuera de casa?
   Si / no

6.- Usted ha sido (es) víctima de violencia intrafamiliar?
   a) Si / no

   b) Durante su niñez
   * Si / No
c) Usted ha tenido experiencias personales con violencia con una pareja?
*Si/no

d) En el último año
*Si/no

e) En la última semana.
*Si/no

7.- Que solución usted propondría para solucionar al problema de violencia intrafamiliar?

Muchas gracias para su cooperación
Translation:

Questionnaire women
Please circle the right answer
Age:
Educational level:
Marital status: single, divorced, married, common law union
If you are not originally from Playa del Carmen, since when do you live here?
1 Do you think violence against women is a big problem in this country?
yes, no

2 What kind of violence against women exists?

3 Do you think violence against women used to be a bigger problem than now?
Yes/no

Possible explanation:

4 Do you think employment helps women to strengthen their positions?
Yes/no

Possible explanation:

5 Does your partner let you work outside the house?

6 Have you been/are you a victim of family violence
a) Yes/no
b) during your childhood?
c) have you had personal experience with violence with a partner?
Yes/no
d) over the last year?
Yes/no
e) over the last week?
Yes/no

7 What needs to be done to solve the issue of family violence?

Thank you very much for your cooperation
**Encuesta hombres**

Por favor circula la respuesta correcta

Edad:

Nivel de educación:

Estado civil: soltero, divorciado, casado, unión libre

Lugar de nacimiento:

Si usted no tiene sus origenes en Playa del Carmen, desde cuando vive acá:

1.- Actualmente muchas mujeres trabajan, que opina usted de este desarrollo?
   a) bueno / malo

   b) Porque?

2.- Usted deja trabajar a su pareja?
   A) Sí / no

   b) porque

3.- El hombre tiene un mas grande responsabilidad de mantener a su hogar que la mujer?
   a) Sí / no

   b) porque

4.- Un hombre que no mantenga a su mujer no es un verdadero hombre
   a) Sí / no

   b) porque

5) si ustedes dos trabajan, como comparten ustedes los gastos del hogar
   a) quien paga la renta: yo ella ambos

   b) quien paga la comida: yo ella ambos

   c) quien he pagado por los muebles: yo ella ambos

6.- A veces es necesario maltratar a una mujer físicamente?
   a) Sí / no

   b) De que manera?

   c) En cuales situaciones?
8.- Usted ha utilizado violencia contra una mujer?
   a) sí / no

   b) De qué manera?

   c) En cuáles situaciones?

Miuchas gracias para su cooperación
Translation:

**Questionnaire men**

Please circle the right answer

**Age:**

**Educational level:**

**Marital status:** single, divorced, married, common law union

**Place of birth**

If you are not originally from Playa del Carmen, since when do you live here?

1. Right now many women work, what do you think of this development?
   a. good/bad
   b. why?

2. Do you let your wife work?
   A. yes/no
   B. why?

3. The man has a bigger responsibility towards the maintenance of the household than the woman.
   A. yes/no
   B. why?

4. A man who does not provide for his wife is not a real man.
   A. yes/no
   B. why?

5. If you both work how do you share the household expenses
   a) who pays the rent: me   her   both
   b) who pays for the food: me   her   both
   c) who has paid for the furniture: me   her   both
**Questionnaire outcomes:**

**Women**
The questionnaire was completed by 55 women.

- **Age**
  Ages varying between 16 (3 women, 1 married, 2 in a common law relationship) and 67.
  13 women were teenagers, 23 were in their 20’s, 10 were in their 30’s, 4 in their 40’s, 1 in her 50’s and 1 in her 60’s. 3 unknown.

- **Education**
  13 had gone through (part of) primary school, 21 had gone through (part of) high school, 9 had an education higher than high school, 1 no education, 11 did not respond.

- **Migratory Status**
  4 women lived less than 1 year in Playa del Carmen, 27 women live between 1 and 10 years in Playa del Carmen, 7 more than 10 years (one is born in Playa del Carmen). 5 did not respond, 12 women filled in an earlier version of the questionnaire that did not include this question.

- **Civil Status**
  20 women were in a common law marriage (union libre), 22 were married, 11 single, 1 divorced, 1 did not respond.

- **Consider violence against women a grave problem in Mexico**
  Positively answered by all 55 women.

- **Level of violence**
  36 think violence against women used to be worse than now. Explanations given: 3 women responded that machismo was responsible for the violence, 1 said women were not allowed to study before, drug addiction was to blame for the violence, there are conferences for women and women have rights, women used to be more downtrodden, men and women are equal nowadays, men used to be the ones to order, because the law helps us.
  12 do not think violence against women was worse, 7 did not respond. No explanations were given for the perceived equality or increase in violence.

- **Types of violence against women**
  Physical, verbal, sexual violence, forced sexual relationships with partner when drunk, machismo, beatings, discrimination

- **Allowed to work by husband**
  ‘Does your husband let you work’ was answered by 47 women, 15 were not allowed to work, 32 were allowed to work.

- **Experiences with family violence**
  13 women had experienced family violence during their childhood.

- **Experiences with domestic violence**

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15 women had (ever) experienced violence from a partner (6 of them both childhood and partner violence), 7 had such experiences in the year prior to the question.

**Outcomes Questionnaire Men:**
The questionnaire was completed by 31 men.

- **Age**
The youngest respondent was 15, the oldest 39. 4 respondents were teenagers, 19 were in their 20’s, 4 in their 30’s, 4 did not respond.

- **Education**
  3 had gone through (part of) primary school, 19 had gone through (part of) high school, 4 had an education higher than high school, 5 did not respond.

- **Civil Status**
  3 men were in a common law marriage (union libre), 8 were married, 14 single, 5 divorced, 1 did not respond.

- **Migratory Status**
  12 men lived less than 1 year in Playa del Carmen, 15 men lived between 1 and 10 years in Playa del Carmen, 1 more than 10 years (no one is born in Playa del Carmen), 3 did not respond.

- **Opinion about women’s remunerated employment**
  26 men said they thought it a good idea that women worked and (would) let their own spouse work. Answers were given as: it help us, it benefits the family, women are equal to men. One man said it was good for the family income, but bad because it made women possessive. Four men said that work was not for women.

- **A man has a bigger responsibility to provide for the household than a woman**
  25 men agreed to have a bigger responsibility as a provider, reasons given: because he is the head, the base, the pillar of the family, because it is the culture, because he is not only responsible for himself, because there are not enough job possibilities for women, because when a man marries he is responsible, because he is a man. 5 did not agree, because we can both work, because together we form a household. 1 did not respond.

- **Violence against women can be necessary**
  Two men said violence against women was sometimes necessary because of betrayal, relationship (presumably sexual).

- **The respondent used violence against women**
  Two men (not the ones who thought violence necessary) acknowledged having used violence against their spouse.
Summary

Playa del Carmen and Cancun were the cities where I investigated men, their presumed disempowerment, and violence against women. This tourist area of Quintana Roo, Mexico, is an area in flux. The expanding tourist economy brings many employment opportunities for both men and women, and attracts migrants from all over the country in search for work. This, in combination with a high report of violence against women, seemed to make this the ideal location to find out how the relationship between masculinity and violence evolves in a setting of socio economic transformations. What place does violence have in the performance of masculinity, and does the inability to be the (main) provider, result in (more) male violence against women in this tourist area? Mexican national and state policies are focused on curbing violence against women; how is the performance of masculinity shaped by these policies? Violence against women is often treated as if it occurs in isolation from the society at large, but how is domestic violence related to other forms of violence? What is the connection with drug- and alcohol abuse that are often considered to be causal to domestic violence?

Methodological practicalities, such as my own safety and getting access to the particular research population of men who had histories of violent behavior, made that I sought for informants through a number of organizations. Alcoholics Anonymous, prison, and the organization for Integrated Family Development (DIF) with its therapy group for male perpetrators of violence, have been particularly important for this research. Doing research through these organizations meant I mostly became acquainted with a population of low- and lower middle class men. They are more often penalized in the juridical system, they are the target population for the DIF and they lack the money to find private care for drug addiction and other problems. Doing research among the lower class population had consequences for the kinds of violence I was to research. Domestic violence was embedded within a range of different forms of violence.

Almost all informants were migrants and their backgrounds were quite divers. Some came from big cities like Mexico City or Veracruz, others came from the country side, some from remote rural areas. The types of violence they had experienced and perpetrated were quite diverse depending on location. For example, the informants with an urban background had become acquainted with gang related violence, something unlikely in rural areas. Despite these
differences, the men who had perpetrated violence in their adult lives had grown up in circumstances where often some form of violence, such as parental physical and emotional abuse or gang violence had been present. Within the commonsensical way of looking at violence, physical violence is prioritized as more serious than non-physical violence. This dissertation shows the unjustness of such prioritization. Neglect, rejection and other forms of psychological violence hurt like physical violence. The relationship between direct violence (physical and non-physical), structural violence and symbolic violence is investigated within this work. These different forms of violence interact and reproduce each other. For the informants of this research the frequent occurrence of violence meant that violence became normalized. The informants generally considered a parental beating with the belt as a normal form of disciplining. Extreme forms of violence were recognized as such, but living through violence means that one has to adapt to this violent reality. The normalization of violence is a coping mechanism; the violence that is witnessed, that is endured, and also the violence that is acted out becomes mitigated. Likewise, the inequality of societal structures is often not experienced as injustice, as a form of violence; it is just the way it is.

The harsh circumstances that the informants had lived in, lead them to reproduce violence. Some said they had vowed to never use physical violence as adults, because they did not want to replicate their father’s behavior. However, being accustomed to experiencing violence it proved hard to not reproduce it. For the informants of this research being a man is associated with domination, if necessary by force, with being the one who orders, but also with being the one who provides. These aspects of masculinity are often equated with ‘machismo’. The violent backgrounds of the informants had resulted in the compliance with the hegemony of ‘machismo’. Gender studies often take ‘machismo’ as the cause of violence, how violence produces certain gender identities has received little attention. While violent circumstances produce machismo, machismo at the same time legitimizes violent behavior.

Within the public discourse in Mexico ‘machismo’, and male alcohol and drug use are pointed out as the main causes behind violent behavior. Drinking is part of male socializing, the end of the work week is celebrated with large quantities of alcohol. Within current addiction research much attention goes out to the way in which the brain changes as an effect of drug abuse, creating the image of a ‘diseased brain’ with a perpetual hunger for drugs. The function that alcohol and drugs have as a coping mechanism deserves more attention:
alcohol has a great ability to numb the pain of social trauma. It can give an immense release and pleasure to not be bothered by thoughts, desires and pain, which in itself is a great stimulus to continue using drugs. Defining drug use and drunken violent behavior as symptoms of a disease ignores the context that produces these behaviors.

The AA was an important location to find research participants. The notion of addiction as a disease, is accepted as common knowledge among the local members of the AA. According to Furedi (2004) in times of increasing individualization people seek meaning within themselves, which may partly explain the popularity of the AA. The AA provides an explanatory narrative for all the wrongs committed: suffering from the illness addiction inevitably leads to violence, imprisonment, hospitalization and eventually death. Interestingly, the prescribed medicine, attending group sessions, does not remedy this random disposition but has a social function. The AA is a place where everyone is welcome, one becomes a member, a part of a group where one finds acceptance. Within the AA, the informants found a safe place in which they could show some of their vulnerability. Hegemonic masculinity was confirmed through crude language, referrals to sex and violence. At the same time, within the liminal space of the group, hegemonic masculinity could, momentarily, be defied. Since problems are defined as individual not societal, the AA disease discourse does not challenge any oppressive structures, be it the hegemony of machismo or that of the upper classes.

The terms that I use throughout this book: normalization of violence, symbolic violence, and hegemony are all similar terms that explain our compliance with the structures we live in. No matter how violent or dysfunctional, we tend to device ways to fit into our surrounding structures, not to brake them. This is often not a conscious process, the term symbolic violence refers explicitly to the unconscious, embodied, process of becoming accomplices within our own oppression. Bourdieu (1992) argues that male domination is one of the most paradigmatic forms of symbolic violence. It is therefore that many non-physical forms of domestic violence go unnoticed. Like Stark (2006) argues practices of coercion and control are hard to discern from ‘normal’ practices of male domination.

Whether women are perpetrators of domestic violence to an equal degree as men have lead to polemic discussion among domestic violence theorists. To merge the opposing theories, Johnson (1995) proposed new terms to separate different forms of violence: patriarchal terrorism versus common couple
violence. With the micro sociology of violence Collins (2008) has added a new perspective to the debate. Entrainment is a key concept within this perspective: it refers to the process of drawing the other along with oneself, and together being in sync. The aggressor and the victim learn a pattern of behavior together, whereby the aggressor feeds of the process of entrainment with the victim, deriving his power from it. The partner cooperates with the aggressor by giving space to act out his violent behavior.

Surprisingly, in the debate about domestic violence many authors omit to take into account the way gender shapes meanings and practices of violence. Collins’ focus on the process of violence itself has been of great value to this research, still a purely micro sociological perspective is not enough to understand domestic violence, we have to take gender into account. Within the context of this research, men are more likely to derive power from women than vice versa. Women are more likely to take on a submissive role, letting men derive power from them in the process of entrainment makes sense within the way they are used to perform gender. Women are also more inclined to call their own behavior violence than men do, because violence is not part of the way in which women ‘do gender’. For the male informants of this research violent behavior is a normal way to express their compliance to hegemonic masculinity; men have to show their dominance, if they do not they are taken to be mandillones, lesser men. However, hegemonic masculinity can conflict with new Mexican laws and policies that are protecting women. Enforcing a dominant position through violence may no longer be accepted.

What is understood as violence is political and gendered and under constant construction (Hume 2008). The creation of definitions of (domestic) violence and their inclusion in the law shows that power relations are changing. New categories, like those of victims of domestic- or sexual abuse are created, while the occurrences of violence may not have changed. In Mexico, the creation of these categories occurred in the nineteen seventies and eighties. International pressure on Mexico to democratize and modernize gave momentum to the feminist movement. The feminist movement pressed for law reforms to protect women against rape, including marital rape, and domestic violence. A proliferation of laws has seen the light since then, and a number of governmental organizations is burdened with the execution of these laws. Non-governmental organizations have followed with programs for (the protection of) women. The execution of these laws and policies often fails due to bureaucratic flaws, lack of police capacity and corruption. However, the organizations have managed to create awareness of the existence of violence
against women and the possibility to report it. The normalization of violence is countered, a sensitivity for the topic of domestic violence is slowly being created. Women learn that violence is not something they have to accept: they can go to the police or other organizations for help. This knowledge empowers them and allows for a renegotiation of the relational balance of power. Some manage to stop the violence by stepping out of the process of entrainment with their abusive partner. Men in the field area also proved to be aware of the topic. The willingness to talk about the subject was striking, apart from the men I had met through the organizations that I worked with, I had random encounters with men in which the topic of violence was discussed. Some men had come to interpret their own (potentially) violent behavior as wrong, while others had become aware of the domestic violence laws but lamented the interference of the authorities in what they saw as their private affair: the enforcement of their authority within their own household.

Male authority is under pressure in this area, to maintain a position of provider and head of the household within this expensive tourist zone is impossible for many workers, especially for those at the lower echelons of the employment market. Men may have to allow their wives to work because they cannot make ends meet on a single income. They expressed their worries over the care of the children, and also over women’s access to a social life outside of the domestic sphere, and their control. These worries can be especially acute for rural men who in their villages of origin had often been able to maintain a household with a traditional division of labor. The transition to this urban zone might bring challenges to their masculinity that they had not anticipated. These transitions can bring about feelings of anxiety, the men themselves most often talk about jealousy (celos) to express these feelings of a loss of control over their partners. In the wordings of the social scientist these men are ‘disempowered’ or in ‘crisis’. Assumptions about increasing violence as a consequence of this disempowerment cannot be confirmed. For the informants, violence, in one form or another, has been part of their lives, but violence was often normalized and not recognized as such. Policies to protect women are now making violence against women visible. Practices of coercion and control, in compliance with hegemonic, macho, masculinity, are now signified as violence. Women who have undergone these practices are starting to recognize themselves as victims. As I have argued, different forms of violence interconnect, and diminishing symbolic violence affects other forms of violence. The increasing recognition of violence as something that is not normal, and the consequent feeling of being victimized, leads women to seek interventions from governmental organization like the DIF and the police. The
fact that they know of the existence of organizations willing to help them, whether able or not, can change the balance of power within their relationship.

While these changes give a hopeful outlook for the future there are reasons for worries. First: what will happen once the public at large notices that policies directed at protecting women are not as effective as they may seem to be? Once women know that actual convictions for domestic violence are quite rare, that the police can only intervene when they catch the perpetrator red handed, that their partners are not likely to be taken away if they have money or influence, will they still be able to shift the balance of power? Secondly: policies to protect women have little to offer to men. The violence enacted against their partners seemed normal to them (at least at the time), and is in accordance with what other men expected of them in order to not be taken for a mandillon, a lesser man. The policies that protect women do nothing but add to male disempowerment. Apart from the DIF’s male therapy group, no efforts are undertaken to deconstruct hegemonic masculinity. Even those men who had learned to think of (their own) violent behavior as wrong, were left to wonder how to change. How to be nonviolent while maintaining a dominant position within the household? How to be recognized by others as a man when not enforcing a dominant position?

The last chapter ‘Doing masculinity in a Mexican prison’ shows that physical violence can diminish if men are given an incentive to restrain themselves, and if they are given a different outlet to ‘do’ masculinity. Necessity makes that practices that would normally be called effeminate, such as crochet, can be made acceptable by molding them in a discourse of providing for the family. The malleability of masculinity should be mobilized much more to promote a non-violent, more egalitarian performance of masculinity. It is unlikely that such a performance of masculinity will arise without outside pressure, among men of the lower social classes. At the time of writing, drug wars are raging in Mexico. Young men like my informants grow up in context of everyday violence, reinforcing the hegemony of a machismo. Awareness of the need to change is not enough. Men will have to learn a performance of masculinity that will be recognized by others and themselves as strong, while not being violent. The current policies give men little clues of how to do this. The creation of new images of strong, non-violent men are needed to construct alternatives to the image of the ‘macho’ that still speaks to the imagination of many men and women.
Samenvatting: Geweld, Drugs en Haken: Een Etnografie over Mannelijkheid en Veranderende Genderrelaties aan de Mexicaanse Riviera

Dit onderzoek naar mannelijkheid en geweld vond plaats in Playa del Carmen en Cancun, in Quintana Roo, Mexico. De groeiende toeristen industrie in dit gebied brengt grote veranderingen met zich mee. Arbeidsmogelijkheden voor mannen en vrouwen trekken migranten aan vanuit het hele land. Tevens is er een hoog aantal aangiftes van geweld tegen vrouwen. Deze combinatie van factoren maakten dit gebied een goede locatie om te onderzoeken hoe de relatie tussen mannelijkheid en geweld verloopt in een setting van socio-economische transformatie. Welke rol speelt geweld in de ‘performance’ van mannelijkheid, en resulteert het onvermogen om de (hoofd) kostwinnaar te zijn in (meer) geweld tegen vrouwen? Mexicaanse nationale en lokale wetten zijn gericht op het terugdringen van geweld tegen vrouwen, hoe wordt de ‘performance’ van mannelijkheid beïnvloed door dit beleid? Geweld tegen vrouwen wordt vaak benaderd alsof het plaats vindt geïsoleerd van de maatschappij in het algemeen. Ik onderzoek hoe huiselijk geweld beïnvloedt wordt door andere vormen van geweld. En, welke rol spelen alcohol en drugs die vaak als causale oorzaken van huiselijk geweld worden gezien?

Methodologische beperkingen, zoals eigen veiligheid en de toegang tot de onderzoekspopulatie, maakte dat ik op zoek ging naar informanten binnen een aantal organisaties. De Anonieme Alcoholisten (AA), de gevangenis, en de organisatie voor Integrale Familie Ontwikkeling (DIF), waren belangrijk voor dit onderzoek. Binnen deze organisaties onderzoek doen betekende dat ik voornamelijk in contact kwam met mannen uit de lagere sociale klassen. Zij worden vaker bestraft binnen het juridisch systeem, zij vallen binnen de doelpop van de DIF, en zij hebben geen geld voor privé behandeling voor drugs verslaving en andere problemen. Onderzoek doen onder mensen uit de lagere sociale klassen had gevolgen voor het soort geweld dat ik ging onderzoeken. Huiselijk geweld is ingebed binnen een scala van geweld.

Bijna alle informanten ware migranten, hun achtergronden waren heel verschillend. Sommigen kwamen uit grote steden als Mexico stad of Veracruz terwijl anderen van het platteland kwamen, soms van verafgelegen gebieden. De soorten geweld die ze hadden ervaren en uitgeoefend waren ook verschillend, afhankelijk van locatie. Bijvoorbeeld, de informanten met een stedelijke achtergrond waren in contact gekomen met geweld gerelateerd aan bendes, iets dat niet waarschijnlijk was in de rurale gebieden. Ondanks de verschillen waren alle mannen die als volwassenen geweld gebruikten,
opgegroeid in omstandigheden waar vaak verschillende vormen van geweld, zoals fysiek en emotioneel geweld van ouders, aanwezig waren. Doorgaans wordt in het denken aan geweld, fysiek geweld als ernstiger te beschouwd dan niet-fysiek geweld. Deze dissertatie laat zien hoe zeer dit onterecht is. Verwaarlozing, afwijzing en andere vormen van psychologisch geweld doen pijn net zoals fysiek geweld. De relatie tussen direct geweld (fysiek en niet fysiek), structureel geweld en symbolisch geweld komt aan de orde. Deze verschillende vormen van geweld hebben een wisselwerking en reproduceren elkaar. Voor de informanten van dit onderzoek betekende het frequente voorkomen van geweld, dat geweld genormaliseerd raakte. De informanten vonden dat een ouderlijk pak slaag met een riem een normale manier van discipilneren/opvoeden was. Extreme vormen van geweld werden herkend als zodanig, maar het leven met geweld betekent dat men zich aanpast aan de gewelddadige realiteit. De normalisatie van geweld is een coping mechanisme. Het geweld waarvan men getuige is, dat men heeft ervaren, en ook het geweld dat men zelf heeft gebruikt, wordt gebagatelliseerd. Eveneens wordt de ongelijkheid van sociale structuren vaak niet ervaren als onrecht, een vorm van geweld, het is gewoon zoals het is.

De zware omstandigheden waar de informanten in leefden, maakten dat zij gewelddadig gedrag reproduceerden. Sommigen hadden gezworen zelf als volwassenen nooit geweld te zullen gebruiken, omdat zij het gedrag van hun vaders niet wilden herhalen. Echter, wanneer men gewoon is geweld te ervaren blijkt het moeilijk het niet te reproduceren. De informanten associëren man zijn met dominantie (indien nodig door middel van geweld), met de lakens uitdelen, maar ook met de kostwinnaar zijn. Deze aspecten van mannelijkheid worden geassocieerd met ‘machismo’. Op groeien onder gewelddadige omstandigheden maakte dat de informanten zich confirmeren aan de hegemonie van ‘machismo’. In het Gender Studies wordt machismo wel als oorzaak van geweld gezien, er wordt weinig aandacht besteed aan de wijze waarop geweld bepaalde genderidentiteiten produceert. Terwijl gewelddadige omstandigheden machismo produceert, legitimeert machismo tezelfdertijd gewelddadig gedrag.

In het publieke discours in Mexico worden alcohol en drugs gebruik van mannen gezien als de belangrijkste oorzaken achter gewelddadig gedrag. Alcohol drinken is een vast onderdeel van het samenzijn van mannen, het einde van de werkweek wordt gevierd met grote hoeveelheden alcohol. Binnen het huidige verslavingsonderzoek gaat veel aandacht naar veranderingen in het brein ten gevolge van drugsgebruik, een beeld wordt
gecreëerd van een verziekt brein met een constante zucht naar drugs. Het definiëren van alcohol en drugsgebruik als een ziekte maakt dat de context waarin dit gedrag voorkomt onderbelicht blijft. De functie die het gebruik van alcohol en drugs kan hebben als coping mechanisme om de harde omstandigheden te kunnen verdragen verdient meer aandacht.

De AA was een belangrijke locatie om onderzoeksparticipanten te vinden. De notie van verslaving als een ziekte wordt als gemeengoed geaccepteerd door de locale leden van de AA. De AA biedt een verklarend verhaal voor alle veroorzaakt leed: het lijden aan de ziekte verslaving leidt uiteindelijk onvermijdelijk tot geweld, gevangenschap, ziekte en uiteindelijk de dood. Volgens Furedi (2004) zoeken mensen ten tijde van toenemende individualisering betekenissen in zich zelf. De populariteit van de AA kan hiermee deels verklaard worden. Echter, het voorgeschreven medicijn, het bijwonen van de groepsbijeenkomsten, geneemt de ziekte niet maar heeft een sociale functie. Iedereen is welkom bij de AA. Binnen de AA vonden de informanten een veilige plek waarbinnen zij iets van hun kwetsbaarheid konden laten zien. Hegemonische masculiniteit werd bevestigd door grof taalgebruik, het refereren aan seks en geweld. Tegelijkertijd hoefde, voor even, binnen de liminale ruimte van de groep, niet beantwoord te worden aan de verwachtingen van het ideaal van hegemonische mannelijkheid. Aangezien problemen worden gedefinieerd als individueel en niet maatschappelijk worden onderdrukkende structuren, of het nou gaat om de hegemonie van machismo of die van de hogere sociale klasse, niet aan de kaak gesteld.

Gebruikte terminologieën in dit boek, van normalisatie van geweld, symbolisch geweld en hegemonie duiden op onze neiging tot confirmeren aan de structuren waarin wij leven. Ongeacht hoe gewelddadig of disfunctioneel, we hebben de neiging om ons aan te passen aan de ons omgevende structuren niet om deze omver te werpen. Dit is meestal niet een bewust proces, de notie symbolisch geweld refereert expliciet aan het onbewuste, belichaamde proces van deelneming aan eigen onderdrukking. Bourdieu (1992) beargumenteert dat mannelijke dominantie een van de meest paradigmatische vormen van symbolisch geweld is; dit is de reden dat veel vormen van niet fysiek huiselijk geweld onopgemerkt blijven. Zoals Stark (2006) beargumenteert zijn praktijken van dwang en controle nauwelijks te onderscheiden van normale processen van mannelijke dominantie.

De vraag of vrouwen in gelijke aantallen daders zijn van huiselijk geweld als mannen, heeft geleid tot polemische discussies onder theoretici van huiselijk

Verassend genoeg wordt in het debat rondom huiselijk geweld door veel auteurs nauwelijks aandacht besteed aan de wijze waarop gender betekenenissen en praktijken van geweld vormt. Collin’s focus op het proces van geweld zelf is van grote waarde voor dit onderzoek, echter een puur micro-sociologisch perspectief is niet genoeg om huiselijk geweld te begrijpen. Binnen de context van dit onderzoek zijn het eerder mannen dan vrouwen die macht kunnen halen uit de relatie. Vrouwen zijn eerder geneigd zich in een onderschikte positie te voegen; aan mannen macht verlenen past in de manier waarop zij uiting geven aan hun gender identiteit. Vrouwen zijn ook eerder geneigd om hun gedrag als gewelddadig te bestempelen dan mannen omdat geweld niet een normaal aspect is van de wijze waarop zij aan gender gestalte geven. Voor de mannelijke informanten in dit onderzoek was gewelddadig gedrag een normale manier om uiting te geven aan hegemonische masculiniteit. Mannen moeten hun dominantie laten zien, doen ze dat niet dan worden ze gezien als mandillones, slappelingen. Echter, hegemonische masculiniteit kan conflicteren met nieuwe Mexicaanse wetten en beleidsmaatregelen die vrouwen moeten beschermen. Met geweld een dominante positie opleggen is niet altijd meer geaccepteerd.

Wat onder geweld wordt verstaan wordt bepaald door politiek en gender en is onder constante reconstructie (Hume 2008). Het ontstaan van nieuwe definities van (huiselijk) geweld en hun inclusie in de wet laten zien dat machtsverhoudingen veranderen. Nieuwe categorieën, zoals die van slachteroffener van huiselijk en seksueel geweld ontstaan terwijl het aantal geweldssituaties niet noodzakelijk is veranderd. In Mexico zijn deze nieuwe categorieën ontstaan in de jaren 1970 en ‘80. Internationale druk op Mexico om te democratiseren en moderniseren gaven kracht aan de feministische beweging. De feministische beweging lobbyde voor het veranderen van de wet
om vrouwen te beschermen tegen verkrachting, inclusief verkrachting binnen het huwelijk, en huiselijk geweld. Tal van nieuwe wetten zijn gecreëerd sinds dien en een aantal overheidsinstanties is belast met het uitvoeren van deze wetten. Non-gouvernementele organisaties volgden met programma’s voor (de bescherming van) vrouwen. De uitvoering van de wetten en beleidsmaatregelen mislukken vaak door bureaucratische fouten, een gebrek aan politie capaciteit en corruptie. Echter, deze organisaties hebben er wel voor gezorgd dat men zich bewust geworden is van het bestaan van geweld tegen vrouwen en de mogelijkheid aangifte te doen. De normalisatie van geweld wordt zo bestreden, vrouwen leren dat geweld niet iets is dat ze moeten accepteren; ze kunnen naar de politie of een andere organisatie om hulp te krijgen. Deze wetenschap geeft kracht en stelt sommige vrouwen in staat de relationele machtsbalans te herzien. Sommige vrouwen zijn in staat om het geweld een halt toe te roepen door uit het proces van afstemming met hun gewelddadige partner te stappen. Mannen bleken eveneens bewust van het onderwerp. De bereidheid om over huiselijk geweld te willen praten was opvallend, naast de interviews met mannen die ik had ontmoet binnen de organisaties waar ik mee samen werkte, had ik toevallige ontmoetingen met mannen waarbij het onderwerp geweld ter sprake kwam. Behalve de mannen die hadden geleerd om hun eigen (potentieel) gewelddadige gedrag af te keuren, waren er de mannen die ook bewust waren geworden van de wetten tegen huiselijk geweld maar die het ingrijpen van de overheid, op wat zij als hun privé terrein zagen, afkeurden.

De mannelijke autoriteit staat onder druk in dit gebied, het behouden van een positie als kostwinnaar of hoofd van het huishouden in dit dure toeristen gebied is onmogelijk voor veel arbeiders, vooral voor mannen uit de lagere rangen van de arbeidsmarkt. Veel mannen hebben geen andere keus dan hun vrouwen toe te staan te werken omdat het onmogelijk is op één inkomen rond te komen. De mannen gaven uiting aan hun zorgen over de opvoeding van de kinderen, en ook over het feit dat vrouwen toetreden tot een sociaal leven buiten de deur, en buiten de controle van de man. Deze zorgen kunnen in het bijzonder acuut zijn voor mannen van het platteland die in hun dorpen van oorsprong vaak in staat waren geweest een traditionele rolverdeling vast te houden. De overgang naar deze stedelijke zone kunnen de hun gebruikelijke percepties omtrent genderrelaties danig tegenspreken. Deze overgang kan gevoelens van angst en onrust teweeg brengen, de mannen zelf hebben het vaak over jalousie waarmee ze gevoelens van controleverlies over hun partner tot uitdrukking brengen. In de woorden van de sociaal wetenschapper zijn deze mannen ‘disempowered’ of in ‘crisis’. De aanname van toenemend
geweld als een gevolg van deze crisis kan niet bevestigd worden. Voor de informanten was geweld, in enige vorm, deel van hun leven, geweld was vaak genormaliseerd en werd niet altijd als geweld herkent. Beleid dat er op gericht is vrouwen te beschermen maakt geweld tegen vrouwen zichtbaar. Het uitoefenen van dwang of controle, gedrag in overeenstemming met hegemonische masculiniteit, worden nu benoemd als geweld. Vrouwen die dit soort gedrag ondergingen beginnen zich zelf te zien als slachtoffers. Zoals ik heb beargumenteerd, zijn verschillende vormen van geweld met elkaar verbonden en zodra symbolisch geweld afneemt heeft dat effect op andere vormen van geweld. Het toenemend herkennen van geweld als iets dat niet normaal is, en daarmee het ervaren van slachtofferschap, maakt dat vrouwen de hulp inroepen van overheidsorganisaties als de DIF en de politie. Het feit dat zij organisaties kennen die hen willen helpen, of ze daar nou toe in staat zijn of niet, maakt dat de machtsbalans in hun relatie kan veranderen.

Terwijl deze ontwikkelingen een hoopvolle kijk op de toekomst geven zijn er ook redenen voor zorg. Ten eerste; wat gaat er gebeuren als het publiek merkt dat de beleidsmaatregelen gericht op het beschermen van vrouwen niet zo effectief zijn als ze lijken. Zodra vrouwen merken dat feitelijke veroordelingen voor huiselijk geweld tamelijk zeldzaam zijn, dat de politie alleen kan ingrijpen als ze de dader betrappen tijdens de overtreding, dat hun partners waarschijnlijk niet zullen worden opgepakt als ze geld of invloed hebben, zullen zij dan nog in staat zijn de machtsbalans te veranderen? Ten tweede: beleid dat erop gericht is om vrouwen te beschermen heeft weinig te bieden aan mannen. Het geweld dat zij uitoefenden op hun vrouwen is voor hen normaal (of was indertijd normaal), en is in overeenstemming met het gedrag dat van hen dat van hen verwacht werd om niet gezien te worden als een ‘mandillon’, een slappeling’. Dit beleid draagt bij aan de crisis in mannelijkheid. Behalve de mannen therapie groep van de DIF worden er weinig acties ontplooipt die een aanzet kunnen geven tot de deconstructie van machismo als hegemonische vorm van masculiniteit. Zelfs die mannen die hadden geleerd om (hun eigen) gewelddadige gedrag te zien als verkeerd, vroegen zich af hoe zij konden veranderen. Hoe kan je geweldloos zijn en tegelijkertijd je dominante positie in het huishouden behouden? Hoe zorg je ervoor dat anderen niet twijfelen aan je mannelijkheid terwijl je je dominante positie niet opeist?

Het laatste hoofdstuk ‘Doing masculinity in a Mexican prison’ laat zien dat geweld kan afnemen als geweldloos gedrag beloond wordt, en als er andere manieren worden gecreëerd waarop mannen hun mannelijkheid
kunnen laten zien. Noodzaak maakt dat praktijden die doorgaans als vrouwelijk worden bestempeld, zoals haken, acceptabel kunnen zijn als ze worden verpakt in een discours van kostwinnaarschap. De flexibiliteit van mannelijkheid zou meer gemobiliseerd moeten worden om een geweldloze en meer egalitaire uiting van mannelijkheid te promoten. Het is onwaarschijnlijk dat onder mannen van de lagere sociale klassen een dergelijke performance van mannelijkheid zal ontstaan zonder druk van buitenaf. Tijdens het schrijven van deze dissertatie woedt de drugsoorlog in Mexico. Jonge mannen, zoals mijn informanten, groeien op in een context van alledaags geweld, de hegemonie van het macho ideaal zal hierdoor versterkt worden. Het erkennen dat er iets moet veranderen is niet genoeg. Mannen moeten leren op zo’n manier uiting te geven aan hun mannelijkheid dat ze door anderen gezien worden als sterk, zonder gewelddadig te zijn. Het huidig beleid geeft aan mannen weinig aanknopingspunten. Nieuw beelden van sterke, geweldloze mannelijkheid zijn nodig om een alternatief te construeren voor de ‘macho’ die nog steeds tot de verbeelding spreekt van vele mannen en vrouwen.