“That’s How Marriage Is”:
An Ethnographic Study of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women
in Lambayeque, Peru

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the Center for International Studies of Ohio University

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of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

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This thesis titled

“That’s How Marriage Is”:

An Ethnographic Study of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women

in Lambayeque, Peru

by

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ABSTRACT

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“That’s How Marriage Is”: An Ethnographic Study of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Lambayeque, Peru (304 pp.)

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Violence against women (VAW) is one of the world’s most pervasive social problems. It is a cross-cultural phenomenon that is created, enacted, and experienced on many levels and to varying degrees. For this reason, ethnographic research on VAW is especially appropriate in order to develop nuanced understandings of each socio-cultural context.

In Lambayeque, a town on Peru’s northern coast, intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is common. IPVAW is naturalized within Lambayecano society, making it particularly difficult to address. The naturalization of IPVAW also leads its reproduction from one generation to the next, as IPVAW is not often questioned or problematized. It is difficult for women to effectively resist IPVAW because it is woven into the multiple socio-cultural spheres of everyday life. Naturalized IPVAW can be understood as a form of intimate terror because of its strategic, intentional, coercive and often extreme nature that has particular effects on abused women and women in general.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

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Esta tesis de maestría se dedica a las mujeres valientes de Lambayeque que compartieron sus historias, y que siguen luchando y sobreviviendo a pesar de la violencia que sirve de fondo en sus vidas diarias.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Characterizing Lambayeque

The women in this study are from Lambayeque, a town on Peru’s northern coast, 13 kilometers north of the city of Chiclayo. Lambayeque suffers from many of the same social challenges and problems that characterize most of Peru’s larger coastal cities. Once a small, close-knit town, Lambayeque now expands beyond the colonial center and includes migrant shanty towns, known in Peru as pueblos jóvenes (a euphemism meaning “young communities” that was implemented by the Peruvian government to replace the former term, barriadas meaning “slums”). These sprawl into the surrounding desert, having attracted rural dwellers from the Andes and Amazon regions, as well as migrants from coastal towns and cities further to the north. Migrants move to Lambayeque primarily to seek work in agriculture in the areas surrounding the town, for easy access to commercial enterprises in the neighboring city of Chiclayo (primarily the large agricultural markets that act as a commercial hub in the north of Peru) without the city’s higher cost of living, or for the possibility of free education at the National University.

This influx causes increased incidents of conflict between people from the three different parts of the country (coast, mountains, and jungle), and between people from the settled community and more recent immigrants.

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1 Lambayeque is a small but populous department on the northern coast of Peru (14,231.3 square kilometers, 8,894.6 square miles); it is also a province (within the department), and a city (within the province). For the purposes of this thesis, “Lambayeque” will refer to the town, unless otherwise specified as the department of Lambayeque.
2 The department of Lambayeque is Peru’s largest producer of rice, and one of the largest producers of sugar cane and cotton.
3 Pedro Ruiz Gallo National University is located in the town of Lambayeque. Each year approximately 10,000 individuals compete for around 800 available spaces to study at the university.
Like other Peruvian cities, the rural-to-urban migration began in the 1950s and exploded during the 1980s and 1990s in response to security threats from the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA) terrorist groups. Peasants, however, were not only escaping violence; they were also looking for new economic opportunities during Peru’s economic collapse of the late 1980s. Like in many Peruvian cities that suffer from uncontrolled urban sprawl, the people who have resided in Lambayeque for generations lament the growth of shanty towns, blaming them for most of the city’s social ills. Local governments, plagued by corruption, are either unable or unwilling (or both) to keep up with the necessary infrastructure to support the increased population. Individuals nostalgically remember times before the pueblos jóvenes, saying that there was virtually no crime because all of the families from the center of town knew each other.

On a national scale, Lambayeque has no upper- or middle-class. The majority of households in the center of Lambayeque are middle or lower-middle class. These families are able to get by day to day. They may own their own home, or they may rent. Some are able to send their children (most often boys) to college at the national university (which is free except for some fees and the cost of materials). Most do not own cars, and thus rely on public transportation. Most do not have much money in savings accounts, instead living month-to-month, hoping that there be no unforeseen tragedy that would break the delicate economic balance. Most of the families in Lambayeque that were once wealthy have either gone bankrupt (usually because of failed agriculture or an extravagant
lifestyle that could not be maintained) or have moved away (some to nearby Chiclayo, Lima, or another country).

The households in the periphery of Lambayeque, in the *pueblos jóvenes*, are comprised of the economic lower-class. Houses take a variety of forms, ranging from brick and cement constructions, to adobe buildings with tin roofs, to *chozas* (shacks) made from woven straw mats, plastic tarps, plastic rice sacks sewn together, sticks/ poles, and whatever other materials can be scavenged. Financially, most households in the *pueblos jóvenes* live week-to-week or day-to-day, and are often struggling not to have their utilities turned off. Children and teenagers may or may not attend school regularly, depending on how many siblings there are and the parents’ ability to pay for materials, inscription fees, uniforms, etc. It is not uncommon for older siblings to drop out of school so that their younger siblings can attend. While 89% of adolescents (age 12-16) in the department of Lambayeque are registered at a school, only 76.9% actually attend. Of people aged 15 and older, 37% have an elementary school education, 41.8% have a high school education, and 21.1% have a post-secondary education (at an institute or university) (MIMDES 2010).

The 2007 census counted 1,112,868 people (541,944 men and 570,924 women) living in the department of Lambayeque, and projected a total population of 1,207,589 in 2010 in the department, most of whom live in the largest city, Chiclayo. Of the total department population 265,344 were children age 11 or younger. In 2009 it was estimated that of these children, 12.9% (around 34,229 children) suffered from chronic malnourishment, and 30.8% (around 81,726 children) were anemic, reflecting the
pervasive poverty and the low quality of healthcare for the poor. Even so, malnourishment and anemia levels are lower than the national levels of 18.3% chronic malnourishment in children and 50.4% anemia in children (MIMDES 2010).

Lambayeque’s relatively lower levels of chronic malnourishment and anemia, compared to the rest of Peru, are probably a result of the local agricultural economy. The Lambayeque valley, while desert, is irrigated and is one of the most productive agricultural areas in Peru. Because so much of the food consumed in Lambayeque is locally produced, it is fresher and significantly less expensive (often half the price, or even less) than when purchased in Lima. Culturally, too, in Lambayeque (and the northern coast of Peru in general), there is an extremely high value placed on eating well. Norteños (northerners) commonly brag that they might not dress as well as the people in Lima, and their homes might be simple, but that their bellies are always full of good food. Lambayecanos take pride in their meals and joke about how Limeños will eat only a fried egg and some rice for lunch so that they can afford the latest designer fashions. In Lambayeque, it is considered shameful to be a muerto de hambre (literally, a person who is starving to death), a person who does not have food to eat. This criticism is usually also linked with one’s laziness or refusal to work. Illnesses (mental or physical) are often culturally attributed to one not eating enough as a child, often because one’s parents were muertos de hambre. The cultural importance of eating well is sometimes thwarted by the poverty of the area. In 2009 it was estimated that 31.8% of the department of Lambayeque lived in poverty, a rate just slightly lower than the national rate of 34.8%. In the department 88.2% of homes have electricity, and only 80.9% have running water.
Only 68.7% of homes have gas stoves, while 25.4% rely on wood-burning stoves for cooking (MIMDES 2010).

Like many other regions in Peru, despite the strain on resources created by migration, Lambayeque has received little infrastructural and economic attention from the central government (centralist policies focus resources on the capital, Lima), the private sector, and NGOs (which have focused predominantly on the southern Andes region, especially since the conflict with Sendero Luminoso). Few opportunities for wage labor and for tertiary education exist for women in Lambayeque, a region plagued by high unemployment and underemployment levels for both men and women. Women often find it difficult to access wage labor or informal work that meets the basic needs of their families (food, shelter, access to health services). Women who do work outside of the home are burdened with the “double-duty” of fulfilling both employment and domestic tasks, as well as with inferior jobs that are compensated and valued in a manner inferior to those of men (Draper 1985, Kabeer 2005, Wilson 1998).

The women of Lambayeque (and especially the women whose lives are detailed in this thesis) are marginalized in many ways. They are marginalized as Lambayecanas, living in a province, and not the capital. They are marginalized again as women in a dominant patriarchal society. Most are marginalized as non-white, either having indigenous or African ancestry, or as mestizas. Many of the women that I interviewed are even further marginalized as impoverished residents of a pueblo joven. And finally, most

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4 According to the Peruvian National Institute for Statistics and Information (INEI), in 2006 only 34% of economically active individuals (men and women) in urban areas of the Department of Lambayeque were adequately employed. While only 7.7% of individuals were unemployed, 21% were underemployed (based on hours worked), and another 37.3% were underemployed (based on earnings) (Mesa de Concertación 2006). Rates of unemployment and underemployment are significantly higher for women than for men.
women in Lambayeque are also marginalized as lower- or lower-middle class, since wealthy families are few and far between in Lambayeque. This multi-tiered marginalization makes women in Lambayeque particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW).

Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Lambayeque

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the world’s most pervasive social problems. It is a cross-cultural phenomenon that is created, enacted, and experienced on many levels and to varying degrees. Globally, violence against women has been recognized increasingly as a serious human problem and an impediment to development. According to World Bank statistics, on a global scale “women between 15 and 44 years of age are at higher risk of being raped or mistreated in their homes than of having cancer, car accidents, war or malaria” (United Nations Dept. of Public Information 1996). Additionally, it is estimated that one out of every five women in the world will become a victim of rape or attempted rape during her lifetime (United Nations Peru 2008, my translation). Global statistics on VAW show that Peru has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world, with rates in some parts of the country more than doubling those of the US and Canada (Boesten 2006:356-7). As a result of this high incidence, and the weak institutional and societal response to VAW, Peru can be considered to be one of the most dangerous countries in which to be a woman.

\[5\] There is an extensive body of feminist and social science literature that debates the use of the terms “victim” and “survivor.” I prefer Winkler’s (1995 with Hanke) use of the term “victim-survivor” as it addresses both aspects of women’s relationships with violence. For reasons of brevity, though, in this thesis I will employ the term “victim,” with the understanding that these women also actively resist and survive the violence that they experience in their daily lives.
Today, combating VAW is a principle focus of the majority of women’s organizations in Peru. The Human Rights Council (2008) of the United Nations (UN) recently asked Peru to address the recommendations in the Working Group’s report concerning VAW, which noted that “in the context of domestic violence, the rights of [Peruvian] women were not fully provided for and perpetrators were let off with light sentences.” Although Peruvian law is fairly comprehensive in acknowledging three types of VAW: physical violence (any type of violence that uses physical force and could leave visible marks), psychological violence (insults, humiliation, etc.), and sexual violence (rape and crimes against chastity) (Ministro del Interior del Peru 2004), there are problems in the process of responding to victims and the prosecution of offenders. These problems occur on many levels, including the judicial response, the effort to prosecute, the police response, and the individual choice of some women to not pursue legal recourse. It is important to note that although 70% of all crimes reported to the police in Peru involve women beaten by their husbands (Human Rights Council 2008), most of these do not advance to legal prosecution.

According to World Health Organization statistics provided to the World Bank (Morrison, et.al. 2007), Peru has a lifetime prevalence rate of 50% in urban areas and 62% in rural areas for physical violence by an intimate partner. Peru has one of the highest rates of violence against women (VAW) in the world, influenced by a particular kind of machista (male chauvinist) gender ideology common throughout Latin America. In Lambayeque many women are victims of intimate partner violence, resulting from a

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6 There are no non-governmental women’s organizations in the town of Lambayeque. There are, however, a few in the nearby city of Chiclayo (department of Lambayeque).
historically, racially, and class-influenced system of private patriarchy that is socialized and naturalized within Lambayecano (and larger Peruvian) culture. Private patriarchy is a dominant force in intimate partner relationships in Lambayeque, and I would argue that while not all women in Lambayeque are physically, sexually, and/or emotionally abused (although a significant number are), patriarchal gender norms heavily influence every relationship.

Although VAW is a global problem, the ways in which it is recognized, understood and addressed vary according to social and cultural contexts. Research on IPVAW in Peru has been limited primarily to a focus on statistical incidence, and has a number of general problems including the lack of transparency in data collection methods. Additionally, because of Peru’s decentralized reporting system and the significant lack of self-reporting by victims of VAW, institutional statistics are regularly skewed and/or contradictory.⁷ Despite statistical disparities, though, it is clear that IPVAW is a common phenomenon in Peru and that it constitutes a serious threat to women’s well being.

In the town of Lambayeque women are exposed to VAW on a daily basis. In the department of Lambayeque, 36.7% of women surveyed by the Peruvian Ministry of Women and Social Development (Ministerio de la Mujer y Desarrollo Social– MIMDES) acknowledged being victims of physical VAW carried out by their spouse or partner. In

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⁷ For example, in 2007 police stations nationwide reported 113,273 cases of physical and sexual violence. During the same time period the Ministry of Women and Social Development reported 33,212 cases through their Women’s Emergency Centers (CEM), and the Institute of Legal Medicine of the Public Ministry identified 115,079 victims of violence against women in their clinics (Torres López 2008).
exclusively urban areas, rates of physical violence are slightly higher at 37.8%.\(^8\) Despite the frequency of violence against women, only 26.3% of victimized women interviewed (aged 15 to 49) sought help from an official institution (Bardales 2006: 2). The same study showed that of the women who did not seek help, 24.4% reported that they were too embarrassed or humiliated, while another 23.1% said that they could resolve the conflict on their own. For 14.3% of the non-reporting women, the consequences of the violence were not sufficient to seek institutional attention, while 9.2% of non-reporting women said that they did not seek help because they did not know where to go.

Although VAW is common in Lambayeque and throughout Peru, it is largely hidden from the public sphere and does not receive a great deal of discussion in everyday life. The fact that nearly three-quarters of abused women did not seek institutional help, and that embarrassment or humiliation kept a significant percentage of those women from seeking help, suggests an attitude or ideology of blaming the victim and reflects the naturalized state of IPVAW in Lambayeque. While in everyday life VAW is casually but flippantly present in conversation, little practical information about where to get help appears to be offered by the media, public health institutions, or in casual conversation.

**Research Aims**

Social science research shows that cultural conceptualizations can obscure violence against women. The term naturalization, used in the social sciences to explain how socio-cultural groups take certain aspects of social practice for granted or make

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\(^8\) This survey relied on self-reporting of IPVAW, a method that when used to report violence, often leads to significant underreporting. Additionally, because the research only considered incidences of physical violence, cases of psychological or sexual violence were not recorded. Had the study included all three types of violence, it is safe to assume that reported rates of IPVAW would have been much higher.
unacknowledged assumptions about how the world works, opens the door to an understanding of how forms of VAW can be tacitly accepted in society. This process of naturalization is facilitated by language, and includes the fact that some social groups do not use linguistic markers that allow victims or observers to directly voice concern about VAW. The result is that VAW is often difficult to acknowledge and confront.

Mary Douglas (1973) explains that reality is socially constructed and that social decisions reflect meaning. She emphasizes that culturally created sets of rules are unable to be isolated from one another, and are connected metaphorically through their similarities, thus leading to cross-influence. Douglas explains that because morality and knowledge are constructed through social conventions, it is this same human-creation that is hidden as a way of preserving their authority, making social conventions, “not merely tacit, but extremely inaccessible” (15). Douglas (1999a:3) also notes that often these social conventions are “regarded as too true to warrant discussion,” and convey the notion that they cannot be questioned. She argues that these social conventions are taken to be unquestionable because discourse reinforces the social conventions without directly acknowledging them. She states that the ability to identify unspoken understandings and recognize the implicit is essential for research. One goal of research, in Douglas’ words, is, “to go below beliefs that can be made explicit and to watch how submerged ideas determine action” (1999b:viii).

This qualitative and localized study of VAW is important because many of the more generalized notions of VAW can be misleading and exclusionary. There is great value in developing a study that is both qualitative and focused on one region. In Peru
geographical and cultural regions vary greatly, despite the fact that they are part of the same country. For this reason standardized models of VAW can not be effectively applied in a blind fashion outside of the social context in which they were created. This research aims to go beyond the dominant framework of understanding VAW in Peru through generalized statistics by focusing on contextualized and nuanced local conceptualizations of VAW in Lambayeque. The expectation is that the combination of in-depth interviewing and participant observation will provide a nuanced understanding of conceptualizations, explanations, and causes of VAW in Lambayeque, which will complement the small, but growing, body of anthropological work on VAW, and help to contextualize the existing statistical studies.

The information and arguments presented in this thesis are the result of three and one half months of ethnographic research focused on interviews and participant observation in Lambayeque, Peru. This research was guided and facilitated by prior experience living in Peru for four years (including one year in Lambayeque). The study adopted an ethnographic approach focused on emic perspectives in order to begin to understand the intricate workings of IPVAW in Lambayeque. This emic perspective privileges local explanations and has largely informed the understanding of the phenomenon of IPVAW. In this thesis the ethnographic data is contextualized and interpreted through contemporary anthropological theoretical frameworks that place importance on the “everydayness” of certain types of structural and interpersonal violence, and the naturalization of these types of violence. Ethnographic data is further
analyzed by considering the link between interpersonal violence and larger scale socio-political violence.

While there are a number of directions in which the analysis of the ethnographic data could go, because there is a dearth of ethnographic description and analysis of IPVAW in Peru, and in Latin America more generally, it is important to characterize the phenomenon of IPVAW in Lambayeque as a cycle that results from processes embedded in nuclear family life. The stories of the women that I interviewed were so compelling that I feel it is important and valuable to portray this phenomenon itself. One of the overall goals of this thesis is to demonstrate the many connections and interactions among all spheres of socio-cultural life. Throughout the research process I was surprised to find how many aspects of the socio-cultural world interlock, contributing to the socio-cultural reproduction of IPVAW from generation to generation.

From the time they are girls, many women witness and/or experience VAW and IPVAW in the home. When young women leave their homes, often in an attempt to escape violence, they many times become involved in relationships with violent men. The private nature of IPVAW, coupled with family responses that are shaped by naturalized understandings of IPVAW, often prevent women from leaving violent relationships, and allow violence to continue and reproduce itself throughout women’s lives.

Women in Lambayeque face patriarchal challenges outside of intimate partner relationships as well, many of which contribute to women’s inability to avoid and/or leave violent relationships. Even when a woman is able to resist and escape intimate partner violence, she is subject to other types of private patriarchy (from her family or her
abuser’s family) and public patriarchy (from the wider society). These public patriarchal power structures are naturalized within Lambayecano society and wider Peruvian society, and contribute to the socialization and naturalization of patriarchal power structures in both private and public realms.

Aside from private and public patriarchy, VAW in Lambayeque is influenced by certain types of structural violence (poverty/class-relations, racism, corruption, centralist government policies that marginalize regions outside of Lima, etc.) I will argue that while structural violence does not necessarily cause interpersonal violence against women (IPVAW), nor does it explain IPVAW, the occurrence and experience of IPVAW is amplified and complicated by structural violence. Structural violence, normalized as the violence of everyday life, legitimizes violence within society, magnifies the general experience of IPVAW, and impedes women from escaping from violent relationships.

In this thesis, chapter two discusses the ethnographic methodology employed in the collection and analysis of data; the context of the ethnographic interviews; and reflexive elements that describe my position in the community, my position as researcher, and how the ways I came to think about my presence influenced the context and discussions with interviewees. Chapter three consists of a literature review that examines the breadth of theoretical approaches to understanding and explaining gender violence, how these approaches have been applied to the Latin American region, and how particular contemporary anthropologists are treating issues of violence and gender violence.
Chapters four through eight place a heavy emphasis on ethnographic data collected through the women’s testimonials. Chapters four and five focus specifically on IPVAW in the private sphere. Chapter four details VAW and IPVAW as it is experienced throughout childhood and explores how experiences of childhood violence serve to propel women from their homes. Chapter five focuses on adult IPVAW, emphasizing the terroristic effects of violence in intimate partner relationships and the largely naturalized understanding of violence in intimate partner relationships. Chapters six through eight describe how IPVAW and VAW in general are affected and influenced by the public sphere, illustrating how public patriarchy reinforces private patriarchy and limits women’s ability to resist IPVAW. Chapter six discusses the economic aspects of violent intimate partner relationships. Chapter seven highlights issues of public patriarchy including other types of violence and gender violence, VAW in popular culture, and VAW in the media. Chapter eight looks at institutional responses to IPVAW in Lambayeque. Chapter nine, the final chapter, provides conclusions drawn from this research, as well as a discussion of possibilities for future research.

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*All names in this thesis are pseudonyms that I selected to protect the privacy of the interviewees.*
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The bodies of research on gender violence and domestic/family violence are extensive and highly disparate. There are a number of theoretical approaches to analyzing and understanding these types of violence and their causes, and they often contest one another. As the focus of this thesis is intimate partner violence against women in heterosexual relationships\(^\text{10}\) (IPVAW) in Lambayeque, Peru, this literature review will only encompass a small portion of the available bodies of literature.

I employ Sally Engle Merry’s (2009:3) definition of gender violence, which she describes as, “violence whose meaning depends on the gendered identities of the parties.” For Merry, an anthropologist who specializes in gender violence, the gendered relationships in which the violence is embedded serve to explain and sometimes justify the violence. Gender violence can take a broad variety of forms, ranging from rape of women during state conflict, to the rape of male prisoners by other male prisoners, to wife battering, etc. As the focus of this research is specifically violence against women, it is necessary to narrow the definition further. Here I use Kelly’s (1988) definition of violence against women, as cited in Levy (2008:3): “behavior that is violent, uses physical force or threat, [and] is intimidating, coercive, [or] damaging to women”; it

\(^{10}\) Violence against women (VAW) is a broad term that often assumes heterosexuality, reflecting social notions of heteronormativity, despite a significant body of research that shows that VAW occurs at similar rates in lesbian partnerships. In the interest of not promoting or succumbing to heteronormative assumptions, I want to make clear that all of the women who participated in this research were in heterosexual relationships. Throughout this thesis, references to violence against women (VAW) or intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) will assume both a gendered nature to the violence and heterosexuality, unless otherwise noted. The designation of “heterosexual” for the women who participated in this research will be purposefully excluded both for reasons of brevity in the text and as to not discount the possibility of a woman who identifies as lesbian or bisexual being in a heterosexual intimate partner relationship. No attempt was made during the interview portion of this research to ask individual women about how they conceptualize their own sexual identity.
includes “physical, visual, verbal or sexual acts that are experienced by a woman or girl at the time or later as a threat, invasion or assault” and acts “that have the effect of hurting or degrading her and/or taking away her ability to control contact (intimate or otherwise) with another individual.” Violence against women, though, is still a broad topic that includes everything from stranger violence to intimate partner or family violence by same- or different-sex partners. Because of the specific nature of the gendered IPVAW represented in the ethnographic data, I find it particularly useful to employ Levy’s (2008) understanding of intimate terrorism (a distinction first made by Johnson 1995). Levy (2008:8) describes intimate terrorism as:

> the repeated and ongoing use of abuse tactics and physical force to obtain (and maintain) power and control over an intimate partner. Through time, the abusive behavior induces fear and subservience in the victim, as well as causing chronic injury and trauma. The perpetrator weaves violence through the “normal” interactions of daily life in a way that may make it difficult for a woman to clearly identify the beginning and end of any particular violent episode. Because it is a regular occurrence in a woman’s life, it is more disruptive and harmful to victims (including children who witness it) and society.

Grant (1993) and Mahoney, Williams, and West (2001) highlight the value in this terminology for its ability to maintain focus on the systematic and intentional nature of intimate partner violence, the historical and cultural roots of violence against women, and the continually heightened awareness of all women of the possibility of being violently attacked. This naturalized common sense of wariness and fear that women experience is expressed well by Elizabeth Stanko (1985, as cited in Levy 2008:28): “All women have some experience of male violation… To walk the streets warily at night is how we actually feel our femininity.” Stanko’s assertion highlights how the gendered experience

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11 Johnson actually employs the term patriarchal terrorism to differentiate it from what he considers to be ungendered common couple violence.
of women includes the ongoing fear of potential violent attack, the mindfulness of one's own safety, and the need to always be on the defensive.

Theoretical Approaches to Interpersonal Violence

Early theory on interpersonal violence was divided into three categories: intra-individual theory, social psychological theory, and sociocultural theory (Jasinski 2001). More contemporary theoretical approaches to analyzing and understanding gender violence and violence against women are regularly categorized into three main groups: individual (or micro-oriented) theories and perspectives, sociocultural (or macro-oriented) theories and perspectives, and multidimensional theories and perspectives (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). The multidisciplinary nature of the study of gender violence has resulted in a variety of competing theories, each with different implications (Jasinski 2001).

*Individual and Micro-Oriented Theories*

Individual (or micro-oriented) theories are part of a common trend to focus on the individual characteristics and traits of both abusers and victims. These theories also concentrate attention on micro-level factors that influence family or intimate partner violence (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Some of the earliest individual theories focused on biological and physiological factors. Thought to be a result of the biological process of natural selection popularized during Victorian times, rape, as viewed through this perspective, is explained by men’s biological desire to reproduce (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Male sexual jealousy, then, is also considered to be a response to the biological process of natural selection and each individual male’s desire to reproduce. Other
physiological factors often used to explain male violence include head/brain injuries that lead to a lowered impulse control, a lower resistance to alcohol, attention deficit disorder, and biochemical disorders in which testosterone and serotonin are not properly regulated by the body. While these physiological factors may lead to increased violence, they do not specifically address gender violence or the social issues that lead to gender violence (Jasinski 2001). Keljo and Crawford (1992:31), in their exploration of the evolutionary origins of wife abuse, reject a strict biological understanding of gender violence, arguing that, “Although our biological nature may set limits and predispositions on our behavior, it cannot inexorably determine how we are capable of acting nor does it address the moral issue of how we should act.” These theories provide a simplistic understanding of men as brutes who are unable to control their sexual desires, thus excusing gender violence by men.

Theory addressing individual personality characteristics, psychopathy, and mental/ personality disorders is another commonly used explanation for violence. Some researchers have argued that mental illness, low self-esteem, jealousy, aggressive or hostile personalities, poor communication or social skills, personality disorders, and/or antisocial and sociopathic disorders in men lead to violence against women. Violent men are often believed to be depressed, bipolar, obsessive, narcissistic, and/or have an increased “need” for power (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Dutton (2004), as cited by Levy (2008), argued that many violent men suffer from “borderline personality organization,” in which men show features of borderline personality disorder, but only in intimate
relationships. Levy notes, though, that it is hard to distinguish between “borderline personality organization” and purposeful manipulation and control by men of women.

Theories about mental/personality disorders are often discredited because they excuse violent behavior through “illness” and the violent men then do not have to take responsibility for their violent behavior (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Focusing on violent men’s “illness” can additionally lead to an understanding of violent men as “victims,” deserving of empathy or pity, rather than as coercive perpetrators of violence. Research has also shown that most men who engage in gender violence, in fact, do not have psychological disorders (Walby 1990, Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). These explanations do not allow for larger, social explanations of gender violence, but many people are satisfied by focusing on the negative traits and qualities of abusers and victims of violence because it allows individuals to easily distance themselves from violent behavior and create a group of “others” (Bourgois 1995, Jasinski 2001, Stewart 2002). This categorization and “othering” can often lead to victim blaming. Additionally, much research has refuted that personality characteristics of the victim provoke intimate partner violence (Jasinski 2001; Mahoney, Williams, and West 2001). Jasinski (2001) and Walby (1990) also note that these theories suggest that only a few deranged men are violent towards women, a misguided notion that misrepresents the reality and regularity of gender violence towards women. While there are many valid criticisms of these theories, Brown (1992) argues, however, that psychological explanations for interpersonal violence exist independently from cultural factors, and that these criticisms often lead to the exclusion of the role of psycho-physical factors in socio-cultural analyses of interpersonal violence.
Social learning theories argue that violent behavior is learned through observation and experience of one’s environment (Campbell 1992, Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Children learn to consider violence appropriate through socialization in which boys imitate their fathers and girls imitate their mothers (Levy 2008). This family socialization leads to the intergenerational transition of violence, in which each generation learns violence from the previous and violence becomes a learned tactic to express emotions and get what one wants (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Strauss et al. (1980), as cited in Jasinski (2001:7), argued that, “each generation learns to be violent by participating in a violent family. This role allows the individual to learn that violence is an acceptable means when other things have not worked. In addition, individuals who experience violence also learn that those who hit you are those who love you the most.” Bandura (1978), as cited in Jasinski (2001:7), argued that violence is learned from the family, culture and subculture, and the media, with the media being particularly important, because of how successful the media is in desensitizing violence through repetition, rationalizing violence, and teaching violence through witnessing.

Criticisms of social learning theories argue that these theories provide a simplistic view of family dynamics, positing children as passive learners. Not all witnesses of violence grow up to be in violent relationships, and not all people in violent relationships witnessed violence as a child (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Jasinski (2001) notes, however, that while social learning theories may not explain all violence, they do highlight important risk factors. Research done by Straus (1991) and Hotaling and Sugarman (1986), as cited in Jasinski (2001), has shown that witnessing and experiencing violence
as a child is a principle and consistent risk marker for adult violence. A final criticism of social learning theories is that they do not explain the social phenomenon of gender violence or violence against women (Levy 2008).

Exchange theory argues that individuals act violently to get what they want and that violence is a means to maintain and/or advance group or individual interests. Violence is used as an effective mechanism of control and reinforcement and “can be interpreted as a means for men to maintain their position in the social structure” (Jasinski 2001:11). Resource theory is conceived within the framework of exchange theory and is used to understand cases of family violence by conceptualizing the family unit to be a system of power. Resource theory argues that within the family, whoever contributes the most resources has the most power, with violence being the “ultimate resource” (Campbell 1992, Jasinski 2001). Campbell (1992) notes that while resource theory does not explain societal changes in the severity or frequency of wife abuse, it can be a valuable tool to understand abuse at the individual level.

Alcohol use and abuse is another theory used to explain violence on the individual level. Some researchers also combine the use of other drugs into this theory (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). According to Fagan (1990, 1993), as cited in Jasinski (2001:11), the drug most commonly associated with violence is alcohol. Alcohol use may increase violent acts, and violence can occur in response to complaints about alcohol use (Jasinski 2001). Some researchers also believe that some men use and abuse alcohol and drugs in order to lower their inhibitions about using violence (Levy 2008). Blaming violence on intoxication, though, serves to dismiss the abuser’s responsibilities for his or her violent
actions, and does not address the gendered nature of certain types of violence (Jasinski 2001).

_Sociocultural and Macro-Oriented Theories_

Sociocultural or macro-oriented theories focus on cultural and social conditions that make violence more likely and attempt to combine social structural and family processes (Jasinski 2001). A common sociocultural understanding of gendered violence against women is that men abuse women “because they can,” in other words, because socio-cultural processes of enculturation and socialization teach men to be violent towards women, and society and culture do not prevent men from being violent towards women (Levy 2008). Like individual (micro-oriented) theories, sociocultural theories vary significantly and at times come into conflict with each other.

The family violence or family structure theory focuses on “spouse abuse” or “family violence” rather than violence against women, and argues that the nature of the family structure (in the US) legitimates the use of violence. This theory suggests that women and men are equally violent in family relationships and that violence can occur between any family members. Family violence theory argues that corporal punishment of children by parents and sibling violence are understood by individuals to be inevitable and legitimate within the family structure, and that violence is understood to be a solution to family conflict, thus creating a connection between love and violence. Family violence theory recognizes social norms that tolerate and permit violence within family structures. This perspective, however, is highly criticized by feminist theorists, because it ignores differences in power and status between men and women and does not distinguish
between patterns, contexts, and motivations for violence (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). The family violence perspective also fails to address patterns of coercive control between individuals, and draws attention away from the issue of the victimization of women, despite the fact that research suggests that between 90% and 95% of victims of family violence are women (Jasinski 2001).

The cultural acceptance of violence theory argues that there is a glorification of violence within culture and that culture legitimizes violence as a means to achieve desired ends. Normative approval of violence spills over into private life from violence in entertainment, sports, etc. (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Baron and Strauss (1989), as cited in Jasinski (2001:14), argued that “the more societies endorse the use of violence or physical force as a legitimate means to achieve desired ends, the more likely this approval will carry over into other arenas, such as VAW.” The cultural acceptance of violence theory, however, does not explain why only some men are violent towards women (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). I would add that the cultural acceptance of violence theory promotes a homogenized and ethnocentric notion of culture and gender both within the US and internationally, failing to recognize all types of diversity and promoting ideas of dichotomized gender-based “sameness.”

The subculture of violence theory, on the other hand, was developed to explain violence by lower class young men of minorities in the US. It posits that there are groups in society in which violence is seen as acceptable, is encouraged, and is more likely to be used than in other groups, and that individuals from the lower class are more likely to use violence than those from the upper classes. This theory argues that in cultural and social
groups that condone violent behavior, violence against women is more likely (Campbell 1992, Jasinski 2001). The subculture of violence theory, however, does not address the fact that lower classes and minority groups are more closely policed and more effectively prosecuted than dominant groups (Walby 1990). The subculture of violence theory plays on racist and classist ideas that do not acknowledge the differences in individuals’ abilities to hide different types of violence between different social, racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, it hides other (non-physical) types of violence, such as structural violence, that are most commonly created and employed by dominant classes. It also does not acknowledge or explain interpersonal violence perpetrated by dominant class/group members against non-dominant class/group members, such as a white slave master’s rape of a Black slave woman or a prison guard acting violently towards an inmate.

Campbell (1992:241) rejects the generalized cultural acceptance of violence theory and the subculture of violence theory, instead arguing that “there are cultures or subcultures of violence against women, rather than cultures of general violence.” Her position emphasizes how societies and governments are much more accepting and tolerant of VAW than they are of other types of interpersonal violence. Walby (1990) also notes the ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of government in arresting and sanctioning men who are violent towards women, which, she argues, lead to a structural bias against women and an implicit state acceptance/legitimization of violence against women.

Stress theory and class analysis suggest that family stress and frustration leads to violence against women (Jasinski 2001). Stressors such as poverty, discrimination,
immigration issues, community crises, personal crises, and medical issues, if not appropriately and effectively dealt with, lead to an increase in family stress and result in violence (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Class analysis postulates that men in lower classes are increasingly violent towards women as a result of their frustration with their class position (Walby 1990). Walby notes, however, that if frustration with social disadvantage leads to violence, women, who are more socially disadvantaged than their male counterparts in all social classes should be acting in more violent ways than men. But, cross-culturally, this is not the case. Walby also questions why men, if acting violently in response to class or race discrimination, would attack women of their same class or race rather than attacking their oppressor. While increased family stress can certainly increase tensions within the family unit, it does not explain the gendered nature of many types of family violence.

The ecological perspective attempts to show the multifaceted nature of intimate partner violence which includes individual, family, and community factors, by showing how these factors operate both independently and interactively (Malley-Morrison 2004, Flake 2005, Alcalde 2009). Individual factors include attitudes, values, and personal resources. Family factors include economic and decision-making authority, marital status, and family size. Community factors include rural versus urban settings, and standards of living in the community (Flake 2005). Some studies that employ an ecological perspective also value the emic explanations of violence of lay individuals over etic explanations of social and biological scientists (Malley-Morrison 2004). This perspective, however, is limited in nature, and rather than explaining violence, it looks at the
correlation or co-incidence of factors that are then used to attempt to create a profile of a concrete, limited group that is considered “likely” to experience violence because of their commonly shared factors. The effectiveness of the ecological perspective can vary significantly depending on the sophistication and breadth of the individual, family, and community factors considered for analysis, and other theoretical approaches that may be applied alongside the co-incidence of individual factors. The use of strictly emic explanations, while useful to understand local conceptualizations of violence, may overlook certain types of violence that are naturalized and therefore go largely unquestioned.

The final sociocultural theory, feminist theory, will be discussed later in this chapter, as my use of feminist analysis in this thesis merits a more detailed discussion of the trajectory of feminist theory in US and international contexts.

**Multidimensional Perspectives and Theories**

Multidimensional theories consider both individual and sociocultural factors in their understanding and analysis of gender violence, and are the most emphasized theories being used contemporarily. Like individual and sociocultural theories, multidimensional theories are diverse and represent a range of understandings (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008).

Gelles’s (1983) multidimensional theory, as cited in Jasinski (2001), combines exchange theory and social control theory. The combination of these two theories posits that individuals pursue rewards and avoid punishment, and that if there are no sanctions
individuals will act in deviant ways. Gelles’s argument is that when the rewards of
violent behavior outweigh the costs, rates of violence and abuse increase.

The gender and violence or institutionalized sexism theory combines feminist
Cultural myths that often encourage victim blaming, promote the eroticization of
violence, and trivialize violence lead to the idea that there are “legitimate victims” who
are part of devalued social groups or classes. Sexual scripts and gendered social roles
define masculinity and femininity as binaries and portray male domination as normal and
natural. Where there is a high value placed on women’s virginity and women are seen as
the property of men, men are understood to be responsible for controlling “their” women
and have the “right” to beat their wives. At the same time, men’s emotional and sexual
well being are understood to be the “responsibility” of women, and women who do not
fulfill the perceived “responsibility” are punished (Levy 2008). Gender and violence
theory understands violence to be a means of constructing masculinity. The patriarchal
systems that develop result in men’s dominant status and often lead to increased violence
against women (Jasinski 2001).

The male peer-support model or male bonding theory combines micro- and
macro- factors to explain violence (especially rape) against women. Common in
“hypermasculine” situations, such as fraternities, gangs, athletics, and the military,
factors influencing this model include a patriarchal social structure, male peer social
support, membership in social groups, alcohol use, and a lack of deterrence. “Rape
culture” influences the socialization of men, and teaches them that it is acceptable to
control, dominate, and objectify women (Sanday 1990, Lefkowitz 1997, Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). In this model, societal understandings of men as inherently aggressive and women as inherently passive lead to sexual violence. The opposing cultural notions of men’s sexual aggression as “manly” (good) and women who enjoy sex as “sluts” (bad) lead to sexual “punishment” of women by men for diverging from the idealized passive female role.

In Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape (1975), radical feminist Susan Brownmiller suggested that gang rape was one of the first primitive forms of male bonding. In contemporary male-support groups, the objectification and abuse of women is used to “prove” masculinity and form brotherhood bonds based on ideals of male dominance. Men rape and/or attack women as a group, though individuals might not rape independently (Sanday 1990, Levy 2008). Sanday, (1990:10) in her study of fraternity gang rape in the US, noted that

The [phallicentric] sexual act is not concerned with sexual gratification but with the deployment of the penis as a concrete symbol of masculine social power and dominance. The male sexual bonding evident in “pulling train” is a sexual expression and display of the power of the brotherhood to control and dominate women. The discourse associated with acts of “pulling train” defines this form of control and domination as part of normal male sexual expression. Thus, this discourse operates as a strategy of knowledge that sanctions the deployment of male power in acts of sexual aggression.

Male support groups maintain and reinforce patriarchal values and offer a narrow definition of masculinity and what a “real man” is, and group solidarity is reinforced through secrecy. These groups frequently use alcohol as a tool to decrease women’s ability to resist violence (Sanday 1990, Jasinski 2001). One of the most significant
reasons for this specific type of violence against women, however, is the lack of deterrence and/or sanctions for abusers (Sanday 1990, Lefkowitz 1997, Jasinski 2001).

The social etiological model or structural oppression model combines structural and personal factors (Bourgois 1995, Jasinski 2001). This model highlights structural inequality and patterns of exploitation and domination. Violence is used as a tool to resolve conflicts and gain/ regain control, and violence against women results from structural inequalities in the social system. Abuse can be justified as punishment in the abuser’s mind (Jasinski 2001).

Feminist Theory

Unlike other sociocultural theories, feminist theory places a primary focus on patriarchy and the social institutions that help to maintain and reinforce it. The relationship between gender and power is key to feminist theory. Feminist theorists argue that men and women are socialized into specific gender roles, and that culture is male-dominated. Control and domination are considered to be the goals of all types of violence against women, including rape. For many feminist theorists, male dominance, women’s position as subordinate to men, inequality in marriages and marriage-like relationships, and women’s limited access to resources result in violence against women (Jasinski 2001, Levy 2008). Levinson’s research (1992 and 1989 as cited in Campbell 1992; in Buvinić, Morrison, and Shifter 1999; and in Jasinski 2001) has supported the feminist concern with patriarchy and by showing that cross-culturally, societies in which men and women’s statuses in the family are more egalitarian have lower rates of violence against
women. In societies in which men are dominant and authoritarian in their households, violence against women is more frequent and more socially accepted.

Some aspects of feminist theory, and particularly earlier feminist theories, have been criticized for having too exclusive a focus on gender, and for ignoring differences that exist between individual men. Feminist theories of patriarchy do not always allow for an understanding of violence by women (towards men or other women). Feminist theory with a strict focus on patriarchy also does not explain why more men are not violent if the society is, in fact, patriarchal.

Additionally, some aspects of Western feminism have been criticized for being a largely white, heterosexual, middle class, US movement that failed to acknowledge cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, and class differences that different groups of women around the world use to define themselves. Western feminists have also been criticized for their sometimes simplistic and idealized notion of a “global sisterhood of women” that assumes a degree of “sameness” in the experiences of all women cross-culturally as well as cross-cultural structures of gendered opposition (Mohanty 1988, Walby 1990, Basu 1995, Trask 1996, Busheikin 1997, Narayan 1997, Mbire-Barungi 1999, Oyewumí 2003, Crenshaw 2005).

Kimberle Crenshaw, a leader in the critical race theory movement, first introduced the theory of intersectionality to the analysis of violence against women in the early 1990s to better explain how some women simultaneously experience diverse oppressions, such as gender violence, class violence, and racial or ethnic violence (Bograd 1999, Crenshaw 2005, Levy 2008, Merry 2009). Crenshaw argues that identity
politics often ignores or downplays the intragroup differences that shape the ways in which many women experience violence. Crenshaw’s understanding and application of intersectionality can serve to remedy many of the ethnocentric and classist assumptions that plague more simplistic forms of earlier feminist analysis. Bograd (1999) furthers this argument, noting that all theories of gender violence would be strengthened by also employing Crenshaw’s intersectionality.

Merry (2009) notes that there continues to be disagreement in the VAW movement about the value of the essentialist perspective in certain understandings of gender. The debate continues over the “the political value of gender as an essentialized category versus the analytical value of the intersectional analysis of gender identities” (15). For political reasons, using the essentialized notion of the group “women” has enabled activists to demystify notions that IPVAW is a problem of only some (often marginalized) sectors of the population (ex. the poor). By conceptualizing VAW as a problem that all women face, activists are also more able to secure funding and receive government support. Treating all women as a homogenous group, though, is often detrimental to understanding and analyzing IPVAW, and may, in turn, prevent activists from providing the most effective and beneficial support to women.

Feminist theory, however, is not static, nor is it homogenous, and it has evolved and developed over time to respond to many of these criticisms. This change over time has resulted in a variety of feminist perspectives that are sometimes complimentary, and other times contentious. The focus in this literature review will be on radical feminist analysis of gender violence.
An early radical feminist, Brownmiller (1975:13-4) attributed the occurrence of rape to lack of a “biologically determined [human] mating season,” the “structural capacity” of men to rape, and women’s “structural vulnerability” to be raped, noting that, “When men discovered that they could rape, they proceeded to do it,” and rejecting the idea that rape is a result of men’s sexual frustration. Brownmiller’s argument, though, is not one of strict biological essentialism, of which she has been accused. Rather, she argues that the physiological ability to rape is encouraged and permitted by many sociocultural factors (Walby 1990). Brownmiller (1975) argued that male violence towards women is the foundation of men’s control over women, and that rape is “a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear” (15). Like Brownmiller, many second-wave feminist perspectives consider wife-battering and other forms of violence against women as tools that men use to subjugate and dominate women in patriarchal societies” (Campbell 1992). While Walby (1990) agrees that male violence is a form of power over women, she rejects the notion that male VAW is the foundation of men’s generalized control over women. She argues that male VAW is instead shaped by patriarchy and cannot be understood without also analyzing state responses or the lack of state response to VAW. Contemporary radical feminist analysis of gender violence focuses both on gender (especially how men and women are socialized to fulfill specific gender roles in which men are taught to use violence and act in other “macho” ways) and societal factors. (Walby 1990). The notion that men act violently against women because they can (because they are socialized to do so and society permits and enables them to do so) is of particular importance.
Walby (1990:136) also notes that one point of contention in radical feminist analysis of violence against women is “whether men are violent to women as a consequence of their power over women, or in order to gain power over them.” Hanmer (1978) and Hanmer and Saunders (1984), as cited by Walby (1990), use a radical feminist perspective to analyze wife beating that supports the former. They agree with Brownmiller that male violence is used to control women socially, but also focus on the inadequacies of the state in the intervention of violence against women and the support of women in general. Their analysis of the state is twofold, highlighting the insufficiencies of the state in helping women to be independent from violent men, and the state’s failure and refusal to intervene in cases of violence against women. Because of the state’s shortcomings, women are often forced to rely on the support of the men who are violent to them. On the other hand, O’Brien (1975), as cited by Walby (1990), suggests that men are violent to women in order to gain power over them by using violence within marriage when they are not clearly “superior” to their wives in other ways, such as through economic dominance or educational superiority. Walby (1990:136) interprets this as a suggestion that, “men use violence to maintain control over women when the usual forms of power that they have, such as the superiority of the wage packet, are missing.” The answer to Walby’s point of contention is probably “both,” with different enactments of VAW responding to a variety of gendered power structures and sociocultural factors in different ways. The question that Walby has posed emphasizes the need to combine analysis of patriarchal structures with the analysis of other socio-cultural factors.
Grant (1993) reinforces the need to analyze both patriarchal structures and social structures in her discussion of the feminist critique of the public/private dichotomy. Feminists have effectively criticized the resistance to politicize the private by showing how the “sanctity of private space has often protected batterers and child abusers on grounds that ‘a man’s home is his castle’ and that women have the freedom to leave” (158). She reminds us that “it is not safe to say that everything is political all the time. Things are politicized in contexts” (181-2). Grant argues that feminist politics are inherently personal politics, but that gender politics must be personal and public in order to combat both public patriarchal structures and private patriarchal structures, which she describes as “an already existing and pervasive system of domination at the level of everyday practice” (159). She highlights the fact that since gender “operates on all levels of existence,” and gender inequality is inherent, the inequity of gender is “reinforced at the level of states, capitalism, and throughout the international community,” noting that, on its own, the feminist tool of personal politics is insufficient (181).

Contemporary feminist social science researchers of violence against women, such as Stewart (2002), use a highly integrated understanding of feminist theory, intersectionality, and analysis of social structures. Stewart describes her perspective as “clearly feminist, although it is fluid and integrative rather than ideological” (2). Stewart believes that the oppression of women is a direct result of public and private patriarchal structures that value men over women and support male power and privilege, and thinks it necessary to look at the varied elements of culture and their intimate links to social structure.
Common Theoretical Approaches to Gender Violence and IPVAW in Latin America

Most social science and feminist research on gender violence and intimate partner violence in Latin America employs sociocultural (macro-oriented) theories or multidimensional theories, although there is also a tendency to focus on individual factors that commonly describe victims and abusers. Other studies, like McCallum (1994) and Harris (1994), focus instead on interpretation of myth, symbolism, ritual, and kinship systems to understand different types of gender violence. This literature review will explore only a small portion of the available literature, focusing on common theoretical approaches and themes.

Micro-Oriented Theories: Individual Characteristics of Abusers and Victims in Peru

Of particular significance to this research is the lack of socio-cultural analysis in most current studies on VAW in Peru. This lack of socio-cultural analysis not only creates a shallow understanding of VAW, but also fails to recognize the wide range of expressions of VAW, which include physical, sexual, emotional, linguistic, economic, political, and media violence. Different studies of violence against women sometimes conflict in their understanding of how different individual characteristics of victims and abusers impact women’s victimization. The contradiction in some findings, while frustrating at times, highlights the complicated nature of VAW, the importance of nuance in how data is collected and analyzed, and the need for multidimensional understandings of IPVAW.

Research focusing on individual characteristics that influence the incidence of VAW has been notably less interested in the characteristics of abusers in Peru than in the
characteristics of women who are victimized. This preference to explore why women are victimized, rather than exploring why men are abusive, is perhaps a reflection of society’s tendencies towards victim-blaming, and making victims responsible for protecting themselves from violence, rather than focusing on what encourages and/or permits men to act in violent gendered ways.

I have organized the data from the most recent studies of IPVAW in Peru into themed categories based on which factors were most commonly considered. It is important to note that while some of the data from the following studies supports the ethnographic data collected for this thesis, other elements are contradictory.

*Individual Characteristics of Victims (Women)*

Brown (1992) argues that, “In every society, the treatment women receive depends in large part upon their age, their economic role and their acknowledged or denied adulthood” (10). She explains that older women are less likely to be beaten due to their more established relationships within the community, the presence of older sons to defend her, and an older husband who is occupied with other social matters. Flake (2005) also found that the older a woman is at the time of union to her partner the less likely she is to become a victim of violence. Perales et.al. (2009) found that pregnant women under age twenty and over age thirty were at higher risk for abuse than pregnant women who were in their twenties. Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999), however, found in their study that the woman’s age does not ever appear as a “statistically significant determinant of violence” (45).
Perales et.al. (2009) and Flake (2005) both found educational attainment to lower a woman’s chances of being abused by an intimate partner. Perales et.al. specifically found that having more than 12 years of education reduced the likelihood of abuse. Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999), however, did not find educational level of women to be statistically significant determinants of violence.

Both Flake (2005) and Perales et.al. (2009) found that employed women were substantially more likely than unemployed women to be abused by their partners. Flake attributes this to the increased social status and potential for economic independence that employment affords women. Perales et.al. similarly attribute the increased violence to Peru’s patriarchal society and men’s desire to reestablish dominance over women who seek work outside of the home.

Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa’s (1999) study showed that pregnancy reduced the likelihood of sexual abuse for women. Perales et al. (2009) agreed, citing that the most common type of abuse that pregnant women experience is emotional. Physical violence is also a problem for pregnant women, but Perales et al. were unable to clearly determine whether pregnancy increased or decreased physical violence against women. They did, however, find that pregnancy before marriage seems to contribute to conflict and IPVAW. Flake’s (2005) study found that large family size was an important family-level risk marker for IPVAW, showing that each additional child that is living with the mother increases her chances of being abused by her partner by 14%. In Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa’s (1999) study, though, the number of children in a household was not statistically significant in relationship with IPVAW.
Flake (2005) found women who came from violent family backgrounds to have increased risk of violence in their own intimate partnerships. Studies by Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999), Perales et.al. (2009), and Flake (2005) all found that cohabitating and separated women experience higher rates of physical violence than their married peers. Flake found that cohabitating women are 22% more likely than married women to be abused and argues that the power imbalance between husband and wife was an important family-level risk marker for violence. The study found that women with social statuses similar to those of their husbands were less likely to suffer abuse than women with statuses lower or higher than their husbands. Control over decision making in the home was also important. Women who control household decisions (probably reflecting their higher social status) were found to be 36% more likely to suffer abuse than women who share household decision-making with their husbands.

Flake’s (2005) research also suggests that women living in Peru’s coastal region are less likely to suffer abuse than women living away from the coast, and that in Peru, urban women experience higher levels of abuse than rural women. I suspect that these findings are influenced by data collection methods, as much of the research conducted on VAW in Peru has been focused on the southern Andes region and not on coastal cities (the exception being Lima). Though urban women may, in fact, experience more violence than their rural counterparts, it is also important to note that rural women have far fewer opportunities for reporting violence than urban women. Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999) found impoverished women more likely than wealthier women to experience psychological and sexual violence. Pearles et.al. (2009) found the same to be
true for physical violence. Flake (2005) found poverty to increase women’s chances of all types of abuse.

Through cross-cultural comparisons, Brown (1992) suggests that groups of women that support each other can reduce violence against women by men, and Flake (2005) found that women’s isolation increased their likelihood of being abused. Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999), however, found that women in Peru who use social support networks of friends or family suffered higher rates of IPVAW than women who do not use social support networks. They note, though, that the direction of causality for this factor is unclear. They are unsure if women using social support networks are using them because they are already victims of violence, or if women are punished with more violence for confiding in friends and family.

**Individual Characteristics of Abusers (Men)**

Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999) found that younger men commit sexual violence towards women more frequently than older men. They did not find men’s educational levels to be statistically significant. They also found that employed men tend to be more psychologically and physically abusive of their intimate partners than unemployed men. They speculate that this is because unemployed men are more dependent on their partners’ earnings and are more afraid of being abandoned by their partner.

Men’s alcohol consumption is often connected to the abuse of women in intimate partner relationships. Flake’s (2005) study found a high correlation between abused women and partner alcohol consumption. This finding is well supported by VAW
research cross-culturally which has found alcohol consumption to be problematic enough to warrant its own theoretical perspective. Harvey (1994) noted that in the Peruvian Andes drinking alcohol is often used to enhance social relations, but drunkenness often leads to conflict and violence.

Harvey (1994) also observed that male sexual jealousy over a woman’s infidelity (real or imagined), past sexual experiences, often leads men to be violent towards their partners. She also notes that some women are punished for the sexual “transgressions” of other women, such as extra-marital lovers.

*Sociocultural and Multidimensional Approaches to IPVAW in Latin America*

*Cultural Acceptance of Violence and Subculture of Violence Theories*

Latin America’s violent history began long before the Spanish and Portuguese conquest, and has continued to smolder and flame up throughout present day. Buvinić, Morrison, and Shifter (1999) cite World Bank evidence that suggests Latin America to be the most violent region in the world, having a homicide rate that is double the world average. In Peru, warring indigenous groups competed for regional domination, with the Inca being the most exemplary conquerors from pre-Hispanic Peruvian history. With the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of what is now Latin America, however, the violent paradigms shifted and class, race, and gender were constructed and hierarchized in ways previously unknown. Violence in Latin America has ranged from organized rebellions seeking independence from colonial powers; to guerrilla warfare, gang warfare, and narco-terror; to subversive intervention sponsored by the US; to interpersonal violence; to varying forms of structural violence that exclude marginalized populations from access to
basic necessities and human dignities. This section will focus on the prevalence of physical violence in Peru and how it is understood to correlate to interpersonal violence through cultural acceptance of violence and subculture of violence theories, a relationship which Buvinić, Morrison, and Shifter (1999:10) describe as “direct, although not immediate.”

Flake (2005:354) describes Peru’s history as “marred by almost continual bloodshed.” Contemporary Peruvian society is plagued by varying types of violence and terror. The most outstanding example from recent Peruvian history was the conflict between the Peruvian government and the guerrilla groups *Sendero Luminoso* (SL, Shining Path) and *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA, Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement) that lasted from the early-1980s through the mid-1990s. In a 1992 report sponsored by Human Rights Watch, Robin Kirk depicted the high levels of violence against women during the armed conflict. Both players in the conflict, the Peruvian government (including the police and the armed forces) and the subversive groups SL and MRTA, used notorious levels of physical violence and terror, and have been shown to be responsible for roughly equal numbers of civilian deaths. While terror tactics, including torture and murder, were regularly used by both sides against men and women of all ages (including children and the elderly), women were victimized in particularly violent and gendered ways. Throughout the guerrilla war women’s bodies were consistently used as a point of control and conflict.

The most commonly employed terror tactic of a gendered nature was the rape of women as a form of punishment for men who were seen to be “supporting” the opposing
group. Because of the high value placed on women’s virginity and their sexuality in general, rape was used to “dishonor” the families of the raped women. In many cases the same woman would be raped first by one group and later by the other. Several factors seemed to determine what “types” of women were raped. The women at greatest risk of rape from the government forces were poor, non-white, young, and had “suspect” affiliations such as student or teachers’ unions. There were no cases of rape of white or wealthy women by government forces uncovered by Kirk’s investigation. In rural areas, poor indigenous women were often gang raped by twenty or more men at a time, often in front of their family members, and frequently resulting in pregnancy.

During the conflict rape was rarely reported. The reasons for low reporting are many. Firstly, because of the sexual stigma surrounding being raped, many women did not want to make their rape known for fear of public humiliation. Secondly, if rapes by guerrillas were reported to the police, the women and their families were targets for retaliation. If women reported being raped by the police or the military, they were labeled as sympathetic to the guerrillas or as subversives themselves. Thirdly, despite government orders that rapists be punished by whippings or cold water baths, the payment of reparations, and community service, the inefficient justice system was so ineffective and frustrating, many families opted instead for vigilante justice. Fourthly, until 1991 rape was treated as a “crime against honor” (rather than a crime against a woman’s body) by Peru’s civilian penal code. This treatment of rape meant that it was necessary for a woman to prove that prior to her rape she had been “honorable” (i.e. a
virgin) in order for her complaint of rape to be taken seriously. This requisite excluded most adult women, who are sexually active with their husbands (Kirk 1992).

Female militants were the most savagely beaten and raped by government forces. Kirk explained that the Peruvian media typically described female militants as, “monsters, killing machines and crazed automatons” (17), much more severe terms than were typically used for their male counterparts. Kirk blames this treatment to the perceived violation of gender roles: women acting in violent ways that are deemed “inappropriate” for women. So frequent was the rape of female militants, SL warned women recruits that they should expect to be raped, encouraging them to understand their rape as “a political test that transforms them into more perfect cadres” (18).

While SL ideology prohibited sex discrimination and sexual molestation, male cadres regularly raped female civilians. *Sendero Luminoso’s* most outward attacks towards women, though, were against women who identified as feminists or belonged to women’s groups or development-oriented groups, such as soup kitchens or local health clinics. SL ideology dictated that anything not directly related to SL’s class-based struggle was a diversion that should be postponed until after their victory. SL frequently accused feminist issues of being international conspiracies to undermine the revolution (Kirk 1992). Many women activists, including María Elena Moyano,12 were murdered for their attempts to better the living conditions of both women and men in their local communities and their resistance to violent conflict (Kirk 1992, Moyano 1995).

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12 María Elena Moyano was a grassroots leader in Villa El Salvador, a shanty town of Lima, during the Shining Path Conflict. As a young, Afro-Peruvian, feminist leader who worked to better the lives of her neighbors, Moyano was seen as a threat by SL. She was killed in 1991 by a SL death squad after she publicly criticized SL’s terror tactics.
Although Peru is no longer terrorized by sociopolitical violence and guerrilla insurgencies,\textsuperscript{13} other types of violent crime are increasing dramatically, especially in urban centers. Flake (2005) and Buvinić, Morrison, and Shifter (1999) explain this increase by highlighting how societies with long histories of wars, or that are recently emerging from conflicts, are vulnerable to sustained outbreaks of social violence. Problems such as gang violence, drug violence, police abuse, and interpersonal violence are all on the rise. Anthropologist Michael Taussig (1987) coined the term “culture of terror” to describe how widespread violence dominates already vulnerable societies (Bourgois 1995). Contemporary Peruvian society, in which most citizens of all social classes live in fear of attacks of everyday forms of violence (especially violent muggings and robberies and gang violence), fits this understanding of a “culture of terror.” Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999:38) noted that after the height of the SL conflict, “people in [metropolitan Lima] have become accustomed to violence and now seem to accept it as part of daily life.” Flake is not surprised, then, that there is a high occurrence of intimate partner violence in Peru, citing the country’s legacy of social and political violence. As culture of violence theories suggest, normative approval of violence in the public arena spills over into private life, a position supported by Morrison and Loreto Biehl (1999). Under this theory, high rates of IPVAW would be understandable considering the high occurrence and tolerance of other types of violence within Peruvian society.

\textsuperscript{13} It should be noted that there are regular reports that \textit{Sendero Luminoso} is regrouping and training for a new insurgency, now funded by narco-dollars and more heavily armed.
While Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa are unsure about how the contemporary atmosphere of violence has affected rates of domestic violence, they do note that Peruvian violence statistics suggest that it is less likely for domestic violence to occur in homes in peaceful neighborhoods than in more violent neighborhoods. This differentiation could suggest that lower levels of violence in the neighborhood leads to less normalization of violence, thus leading to lower levels of domestic violence. But, this data is more supportive of a subculture of violence theory, as wealthier neighborhoods tend to be less violent (and are protected by private security services) and poorer neighborhoods tend to have higher levels of violence. However, because of the inconsistent nature of data collecting by Peruvian government organizations and the heavy reliance on self-reporting, this assertion may be misleading. Because of the embarrassment and shame surrounding domestic violence, and the high value placed on family reputations – especially for upper-class families – it would not be surprising to find significantly higher levels of underreporting in middle- and upper-class homes than in lower-class homes.

*Analysis of Gender Roles in Latin America*

Analysis of Latin American gender roles usually focuses on the idealized gender dichotomy of *machista* men and *marianista* women (Wade 1994, Powell 2004, Flake 2005). Men, fulfilling the idealized roles of *machismo*, are expected to be hyper-masculine; sexually aggressive, having sex with as many women as he wants; strong; violent towards women and other men; dominant over their wives and children; and unfeeling, as showing emotion is perceived to lead to vulnerability (Wade 1994,
Lafayette De Mente 1996, Powell 2004, Flake 2005). Lafayette De Mente (1996:173) provides the following definition of machismo from Mexico, which Powell (2004) applies to his analysis of Nicaragua, and which is quite apt for the understanding of machismo in Peru as well: “the repudiation of all ‘feminine’ virtues such as unselfishness, kindness, frankness, and truthfulness... being willing to lie without compunction, to be suspicious, envious, jealous, malicious, vindictive, brutal and finally, to be willing to fight and kill without hesitation to protect one’s manly image.” Powell (2004) and Flake (2005) note that gender norms and the extreme pressure to be machista clearly leads to men’s (often violent) dominance over women. Violence is an expression of male power that is used by men to garner respect from both women and other men (Bourgois 1995).

Women, on the other hand, are expected to embrace the role of the Virgin Mary and silently endure any pain and suffering inflicted upon them by their husbands or society (Wade 1994, Flake 2005, Levy 2008). Women are expected by men and women to be the point of stability and support in the family. For many women this personal sacrifice is seen as an investment in her family’s, and especially in her children’s future. This women’s role is largely in response to men’s impermanence and irresponsibility in the home. Wade (1994:119-20) notes that, for men, the ideal woman is the mujer conforme (the acquiescent woman), who is “selfless and disinterested: she loves her man, provides him with domestic support, tries neither to control or exploit him, and does not interfere with his activities outside the home.”

Although these idealized dichotomous gender roles are perhaps overly simplistic and do not account for other sociocultural or personal factors, women and men in Latin
America do tend to enact these roles, or at least give the impression that they are being enacted. In his description of men along Colombia’s Pacific and Atlantic coasts, Wade (1994) further develops the understanding of a certain type of *machista* men, the *hombre parrandero* (the partying man). It is this type of *machista* man that most closely resembles the men of Lambayeque: “the fun loving drinker and dancer who is always ready to party with his male friends and stay up all night, drinking rum, listening and dancing to music, telling jokes and stories” (117). There is significant prestige among men associated with being an *hombre parrandero*, and men who can stay up all night drinking heavily without getting incapacitated are particularly esteemed. Wade counters the *hombre parrandero* with a competing masculine identity, that of the “good father” who provides for his wife and children. While he notes that being a good father is also valued by other men, they are careful to not let their “good father” status undermine their *hombre parrandero* status, which is ultimately more valued and desirable. Women, both in Colombia and in Lambayeque, acknowledge that men are “naturally” *machista*, thus excusing men’s behavior to an extent, but also commonly note that these men are “irresponsible” because they prefer to be in the street *de parranda* with their friends, instead of providing for their families.

Conflicting attitudes about what gender roles *should* be, and contradiction between idealized roles and actual behavior are often what leads to IPVAW in Latin America. Wade (1994) believes that these conflicts are what lead to violence. He explains that, “This is not to deny gendered power differences, enacted in economics and representations; it is to qualify over-simplified and undifferentiated notions of gender and
dominance” (134). Moore (1994a:70) reinforces this understanding, arguing that, “we might come closer to an understanding of the phenomenon if we shift our gaze and move from imagining violence as a breakdown in the social order – something gone wrong – to seeing it as the sign of a struggle for the maintenance of certain fantasies of identity and power.” Flake’s (2005) research supports this position, finding that likelihood of abuse increases in Peru when women challenge the patriarchal power structure in ways such as being employed in wage labor outside of the home. Brown (1992:3) argues that “A wife’s assertiveness or her flirtations with autonomy are viewed as equivalent to insurrection and as a threat against the sacred social order.”

Bourgois (1995) highlights how changing rights and roles for women are seen as a challenge to the old social order based on a hierarchy structured by kin, age-grade, and gender that served to socialize individuals and regulate women and children’s behavior. While he is quick to point out that women have not provoked male violence by assuming new rights and roles, explaining that such victim-blaming glorifies historical status quos of patriarchy and obscures the historical trajectory of structural oppression, he notes that these changes are interpreted by many men as a challenge to men’s authoritarian power within the home, which some men then desperately attempt to reassert.

**Stress Theory and Class Analysis**

There are a number of studies of IPVAW that evaluate family stressors and family class status as causes of IPVAW. As Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999) and Morrison and Loreto Biehl (1999) note, while many studies find a direct correlation between poverty and IPVAW, other studies suggest that the phenomenon of IPVAW
affects all socioeconomic classes fairly equally. Flake (2005), for example, found that socioeconomic status in Peru was not a risk marker for violence, unlike in other countries. It is difficult to evaluate the role of socioeconomic status on IPVAW because of the complicated nature of data reporting, in which even the best designed studies rely to an extent on self-reporting of intimate partner violence. Additionally, there seems to be a bias in data collection, in that most studies of IPVAW tend to focus on lower-class groups. Upper class individuals are more able to hide violence and maintain their privacy than are impoverished individuals. They are also more able to mediate and respond to violence through private services (ex. private hospitals and clinics, private lawyers) to which poorer individuals do not have access. Wealthier individuals may have good reason to try to protect their privacy, as they are seen to have social reputations to protect and are at risk for higher material loss should a marriage end. As Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999:35) suggest, it may be that “domestic violence is not more prevalent among the poor, just more obvious.”

Even so, Gonzales de Olarte and Favilano Llosa (1999) argue that absolute poverty is the fundamental basis of IPVAW and family violence in general. They note that relative poverty and the frustration resulting from the inability to purchase consumer goods may play a complimentary role in the instigation of violence. They list the following frustrations of impoverished individuals that they believe to “unleash violent behavior” (37): poor living conditions, overcrowding, lack of basic services, absence of entertainment opportunities, high levels of alcohol consumption, low education levels, high unemployment, large family size, and the lack of opportunity to improve living
conditions. Perales et.al. (2009) agreed that financial stress may correlate to IPVAW in Peru.

While economic factors certainly do play a role in family dynamics and IPVAW, as is shown extensively throughout the ethnographic data collected in this study, class analysis is simply not a sufficient explanation for IPVAW in Peru. An analysis that places too much focus on the economic aspects of violence, and not enough focus on other factors, can be misleading and invoke potentially dangerous conclusions. Flake (2005), who did not find socioeconomic status to be a risk marker for IPVAW in Peru, suggests that the commonness of poverty in Peru leads to couples’ increased abilities to deal appropriately with poverty-related stressors, rather than resorting to violence. Flake (2005:369) argues that, “This finding suggests that policies seeking to alleviate abuse by improving women’s socioeconomic status might not be effective in Peru.” Although the exact role of socioeconomic standing in IPVAW is contentious, such conclusions are dangerous in that they can be easily manipulated by governments already disinterested in bettering women’s socioeconomic positions and reducing IPVAW. As the ethnographic research in this study shows, the socioeconomic standing of women is key in their ability or inability to respond to and resist IPVAW.

The shortcomings of stress theory and class analysis remind us of the importance of using multidimensional analyses of gender violence and intimate partner violence. Understanding the nuanced importance of men’s and women’s socioeconomic statuses is impossible without also considering other sociocultural elements, such as the patriarchal
nature of the society in question. Class analysis and stress theory, in isolation, are simply unable to explain the gendered nature of IPVAW.

Contemporary Anthropological Treatments of Violence: Theories and Trends

Beginning in the 1980s and gaining significant momentum in the 1990s and 2000s, anthropologists have undertaken violence as a relatively new focus for the discipline. Prior to this interest, anthropologists shied away from writing about violence for a number of reasons, including the fear of exacerbating Western stereotypes of “primitive, savage, and barbaric” peoples that modern anthropologists had worked diligently to demystify (Farmer 2004, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, McClusky 2001). Because of anthropologists’ tendency to shy away from focusing research on violence, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:6) note that “Consequently, the contribution of anthropology to understanding all levels of violence – from individual sexual abuse and homicide to state-sponsored political terrorism and ‘dirty’ wars to genocide is extremely modest.” Feminist anthropologist Henrietta Moore (1994b:138), made a similar criticism, specifically of the lack of research on gender violence in the social sciences, arguing that “…in spite of a great mass of writing, research, and speculation, the concept of violence in the social sciences still seems remarkably under theorized.” Kleinman (2000) also notes the lack of theory with which to frame comparisons of everyday violence within anthropology, and calls for theoretical elaboration.

The contemporary treatment of violence by anthropologists is extremely varied, but has focused primarily on issues of violence in relation to larger socio-political
structures and processes, which is often linked to manifestations of interpersonal violence. In their introduction to the anthology *Violence in War and Peace*, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) note a number of terms that have been employed to describe this socio-cultural phenomenon. These include, among others, “the violence of everyday life” (Scheper-Hughes 1992), “culture of terror” (Taussig 1987, 2004), “structural violence” (Bourgois 1995, 2004a, 2004b; Farmer 2004), “social suffering” and “violences of everyday life” (Kleinman 2000), and “violence continuum” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Despite differences in the specific terminology employed, these anthropologists (and others) emphasize the need for a heightened awareness of the inability to separate the individual from the social/structural, the “everydayness” of violence, and, the naturalization of violence in quotidian life. Klienman (2000:238) highlights the importance of recognizing “the violence of everyday life as multiple, as normative (and normal), as the outcome of the interaction of changing cultural representations, social experience, and individual subjectivity.” But even with this increased recognition of the “everyday,” most research is still focused on more public manifestations of violence and “larger” socio-political violence. When gender violence is treated, it is usually done so on a larger scale, and rarely at the individual level. There has been very little ethnographic anthropological research done specifically on intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) (McClusky 2001).

What this portion of the literature review aims to do is characterize this contemporary approach to violence that is located within a present-day trajectory of anthropology. First, I will focus on the interconnectedness and inseparability between the
“individual” and socio-cultural/structural forms of violence and between different forms of structural violence (importance of intersectionality: individual and social). Second, I will focus on how the interconnectedness between the individual and structural violence leads to the naturalization of violence. Third, I will look specifically at gender violence as naturalized and “everyday” violence. Fourth, I will show how IPVAW, as an intentional but naturalized form of gender violence, can be understood as a type of intimate terrorism that mirrors larger-scale forms of violence. Fifth, I will show how the cyclical nature of violence between society and the individual facilitates the reproduction of violence.

The Relationship Between the Individual and Socio-Cultural/Structural Violence

Many anthropologists have noted that violence is fundamentally a socio-cultural construct (Robben and Nordstrom 1995, Klienman 2000, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, Merry 2009). Because violence is socially and culturally constructed, all dimensions of violence are shaped by culture, ideologies, history, symbolic structures, and social structures, and cannot be understood only in terms of its physicality (Robben and Nordstrom 1995, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Robben and Nordstrom (1995) emphasize that violence is not something that simply “happens” to people, but is rather a dimension of people’s living existence. Because violence is constructed socio-culturally, there is an inseparable link between individuals/individual actions and social/structural determination (Bourgois 2004b). The power and meaning of violence are rooted in the cultural dimensions of violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004).

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:2) observe that violence is difficult to categorize because of its varied nature: “It can be everything and nothing; legitimate or
illegitimate; visible or invisible; necessary or useless; senseless and gratuitous or utterly rational and strategic.” \textit{Structural violence}, however, is understood to be violence that results from structural inequalities within a designated population. Those who suffer from the consequences of structural violence tend to be those who live in poverty, but can also include other groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, etc. Structural violence leads to forms of “everyday” violence that include “the highest rates of disease and death, unemployment, homelessness, lack of education, powerlessness, a shared fate of misery, and the day-by-day violence of hunger, thirst, and bodily pain” (Klienman 2000:227). This “everyday violence” encompasses implicit, legitimate, and routinized violence that is inherent in certain social-economic-political structurings and processes (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). For most individuals facing the consequences of structural violence, though, there is an intersectionality to their categorized suffering that may place them simultaneously in multiple marginalized groups. As Paul Farmer (2004:282) noted, “For many… life choices are structured by racism, sexism, political violence, \textit{and} grinding poverty.” For this reason, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:22) argue that “we need to understand violence as encompassing all forms of ‘controlling processes’ that assault basic human freedoms and individual or collective survival.” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:22).

\textit{The Naturalization of Everyday Violence}

The naturalization (or normalization) of violence exists as a subtext in many academic studies of different types of violence, but there is very little explicit theorizing about the process of naturalization. Veena Das (2007) cites her own struggles in writing
about the “everyday,” despite the “certain air of obviousness with which notions of the
everyday… are spoken of in anthropological writing” (2). In this section, I will try to
elucidate the normalization of structuralized violence.

Most contemporary cultural anthropologists have openly rejected the notion of
violence as having “natural” evolutionary origins that continue to be universally and
essentially present in our psychobiological or sociobiological selves (Scheper-Hughes
and Bourgois 2004). That is not to say, however, that psychological and biological factors
cannot or do not sometimes play a role in violence – they can and they do. But, as
Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) note, ideological academic approaches to and
treatments of violence (such as assumed “natural aggression” in the natural and
behavioral sciences, conceptualizations of violence as “deviant behavior” in the fields of
psychology and sociology, and a limited focus on patriarchy and the “medicalization/
psychologization” of violence by older feminist theory) are unable to capture the extent of
the naturalization of violence that results from structural inequalities and power relations,
and fail to recognize the variety of violent acts that make up the continuum of violence.

Although not biologically “natural,” structuralized violence is often “seemingly
natural” and is understood to be naturalized as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Because
socio-cultural structures are regularly understood to simply “be as they are,” the resulting
violence is often obscured by notions of “everydayness” that accept that things are “as
they are” or “at face value.” Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) explain that structural
violence is “misrecognized because its very everydayness and its familiarity render it
invisible” (21) and because “it is part of the routine grounds of everyday life and [is]
transformed into expressions of moral worth” (4). Merry (2009:5) similarly argues that structural violence is “hidden in the mundane details of everyday life” and “impacts the everyday lives of people yet remains invisible and normalized.”

*Gender Violence as Naturalized “Everyday” Violence*

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:1) state that structural violence “inevitably translates into intimate and domestic violence.” While not all individuals who suffer the everydayness of structural violence act in violent ways in their intimate relationships (and not all individuals who act violently towards an intimate partner face the day-to-day perils of structural violence), they point out that structural violence increases the likelihood for intimate partner and gendered violence and decreases the ability for individuals to resist all types of violence.

Like other types of “small scale” and “large scale” violence, gender violence is “socially produced, performed, contextually defined, and existing in many different situations and contexts” (Merry 2009:185). This anthropological understanding of gender violence places emphasis on the socio-cultural explanations of gender violence, rather than psychological or biological aspects of gender violence (Sanday 1990, Stewart 2002, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, Merry 2009). Perhaps most importantly, an anthropological approach to gender violence, “shows clearly that efforts to change gender violence must understand the practice in terms of audiences that support it, the institutions that treat it lightly, and the structures of inequality that benefit from the kinds of control and power that it provides” (Merry 2009:185).
For Sally Engle Merry (2009), there are four important points that outline and shape anthropological perspectives on gender. First, the concern with gender violence is rooted in social and political movements that have changed and will continue to change over time. The US battered women’s movement, for example, initially relied largely on notions of commonality among all women and an understanding of gender as binary in order to posit patriarchy as the common enemy. Changes in the conceptualization of gender have led to more nuanced understandings and approaches that address a number of issues in addition to patriarchy in order to understand and combat both domestic violence and gender violence in general. This movement-driven understanding, because of its broad and all-encompassing nature, has led to a somewhat incoherent conceptualization of gender violence and an anthropological undertheorization of gender violence that pieces together aspects of many other theories of violence.

The second point is that gender is understood by anthropologists to be flexible, rather than fixed, and is performed differently depending on the audience and the context. The shift from focusing on the biological sex to focusing on the culturally produced gender along with the understanding that gender is intersectional, rather than essentialized and static, have contributed significant nuance to the anthropological understandings of gender violence. To begin to fully understand gender violence, it is necessary to understand the influences of socio-cultural structuring on gender performance.

Third, because gender violence has no universal explanation, it is imperative to understand interpersonal behavior within the wider socio-cultural contexts of power and
meaning and it is impossible to understand violence between individuals without first understanding structural violences by states, communities, and institutions. Issues of structural violence stemming from racism, inequality, conquest, occupation, colonialism, poverty, hunger, social exclusion/marginalization, kinship patterns and family organization, humiliation, warfare and civil conflict, impunity, migration, urbanization, corruption, and economic disruptions are inseparable from interpersonal gender violence and make individuals increasingly vulnerable to victimization at all levels of violence (ranging from state or international violence to domestic violence). This intersectional political economy approach “focuses on the increased vulnerability to violence of the impoverished, rather than focusing on violence as part of a ‘culture’ of poverty (Merry 2009:103). Women whose lives are lived at the intersections of these factors are even more vulnerable than men in comparable situations.

Finally, the anthropological study of gender violence is comparative; while gender violence occurs globally, it takes different forms and occurs at different degrees in different socio-cultural contexts. Merry’s conceptualization makes it clear that there is no one simple answer to explain gender violence cross-culturally because of the intersectional nature of individual identity, local and regional identities, and state and international identities.

**IPVAW as Naturalized Intimate Terror**

For Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004), as well as other anthropologists, gender violence forms part of the violence continuum that ranges from interpersonal violence to inter-state/nation war. Because of its intentional, coercive, and strategic
nature, gender violence, and, specifically in this work, intimate partner violence against women, can be understood as a type of terror. Bourgois (1995:34) highlights the value of Michael Taussig’s term “culture of terror,” which attempts to “convey the dominating effect of widespread violence on a vulnerable society.” Bourgois (2004a:344) also employs Taussig’s term “public secret” to describe the “terrifying conspiracy of silence… that enforces an important dimension of the oppression of women in everyday life.”

These concepts are particularly useful when attempting to understand the “everydayness” of the terror that the women that I interviewed in Lambayeque experience in their intimate partner relationships. What these women experience in their day-to-day lives goes far beyond simple acts of isolated physical violence. These women, already intersectional members of numerous vulnerable groups (race, class, gender, etc.), have grown up in, and continue to live in a “culture of terror” that results from the gendered violence that they experience both within and outside of their homes. The violence they experience is a “public secret” that is visible only to those who choose to see it. Stewart (2002:282) describes violence against women as “omnipresent and ordinary,” noting that “It is this commonplace, taken-for-granted character of violence against women that is at once so overwhelming and yet so pervasive.”

Robben and Nordstrom (1995) argue that “the uncertainty of violence is invariably related to a summoning of fear, terror, and confusion” (10). Rape (in any form, from stranger rape to wife rape) is a useful example of gendered terror. In their analysis of sex and violence, Harvey and Gow (1994) note that the conceptualization of the
relatedness between “sexuality and attraction” and “violence and separation,” leads to a sense of transgression when sex and violence come together. In the discussion of her own rape, Winkler (with Hanke 1995: 175-6), highlights the terroristic effects of this transgression on the victim-survivors:

Rapists are social murderers. Physically, rapists bludgeon victim-survivors’ bodies: marking, scarring, battering, penetrating, devouring, liquidating, salivating on us. Emotionally, rapists stab our feelings: defining, dictating, demanding, manipulating, infiltrating us. Mentally, rapists take authority over our actions and words: distorting, contradicting, deforming, falsifying, contorting us. These are terror mechanisms. Rape is an attack on the identity of victim-survivors. Rapists attempt to distort and to sever ourselves from our own identity.

Das (2007) attributes the sense of violation resulting from violence to the loss of familiar context. She explains that after context is lost, trust is also lost. “The affect produced on the registers of the virtual and the potential, of fear that is real but not necessarily actualized in events, comes to constitute the ecology of fear in everyday life. Potentiality here does not have the sense of something that is waiting at the door of reality to make an appearance as it were, but rather as that which is already present” (9). Das describes the loss of context and trust as the “sense of being betrayed by the everyday” (9). In response to this loss of context and trust, “normal” reactions to violence have to be “unlearned” as a means for self-preservation (Das and Kleinman 2000). “As faith in trusted categories disappears, there is a feeling of extreme contingency and vulnerability in carrying out everyday activities…” (8).

Das and Kleinman (2000) argue, however, that the institutions of everyday life can constitute places of hope, even when everyday life is plagued by the potential for danger. They cite Reynolds’ (2000) research on apartheid which focuses on the role of
mothers and family in creating stability during politically violent times. I agree that this assertion is probably correct in most instances of larger societal violence, but in the case of IPVAW in Lambayeque, the institutions of everyday life are often a principle source of terror. Without dismissing or minimalizing the obvious horrors of war, genocide, civil violence, and other types of larger socio-political violence, I argue that IPVAW in Lambayeque is a particularly terroristic type of interpersonal violence because of the absence of larger institutional support and the absence of support from the family/institutions of everyday life. When terror comes from both inside and outside the home, and violence comes not only from strangers but also from one’s own intimate partners and family members, all context, all trust, and sometimes all hope, can be lost.

The Reproduction of Violence

The socio-cultural reproduction of violence has been widely observed by anthropologists (Sanday 1990; Moore 1994a, 1994b; Robben and Nordstrom 1995; Bourgois 1995, 2004b; Stewart 2002; Bourdieu 2004; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:1) note that “Like produces like… Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence – or, as we prefer – a continuum of violence.” This reproduction of violence can, however, be conceptualized in a number of different ways, and Moore (1994a:51) has observed that the problem for anthropologists “is to explain how dominant discourses and categories get reproduced when so few people are prepared to acknowledge that they support or believe in them.” Robben and Nordstrom (1995) suggest that some societies may have an internalized habitus of violence that leads to coercive social interaction and reproduces
the same cultural divisions. They also note that sociopolitical processes permit certain
groups to retain power and thus reproduce inequality. Bourdieu (2004) argues that
singular agents (ex. men) and institutions (ex. families, the state, religion, educational
systems, etc.) incessantly labor to reproduce structures of domination. Stewart (2002), in
her analysis of gender violence, argues that the patriarchal structuring of societies leads to
the reproduction of unequal gender structures. Bourgois (1995:301-2) agrees that
patriarchy and the “contemporary crisis of patriarchy” are important in the reproduction
of violence, but notes that both need to be understood in a historical and political
economy framework.

In this study of IPVAW in Lambayeque, what becomes obvious is that
(naturalized) violence begets (naturalized) violence. Violence against women is learned
through witnessing and experiencing violence against women in both childhood and
adulthood, and its reproduction is enabled through the reciprocal buttressing that takes
place between structural inequalities and (public and private) patriarchy. In Lambayeque,
violece leads to more violence because socio-cultural structures and processes hide,
protect, reinforce, and encourage violent behaviors.

Because of the broad nature of the ethnographic approach which takes into
account many spheres of socio-cultural life, several theoretical perspectives on violence
are of particular interest to the analysis of the data in this thesis. These theoretical
approaches are understood to overlap and interconnect, as do the many spheres of socio-
cultural life that influence the phenomenon of intimate partner violence against women.
This thesis is founded in the contemporary anthropological treatment of violence which
recognizes violence as naturalized, culturally-reproduced, and terroristic. Cultural acceptance of violence theory and the concept of a subculture of violence against women compliment the anthropological treatment of violence by recognizing the role other types of violence play in the naturalization of gender violence. Feminist theory, focusing on patriarchal structures and the analysis of idealized and dichotomized gender roles, highlights the specific gendered nature of IPVAW.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Why Study Violence Against Women?

Before carrying out my fieldwork for this research project, I lived for four years in Peru. I spent my sophomore year of college in Lima, where I studied Peruvian literature and anthropology at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. During that year I also traveled extensively, having the opportunity to visit a variety of places on the coast, in the Andes Mountains, and in the Amazon Rainforest. I returned three more times during my undergraduate years to do research for my undergraduate thesis, to study Quechua, and to visit friends. After graduating I returned to Peru where I lived and worked for a little over two years, teaching English in Chiclayo, guiding tour groups around different cities, and developing content for the website of a large travel agency in Lima. It was also during this time that I married my husband, a Lambayecano.

During those four years I saw many things that shocked, saddened, and angered me: extreme poverty, blatant racism, gang violence in the street, and shameless government corruption, among others. Violence against women is sometimes more subtle and more hidden, but at other times it manifests as a gendered performance that men feel compelled to perform when around women. Women walking down any street in Peru are subject to cat-calls, whistles, and the occasional (but far too common) unwanted groping. Most days I tried to ignore it, imitating the Peruvian women I observed. Some days, though, the overwhelming and continual barrage of cat-calls that constitutes this machista style of interaction would get to be too much. As I was going home from the university one afternoon, a man who was standing at the bus stop at which I usually disembarked,
said something particularly grotesque to me and I snapped. He had been following me for about half a block saying increasingly crass things, while other men looked on and laughed. I had enough. I turned to him and said, “Why don’t you go say that to la concha de tu madre (your mother’s cunt)??”

Based on the expression on his face, I can only assume that, because he saw me as a gringa, he did not think I would understand the things that he was saying to me. The other men who were watching laughed hysterically at my insult, which was a flagrant gender violation, as they are not “proper” words for a “lady” to say to a man, and are certainly not words that are typically heard coming out of a gringa’s mouth. Not only had I surprised him, I had insulted both his mother and his masculinity. He responded with even more vulgarities at which point I said that he had better run because he was about to be very embarrassed by a woman who was going to beat him up in front of all the other men in the street. I turned and took three quick steps towards him, raised my fist, and he turned and ran (I was so relieved that he did!).

The other men who had been watching the scene unfold were doubled over laughing, yelling after him “maricón” (queer) and congratulating me, “Buena, gringa” (Good one, gringa)! I turned and continued my walk home without saying anything. My body shook and my stomach turned the whole way. I wondered how Peruvian women put up with that kind of behavior for their entire lives. I hated that moment. I hated fearing for my safety. I hated having to pretend that I was ready to fight the man just so that he would leave me alone. The only good that came of it was that after the incident the men who would hang around the bus stop selling newspapers, candy, etc. would greet me with
a smile and a polite, “Buenas tardes, señorita.” This pervasive and continual accosting is just one example of the violence women in Peru are forced to deal with in their everyday lives. Being constantly at the defensive in order to protect one’s personal safety and dignity is a daunting and exhausting task.

The more time I spent in Peru, the more violence against women I witnessed. The cat-calls and whistles continued, but they were nothing compared to the things to come. When visiting my husband’s (then-boyfriend’s) family in Lambayeque for the first time, we were all sitting in the living room of his family’s house enjoying the afternoon breeze (the only relief from the summer heat) when we heard a woman screaming. I jumped up and ran out onto the sidewalk. Across the street there was a young man fighting with a young woman. She was yelling at him to leave her alone, and repeatedly she tried to walk away. He had her by the arm though, dragging her back. Finally, he threw her up against the gate of a medical clinic and he slapped her. I naively yelled into the house for someone to call the police.

My father-in-law gently explained that it would do no good to call the police, saying that they would not come. He said that even if the police did come there was nothing that they would do. I said, “Then we have to go stop this.” The young man had the young woman pushed up against the gate, yelling at her. My father-in-law said to me, “It’s best to not get involved, getting involved only creates more problems.” I stood there, feeling helpless, wondering why no one was helping her, and wondering why no one from the clinic was coming out to intervene. After what seemed like an eternity, but in reality was less than a few minutes, the yelling stopped. The young woman cried quietly
as he led her away by the arm. Never in my life had I felt so impotent. I still see the image of the couple fighting in my head, and to this day I often wonder about what has become of their lives.

Years later, living in Lima, when working for a travel agency doing web content development, I again witnessed intimate partner violence against women firsthand. The owner of the highly successful travel agency, a US-university educated man in his 30s, is one of the most volatile individuals I have ever personally known. Referred to as “Sata” by employees behind his back (a nickname short for Satanás, Satan, that existed long before I began working there), he ruled the office through a system of threats and fear-mongering. He was also a heavy drug user. On more than one occasion drug-dealers would come to the office (which was also Sata’s home) to sell him fairly large amounts of cocaine and marijuana. Sata was unapologetic for his behavior, and from the very beginning he and I did not get along very well. I was one of the few in the office that did not fear him and was not impressed by his relative wealth. As time went by our professional relationship deteriorated even further as I openly criticized his abusive and manipulative management techniques.

Sata’s main girlfriend (he had several women on the side), Ruth, also worked in the office. She was in charge of the bookkeeping, despite her lack of formal training as an accountant. One day Sata came downstairs in a rage (he lived upstairs, and the first floor was the office). He began screaming at Ruth about missing money, accusing her of stealing from him. Embarrassed, she repeatedly asked him if they could speak in private. Calling her a lying and thieving whore, he picked up her dog (a miniature schnauzer) and
took off running towards the garage. Ruth ran after him screaming, begging him not to hurt her dog. Most people in the office, men and women, Peruvians and foreigners, kept their heads down and continued working, pretending that nothing was happening.

I ran after them into the garage, as did the maid, Karina, just in time to see him holding her dog in one hand by the neck, shaking him, while he screamed at her. He threw the dog against the cement wall of the garage as Ruth cried. Sata then grabbed Ruth by the neck and pinned her against the wall, choking her, threatening to kill her if she did not return the money. As Karina and I yelled for help, two other office workers came in, Juan and Carola (both Peruvian). Juan and I pulled Sata off of Ruth, holding him while Karina led her out of the garage and Carola checked on the dog who was cowering in the corner. Sata was led upstairs by Juan, and I went into the kitchen to check on Ruth. I found her slumped in a corner, on the floor, sobbing and yelling that she had not stolen the money. She told us that Sata himself had taken the money out of the business’ bank account (which he used as his personal petty cash) to pay for her to have the breast and buttocks implants that he talked her into getting – he had told her that he was not satisfied with her body the way it was.

Later that day Sata called me into the meeting room, saying that he wanted to speak with me, alone. I refused, saying that I did not feel safe alone in a room with him. I insisted that if he wanted to speak with me that I would only do so if Juan were also in the room. The three of us entered a spare bedroom on the second floor that was used as a conference room. Sata began by asking me what I had seen. When I told him, detail by detail, he denied that anything had happened, saying that I had made it all up. He said that
he did not remember seeing me in the garage, and that he and Ruth were only talking. He threatened me, saying that if I ever told anyone what I “claimed” to have seen that he would make my life miserable. Ruth and Karina later told me that he had denied everything to them too. Ruth said that it was not the first time that he hit her, and that it was typical behavior of his when he was using cocaine. I asked her why she stayed with him, why she did not file a police report against him, and she explained that he was paying for her university education, he paid her to work for the travel company, and he would give her mom money for luxuries. When she was recovering from the plastic surgery that he paid for (and insisted on her getting), she and her mom spent three weeks at a resort in Brazil. Ruth and Sata ended up breaking up shortly thereafter, although I’m not sure who broke up with whom, and she no longer worked at the travel agency. I never saw her again, but I often think of her, and hope that her life is better now without him.

By that point, I had decided that I clearly could no longer tolerate working in that environment. I had only put up with Sata’s behavior for as long as I did because we were waiting for my husband’s visa paperwork to go through at the US Embassy. The general office manager informed me two weeks after the incident that the company was “no longer happy with my work.” I told him that it was mutual – I was not happy working there. I had already planned to inform them the following week that I would be taking the rest of my vacation days, and that afterwards I would not be back. After I stopped working there, but before leaving Peru to return to the US, Sata sent Karina to give me a message. She called me, crying, saying that Sata had said to tell me that a hit man in Peru can be found for 50 soles (about 18 US dollars at the time) and to watch my back. She
said that he also had threatened (as he had previously threatened another ex-worker whose girlfriend Sata had slept with) to plant drugs in my suitcases at the airport and to send me drugs in the mail to my address in the US. I went to the police and asked for _garantías_ (similar to a restraining order, _garantías_ are a record of a threat indicating that if anything were to happen to me, Sata had threatened my life and personal wellbeing). The next week I left the country.

These experiences, along with numerous other experiences with Peruvian gender violence (some were intimate experiences with gendered violence while others were more distant), changed my own consciousness and understanding of violence against women. They changed the ways that I understand gender relations and intimate partner relationships. Although I knew violence existed all around me, at home in the United States and in Peru, I had never before been so keenly aware of it. I had also never felt so powerless and so frustrated with the positioning and treatment of women both in Peru and in general.

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14 While I have considered the possibilities of including stories of my own intimate experiences with gendered violence in Peru, I have chosen not to for three main reasons. Firstly, while it is important to acknowledge how I, the researcher (and therefore my own past experiences), influence my research, I do not want this ethnography to be about me. I feel it is more important, and ultimately more valuable for the purposes of this research to focus on the lives of the women in Lambayeque who were courageous enough to share their stories with me. Secondly, unlike the women I interviewed, I do not have the opportunity to share my story anonymously, and I do not feel comfortable sharing some of my own intimate experiences with violence in such a public forum. Thirdly, I fear that should I share my own personal stories, this work runs the risk of being dismissed as important and respectable research. I, like many researchers (see Mattley 1997), fear that readers will assume that the only reason I am interested in the topic of violence against women is because of personal experience or because of personal fetish, which is untrue. While my personal experience has certainly influenced the way I think about issues of VAW, the true motivation for this research is the desire to begin chipping away at the culturally-created silence that so often obscures VAW. I, however, cautiously include this footnote as I reflect on Hippensteele’s (1997:90) observation: “Our own stories as victims and researchers is (sic) shared in quiet conversation with like-experienced colleagues over drinks toward the end of the conferences we attend. We collectively shudder to imagine that ‘word might get out’ that our interest is more than professional, and our public silence reinforces the victim-blaming we claim to resist.”
Since beginning this research I have been amazed by the reactions of others to violence against women. I continue to be in disbelief that so many Peruvians (and people in the US) witness the same types of violence daily and either do not or can not do anything. That is not to say that there is no resistance – there most definitely is, but it is not enough. It is for this reason that I chose to research and write about violence against women in Peru, with the hope that this research will help contribute to and enable increased future resistance.

Throughout my research, when friends, family, and acquaintances in the United States would ask me what my thesis was going to be about, more often than not they would appear somewhat uncomfortable when I would answer, “violence against women in a town in Peru.” While there were the empathetic few (many of whom also work in areas related to violence), I was surprised by how many individuals questioned my choice of topic. Their reasons for doing so varied significantly. Some questioned my own “good judgment” in choosing such a topic. Some were concerned for my personal safety, a legitimate concern. Others warned me not to “get too involved” in the lives of the women, something I politely promised that I would not do while not really knowing what “too involved” even meant. I wondered, how do I not get involved? How could I ask these women to share such painful, personal experiences and not also be invested in the pursuit of their individual wellbeing?

The question that most shocked me, however, presented itself numerous times and in a variety of ways: “Is VAW even a big enough problem to study? Is it even common enough for you to find people to interview?” When one person asked me this, I replied
that yes, it is actually very common, both in Peru and the US. This person responded curtly, “I don’t know anyone.” I answered, “You probably do know someone in a violent relationship, you just don’t know that their relationship is violent: people are very good at hiding things.” This person’s response (because we know many of the same people) was, “Then name somebody.” I politely declined to “name names,” at which point this person worriedly asked me, “Are you in a violent relationship?” I replied that no, thankfully I am not in a violent relationship, but that there are many women worldwide who are. The conversation ended with hints of concern on the other person’s part, now faced with the reality that people we know may be in violent relationships.

In Peru the reaction to my research topic was quite different. The dynamics of violence against women in Peru and in the US, while similar in some ways, are also quite different. Most Peruvian men and women were nothing but supportive of my research. Both men and women expressed how happy they were that someone was finally paying attention to the problem of VAW in Peru and specifically in Lambayeque. While some men did try to downplay the frequency of VAW and its severity, most women outwardly celebrated the fact that someone was finally going to listen to their stories. They were finally going to have a sympathetic ear, if not to share their own story, to share the stories of their mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and neighbors.

As much as I would like for this research to be able to “fix” the problem of VAW in Lambayeque and around the world, the women who participated in my research and I know that research alone will not have this effect. There were, however, some women who participated in this study who commented that they were happy to be sharing their
personal stories, knowing that they were going to be published. They felt that their testimonies would help people to understand VAW, which they acknowledged as an important step to combating VAW. While it is reasonable to assume that all the women I interviewed hope that there will be change for women, they are aware that there is no “quick fix.”

Why Lambayeque?

I chose to conduct my ethnographic fieldwork in Lambayeque for different reasons, some of which were outlined in the introduction. Because of time constraints in the field, location selection was very important. Lambayeque is a small enough town that conducting research there was a reasonable undertaking (unlike trying to take on a larger and more diverse city) in the 3.5 months that I had in the field between December 2009 and March 2010.

But most importantly, my husband’s family is from Lambayeque and continues to live there. Previous to conducting fieldwork, I lived with them in Lambayeque for a year. I had many previously established personal contacts in the town, and the family’s longstanding position in the community facilitated my access to local individuals. Because I have a kinship status of nuera (daughter-in-law), I am seen as a legitimate part of the community despite being a gringa who no longer lives in Lambayeque. Although I do not have complete insider status, I am not seen as a tourist or a complete outsider either. The time I previously spent in Lambayeque, along with my familiarity with the area and the people, allowed me to get a quick start on my research – an essential benefit considering the limited time I had in the field.
Because my request for funding for this research was denied,\textsuperscript{15} by staying in Lambayeque I significantly reduced the cost of conducting fieldwork by staying with my in-laws, thus allowing me to spend the full 3.5 months researching. By living with my in-laws I was also more able to engage in participant observation as I was regularly surrounded by the seven extended family members that lived in the house and the many friends and family members that came by the house daily. Their company also played a vital role in my personal safety. In Lambayeque homes are regularly burglarized, and had I been a \textit{gringa} living alone I would have been a prime target. Perhaps most importantly, though, these family members and friends contributed positively to my own emotional health throughout the fieldwork process. When working with victims of violence, burnout and compassion fatigue are very real possibilities (Schwartz 1997, Stanko 1997, Ohio Domestic Violence Network 2008). The supportive group of friends and family that surrounded me provided me with both humor and understanding. My three-year-old godson was particularly adept at this and was a reliable source of comic relief – always willing to provide a distraction and keep me company.

Living Conditions, My Position in the Community, and Participant Observation

While conducting fieldwork, as was already noted, I lived with my mother-in-law and father-in-law. They live in a medium-sized, rented house in the center of town. The second floor is rented out by my mother-in-law’s sister and her husband. At the time their youngest son (11 years old) lived with them, as did my godson and his mother who rented out one of the bedrooms. My parents-in-law’s house serves as a point of gathering

\textsuperscript{15} Some anthropologists, such as Laura McClusky (2001) and Dorothy Counts (1992) have noted the difficulty in securing funding and support to research domestic violence because of the sensitive nature of the research and the social taboos that surround talking about domestic violence.
for their many siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews, and friends. There is always activity in the house as family members and friends drop in every day and often stay for several hours at a time, bringing in the latest news and gossip.

In Lambayeque I have an insider-outsider status, as both gringa and nuera; now I live outside of Lambayeque, but I maintain social contacts with Lambayeque and also spend some time living there. Because I stand out as a gringa, I suspect most people in the center of Lambayeque know (to differing degrees) my relationship to longstanding members of the community, and I am rarely confused with tourists. When in Lambayeque, I quickly slip into the Lambayecano lifestyle, which is relaxed and values social relationships above all else. Lambayecanos are known primarily for their friendliness and generosity, a fact that is evidenced by Chiclayo’s nickname: “The Capital of Friendship.” I often joke that in Lambayeque a fireman could be on his way to a fire, but if he runs into a friend who wants to go have a few beers, the fire will just have to wait. Several hours each day in Lambayeque are spent, by both men and women, talking with friends and family, telling stories and jokes, talking about politics and complaining about the government, and gossiping.

While in Lambayeque, one research method I employed was participant-observation, much of which involved informal conversations with family and friends. Through participation in daily life in the community I was consciously sensitive to public and private gender dynamics, speech acts that involved VAW, representations of gender

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16 A common joke in Lambayeque is to justify time spent talking with friends over a few (or many) beers by telling others that “We are sitting here, solving all the world’s problems.” This is said with a twist of irony, as people in Lambayeque are fully aware that their opinions, for the most part, do not matter to local, national, or international politicians.
violence in the media, symbolic representation of VAW, and public acts of VAW. When not conducting formal interviews, I participated in “normal” day-to-day life. I would often accompany my mother-in-law to the market, take my godson to play at the park, and visit friends.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data Collection and Secondary Sources

Prior to conducting fieldwork in Lambayeque, I read a number of books, chapters, journal articles, and news articles about gender violence, violence against women, and intimate partner violence against women in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. Most of the literature specific to Peru focused on statistical analysis of IPVAW, although there is some limited ethnographic description of IPVAW in Peru available. For current statistics and reporting rates of IPVAW I relied on documents and statistics from the Peruvian government and multinational organizations such as the United Nations.

Qualitative Data Collection and Primary Sources

In addition to ethnographic observation, a primary research methodology was to conduct extended interviews with individuals who live in Lambayeque. By providing a qualitative approach to current studies that are largely quantitative, this work hopes to help to provide a more complex understanding of violence against women in Peru and Latin America. It will also help to counter what Lomborg (2007:1) has called “a disturbing lack of research” on domestic violence in Latin America. My fluency in Peruvian academic and colloquial Spanish, along with my experience living and researching in Peru, allowed me to effectively undertake research without the use of a
translator. Because of the sensitive nature of this research, the ability for me to work without local translators or research assistants was important. Additionally, by having already established personal contacts I was able to begin researching and interviewing immediately upon my arrival in Peru. I also had preparation in conceptualizing how to speak with women about VAW during a Domestic Violence Advocacy Fundamentals workshop, facilitated by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. This extremely valuable three-day workshop included many role-playing activities centered on speaking with women about their experiences with IPVAW.17

Interviews of Individuals

During the time I was in Peru I conducted and recorded ten extended interviews, most of which lasted over two hours. These interviews were later followed-up through casual conversation that included questions I had. Nine of these interviews were with individuals (eight women and one man). All nine individuals were either in or had been in what they considered to be violent relationships. I also performed one group interview of five women: three of whom are sisters, one is their niece, and one is an ex-daughter-in-law (although she and her “ex-husband” were never actually married, they do have a son together).

Of these fourteen individuals, I knew ten prior to conducting fieldwork. Some are my husband’s family members, while others are friends. Of these ten people (nine women and one man), nine live in the center of Lambayeque, and one woman lives in

17 Highlighted in this workshop, as well as in many readings on VAW and methodology, was the issue of the possibility of revictimization during interviewing. While there are a number of steps I took in an effort to prevent this, one of the main strategies I employed was to allow the women to tell their story in their own manner.
Moxe, one of the many shanty towns surrounding Lambayeque. When deciding on interview location, I always deferred to the wishes of the interviewee, trusting that they have the best understanding of what is the safest circumstance for their individual situation. I conducted three of these interviews in the home of the person that I was interviewing, in the privacy of a closed bedroom, or while no one else was home. The other seven chose to come to my in-laws’ house, where I secured a private space to interview them. I am extremely grateful to my mother-in-law who, of her own will and initiative, served as a lookout and guardian, assuring that we were not interrupted and privacy not breached during the interviews.

The four other women were introduced to me by Iris’s mother-in-law, Carmen, who is a community organizer in Las Dunas, a shanty town that skirts part of Lambayeque. We arranged for Iris to take me to Carmen’s house one afternoon. Carmen was getting ready to travel to a town in the jungle to stay with her daughter who was about to give birth to her first child. She was planning on staying there for a couple of months, and before she traveled she wanted to introduce me to some women in Las Dunas who she thought would be interested in talking to me about their experiences with IPVAW.

This was the first time I had ever really been to Las Dunas. I had driven through before, but never had any reason to visit Las Dunas. Additionally, I had been warned a number of times not to go to Las Dunas because it is dangerous. There is a lot of gang activity in most pueblos jóvenes. The gang activity is a result of high unemployment, too few educational opportunities, low expectations for personal achievement, easy access to
drugs and alcohol, and a glorification of violence and “thug life.” Many people are robbed there, especially “outsiders.”

I have noticed throughout my many stays in Peru that people are often afraid of places and barrios that they’ve never been to. It is an interesting type of “othering.” This fear is especially heightened when it comes to pueblos jóvenes. Because people who live in wealthier neighborhoods often have no reason to go to a pueblo joven, they frequently believe and exaggerate stereotypes about pueblos jóvenes that are regularly promoted by the news and gossip. Since the news in Peru is remarkably sensationalist, only the most dramatic and horrific happenings are made known to the public. As many people have no personal experience in these areas, the “newsworthy” events become a solidified image of what these places represent. I do not want to minimize or dismiss the potential danger that is real in areas that are often controlled and/or terrorized by gangs, but at the same time I can say fairly confidently that based on my experience in Peru there are no safe places. Crime happens in the wealthiest of neighborhoods of Peru, and I have yet to be somewhere where I feel safe enough to walk alone (day or night) without regularly checking over my shoulder. Houses in the best neighborhoods of Peru are burglarized, and secuestro al paso (drive-by kidnapping) is becoming increasingly popular, especially in wealthy neighborhoods, where kidnappers assume that families will be able to pay a quick and somewhat substantial ransom. Purse snatching and pick pocketing also happen everywhere. I have traveled extensively throughout Peru and there is nowhere I would consider “safe.”
As Iris, 3 of her daughters, and I rode in the moto-taxi to Carmen’s house, I did my best to memorize the way, as I knew that later I would be coming back alone. The houses in Las Dunas are noticeably smaller than most houses in the center of Lambayeque, and are almost exclusively one story. Most of the houses are made from adobe and have dirt floors. Some of the adobe homes are covered in plaster, and then painted, while others are just plain adobe bricks. Very few houses are made of brick and cement. As we rode along, I also thought about the Peace Corps volunteer I causally knew who had been raped while in Las Dunas a few years before (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven). I specifically had not told my husband that I was going to Las Dunas that day because I knew that he would worry, and that he might even try to convince me not to go.

When we arrived, around 3:00 in the afternoon, both the glass and iron door and the corrugated metal doors were wide-open. There were about six women sitting around the living room/dining room area. One woman, in the middle, sat at a sewing machine, making a bedspread for a baby’s crib. There were around six or eight small children (under age 10) running around, as well as a few babies in their mothers’ arms. I was introduced to everyone in a rapid-fire way that did not allow me to catch everyone’s name or understand all of the social and familial relationships. Most were sisters or sisters-in-law and the rest were friends. Carmen and Carmen’s mother were also there. The women, finished with the day’s tasks of cooking, cleaning, and washing, were sitting around talking and keeping an eye on the children.
Carmen, rushing around to get packed for her trip, kindly took the time to accompany me from door to door, up and down a few different streets near her house, in order to introduce me to the women that she wanted me to meet. After approaching a house, she would knock on the door, or yell through a window. When her friend/neighbor would come out, she would introduce me as her amiguita (little friend) “that is doing the project on women who are abused.” It appeared that she had already mentioned me and my research to several of the women, and seemed to suggest to them that it would be beneficial for them to talk to me. I would often then jump in the conversation and explain more about my research. I politely requested that they let me know if they would be interested in talking to me about their opinions and/or experiences, saying that I would be hanging around Las Dunas for the next several weeks. All eight of the women to whom Carmen introduced me expressed interest in talking to me, having me write down their names, addresses, and telling me the best times to try to find them in order to talk.

Concerned about conducting interviews in the women’s homes, I asked Carmen if she knew of a space in Las Dunas in which we could meet. She offered her own home, but warned that it might be difficult to find someone home while she was away. She then suggested that I ask Eloísa, one of the women she introduced me to and the owner of a bodega in the neighborhood, if I would be able to interview women inside her store. When we spoke with Eloísa, she agreed, telling me to feel free to meet with women inside her store.

During the following month, I visited Las Dunas about four days each week. Sometimes I would interview a woman, while other times I would just sit and talk with
women in the neighborhood who congregate on the shady sidewalk outside Eloísa’s store in the afternoons. My mother-in-law would accompany me to Las Dunas, in part because “there is safety in numbers” and, I think, in part because she enjoyed having a reason to get out of the house and meet and talk with new people. As I interviewed women inside Eloísa’s store, my mother-in-law would join the women outside on the sidewalk, where she would work on her crocheting, participate in the varied conversation, and often fall asleep, much to the amusement of the other women. Later, my mother-in-law began going to Luz’s (the first woman I interviewed in Las Dunas, and coincidentally, a childhood neighbor and playmate of my mother-in-law and her sisters) house to learn how to weave baskets while I would interview other women or participate in the afternoon chats. One woman, Dolores, chose to be interviewed in her own home because she no longer lives with her husband. Eloísa chose to be interviewed in her own store. Although she seemed somewhat hesitant to be interviewed (reasons for this will be discussed in chapter four), she was incredibly gracious, setting up a table and chairs in a dark corner of her bodega, and making sure the other women I was interviewing and I were not disturbed.

After explaining my research to each interviewee, I began by asking whether they would prefer to tell their story or have me ask them questions. With the exception of Eloísa and Joaquín (the only man I interviewed), all of the women took charge of the direction of the interview, preferring to simply tell their stories. As they guided the conversation, I would occasionally ask questions. As I reflected on each interview, I would also write down follow-up questions that I had, making sure to ask later.
I was surprised at how forthcoming these women were with their private, and often painful, narratives of the IPVAW that continues to profoundly affect their lives. Many of the women I interviewed revealed it was the first time they had shared their stories of abuse with anyone, and for others it was the first time they had provided a detailed narrative. They appeared to feel comfortable talking with me, despite some of them only having met me a few days before. I suspect that for the women in Las Dunas that I had just met, my “outsider” status as a gringa (i.e. I was not seen as a local gossip threat), coupled with my obvious interest in their stories and empathy for their suffering, contributed to their comfort talking with me.

Interviews of Professionals who Work with Victims of IPVAW

I conducted an additional five interviews off the record with professionals who work with victims of IPVAW and were interested in sharing their experiences and understandings of IPVAW (four worked at the CEM in Lambayeque, and one was a police officer). All five individuals preferred to speak with me without the knowledge or approval of their supervisors. Several expressed concerns that if permission was asked it could also be denied, saying that, “this way was better.” All of them expressed concerns that the comments they made (primarily criticisms of the system within which they work) could put their jobs in jeopardy. Despite these legitimate concerns, ironically, all five individuals had me interview them while they were on the clock, at their place of employment.

I also briefly interviewed one of the Catholic priests based out of the parish in Lambayeque, during parish walk-in hours. He politely and succinctly answered all the
questions I had with unsurprising answers that followed the ultra-conservative Peruvian Catholic Church’s “official party line.”

Limitations to Research

Here, I will explore a few of the limitations to the research that I consider to be the most salient.

*Interviewing Women vs. Interviewing Men*

As a woman, I found it much easier to talk to women about their experiences with IPVAW than to talk to men about their roles as perpetrators of IPVAW. As a feminist who strongly opposes IPVAW, I am aware of how my own understandings of and opinions on IPVAW could potentially influence or undermine interviews with violent men. On the few occasions that I met the violent husbands of women that I interviewed I felt physically sickened, and had no desire to interact with them – not even for the benefit of my research. The one man I did interview, Joaquín, is a close friend of mine, but even so, the interview was more uncomfortable than I had expected. Even though I was already familiar with much of his life story, I was bothered by some of the ways in which he talked about IPVAW, *machismo*, and his own life experiences. Although our friendship is one in which we can tease each other and give constructive criticism, throughout the interview, I worried that my opinion of him as a friend would change. Although we remain close, I am still troubled by some of his positions.

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18 When deciding whether to include Joaquín’s testimony, I struggled with the possibility that readers may understand Joaquín to be a “token” Lambayecano man. I interviewed Joaquín because of my close relationship with him and his family. Because I also interviewed his wife and daughter, I felt that his testimony would provide an interesting perspective and insight into family dynamics. The inclusion of his testimony in this thesis is not intended to suggest that all Lambayecano men are like Joaquín, or that Lambayecano men are a homogenous group.
**Personal Safety**

The personal safety of the women I interviewed and my own personal safety have been of key importance throughout the research process. In the field, I worried that my presence and interaction with women who are abused would contribute to their future abuse. I was also concerned that an angry, abusive partner might try to hurt me, should he find out about my research and his wife’s participation. For this reason, I always followed the lead of the women I was interviewing, as they know the behaviors of their abusers better than anyone else. I also worried that someone would break into my in-laws’ house, or rob me on the street, taking my laptop\(^{19}\) or digital recorder with sensitive interview material on them. Because of the danger of generalized street violence (discussed in detail in chapter seven), for my own safety I was careful not to linger in certain areas of town after dark (which comes relatively early in the tropics), sometimes having to turn down invitations to stay for *lonche* (the evening meal in Peru, usually consisting of bread and coffee).

**Burnout**

As noted earlier, when working with victims of violence, burnout and compassion fatigue are common emotional reactions for the researcher. During the 3.5 months I was in Lambayeque, there were days in which I simply could not face the prospect of doing another interview and hearing more stories of abuse. I would seek out distractions and tasks, like babysitting my godson, that would give me an “excuse” not to do any interviews that day, justifying it to myself as participant observation.

\(^{19}\) My laptop remained password protected at all times, and research-related materials were stored on the hard drive in a virtual vault with a different password.
These feelings intensified after returning to the US, when I was working on transcribing the recorded interviews. After listening multiple times to the women’s stories of violence I became hyper-vigilant and panicky about my own personal safety. For months I had nightmares about the things I had heard, often waking up thinking there was an intruder in my apartment. The sense of dread that I felt when thinking about returning to the data led to a spiral in which I avoided working with the data, only to feel guilty about not working with the data and “getting behind,” which then led to an even stronger desire to avoid the data. Finally, after suffering from insomnia and panic attacks, I decided to seek help from Ohio University’s counseling services. With the help of a counselor, I was able to better process the feelings I was having about my research, and found ways to better deal with the anxiety that I felt about the data I had collected and the entire research and writing process.
CHAPTER 4: GROWING UP WITH VIOLENCE – THE BEGINNINGS OF PRIVATE PATRIARCHY

This chapter will describe the ways in which children witness and experience violence throughout childhood. Physical and sexual violence against children in common in Lambayeque, and, coupled with the witnessing of IPVAW between adults, serves to help naturalize gender violence. This chapter will then demonstrate how experiences of childhood violence can serve to propel girls from their homes and into violent intimate partner relationships.

Witnessing and Responding to IPVAW as a Child

Many children in Lambayeque, both boys and girls, are witnesses to intimate partner violence against women between their parents. Because most houses in Lambayeque are small and crowded, sometimes composed of only one or two rooms, there is often very little privacy for the parents or for children. Siblings often share beds, and an effort is made for boys and girls to sleep separately when possible. It is not uncommon for a mother who does not want to sleep with her husband\textsuperscript{20} (often because of ongoing experiences with IPVAW) to sleep with her daughters as a way of protecting them and herself from unwanted sexual advances. This is something that I have been told many men resent, which sometimes results in even more violence. Because there are such close quarters in many houses, children, especially young children that are not yet

\textsuperscript{20} Throughout this thesis I will use the terms “husband” and “partner” interchangeably, as women in Lambayeque use them. Several of the women interviewed refer to their “husbands,” despite not actually being married. In Peru civil marriage ceremonies and religious marriage ceremonies are held separately, and only civil marriages are legally binding. When women in Lambayeque refer to their “husbands” or “parejas” (partners), they may or may not be married religiously and/or civilly. It should also be noted that in Spanish pareja does not have the same significance of two people who are working together towards a common goal that the word partner has in English.
attending school, can witness physical, sexual, and emotional violence between their parents.

Many mothers try to hide violence from their children out of shame and embarrassment and the fear that witnessing violence will make their children more likely to get involved in and stay in violent relationships when they are older. Camila, the twenty-four-year-old mother of a four-year-old girl, feared that her daughter would grow up seeing the violence between Camila and her husband and think that it is normal for husbands to hit wives. She planned on talking explicitly about intimate partner violence with her daughter when she was older, with the hope that her daughter would avoid getting involved in violent relationships.

I know that [witnessing violence] would be damaging for my daughter. If she lives through all of that, one day she's going to think that it is normal. And it's not normal. As a woman, we have to give ourselves the respect we deserve. Women are to love and to respect, not to humiliate or hit. Rather, they are to take care of, to help. That's something he didn't do with me. He did the opposite... I tell him sometimes, when my daughter is a little bit bigger, I'm going to talk to her. I'm going to tell her everything we have been through, and that she should not go through it. That she, as a woman, should give herself respect because no one has the right to hit her. She is free to make her own decisions... She should have a better life than us.

María, a thirty-five-year-old mother of three children (a twelve-year-old boy, a ten-year-old boy, and a two-year-old girl) had similar fears about the IPVAW that her own children were witnessing.

I hid myself from my kids, too. My son was younger then, but he looked at me. Sometimes he’d ask about his dad, and I’d tell him, “It’s ok son, he’s not going to bother me anymore.” “Why’s your face like that mom?” “No, son, I fell down.” “No,” he would say, “no, he hit you, he threw you down there.” “Oh, son, it won’t happen again,” I would say.
María’s fears for her children were based in what she had been told by others about the negative effects of children witnessing violence. She feared that her sons would resent their father, and at the same time, grow up to act in ways similar to their abusive father. She did not want to be responsible for her sons growing up to be abusive with their future partners.

Well, they say, if I tell my son he could grow up with that resentment towards his father. You understand? And over time he could even confront and fight with his father. He could complain and ask why he did these things to his mom. In other words, I didn’t want there to be a rivalry with his father. I didn’t want to make things worse… So I would say, “It’s okay son. It will be over soon,” I told him. “I fell.” “No,” he’d say, “you didn’t fall, my dad hit you. You were knocked out and my dad left and he left you there.” … And that’s why I lied to my son, because I didn’t want him to have a rivalry….

Also, if the kids see and absorb all that, one day when they have their family they might do the same thing, the same things their dad did, and I don’t want that. That’s why.

María, like all of the women I interviewed, hoped that her children would grow up to have a better life than her own. She hoped that her children would have loving relationships with healthy family dynamics. When I asked María what hopes and fears she had for her children, she explained that she finally separated from her husband with the hope that her children might be better off not witnessing violence between their mother and father. Even after her separation, though, María was more fearful than hopeful.

Well, I have more fear than hope. Fear that, because of everything that we’re living through, they might be absorbing everything [negative]. I’m afraid that they’ll be just like their father. That they’ll be just like their father, and I wouldn’t like that, that they get to that extreme. That they might go as far as hitting, mistreating, be irresponsible… I don’t want that.
The fear that witnessing violence as a child would lead to violent relationships as an adult was also brought up very “matter-of-factly” in the one group interview that I conducted:

*But why does violence against women exist?*

Olivia- There is a percentage that just continue [the violence]. Because my mother or my father was like that I have to continue to be like that. The son has to be like that. The daughter has to be like that...

Pilar- And why did they allow the abuse? Because they saw their mom being abused.

Marta- Or stepmothers...

Olivia- They see it as something normal.

Marta- They have seen all of it.

Pilar- They carry it with them.

*Aldo [my husband] told me about one of his friends…* one time Aldo, a friend, and the other friend were talking. the other friend said that he would beat the shit out of his wife. Aldo and his friend asked him how he could do that, asked him why he treats her like that. and he responded, “If my dad hit my mom, why can’t I hit my wife?”

Olivia- You see!

There was a general consensus among the women that I interviewed that children who witness violence between their parents are more likely to be involved in violent relationships as adults. All of the women that I interviewed agreed that regularly witnessing IPVAW as a child helped to normalize IPVAW in adult relationships. This was a principle worry for all of them as well.

Many mothers, though, are simply unsure about how they should talk to their children about intimate partner violence, and several of the women I interviewed asked me my opinion. I never really knew how to respond, and I would politely explain that I’m not a child psychologist and that it would be best for them to talk to one at either their child’s school (although most schools do not have a full-time child psychologist) or to get

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21 My voice will be distinguished in *italics* in the interview portions.
a referral from the Centro de Emergencia Mujer (CEM – Women’s Emergency Center) to go to the free child psychologist at the local hospital. I always felt bad that I could not provide concrete advice and guidance, knowing that most of the women would not go to a child psychologist for a variety of legitimate reasons (including accessibility, time limitations, and cost), but I truly did not know how to answer. I also worried about what type of treatment and advice they would receive should they talk with a child psychologist. Medical professionals in Peru can often be dismissive of patients’ concerns, especially when the patients are poor women. Many medical professionals in Peru also often resort to victim blaming, and I worried about how they might interact with the women. Although I participated in a four-day training workshop for individuals working with (adult) victims of domestic violence run by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) prior to conducting my fieldwork, I feel that it would be beneficial to continue attending training sessions and to gain additional experience working with victims of domestic violence before conducting future research on IPVAW in order to be more able to respond appropriately to those types of questions.

Sometimes the children of abused women in Lambayeque (especially boys, but occasionally girls) would try to intervene and would stand up to their violent father, in an attempt to protect their mother. While the mothers I interviewed valued the efforts of their children, they were also worried that their children would be physically injured or emotionally traumatized. Although María’s older son is distant and emotionally unattached, her younger son gets very angry at his father and sometimes tries to defend his mother.
My [younger] son, when my husband is here, is so angry. He says, “Oh, my dad is a liar, Mom. He says he’s going to change, but he doesn’t change.” He’s the one who is always watching his dad. “Mom, Dad is always telling me to go inside. He’s probably going to go see some woman, or going to call some other woman.” That’s why I also tell him to come inside – because he follows his dad. He’s the one that always follows his dad. One day [my husband] went to go talk with the woman… My son was going to school … and he said to me, “Mom, my dad went in that old school. Mom, I think he’s there with a woman.” “Oh, Son, I’m doing the washing,” I told him. “Mom, go! Go there.” So, I went with my friend… And there he was, talking to the woman. I was so angry. I grabbed a rock. “You swine! You tell me no, that it’s all lies, this and that. You’re spending all your money on her instead of on my kids. And it enrages me even more that you’re out wasting the money for my kids’ food! You can have all the women you want, but don’t misspend the money of my children. Give me money for my kids and then go do whatever you want!” … I reacted and I grabbed him by the hair. I pulled him by the hair, that swine! But since he’s a man, he’s stronger than me, and he threw me off of him and threw me down on the ground.

Her son witnessed the conflict. In a way María feels relieved that her sons are old enough to understand what their father is doing, although she worries that her sons will learn and later imitate his bad behavior. She feels relieved that her younger son tries to defend her, because for her it signifies that her son recognizes that his father’s behavior is unacceptable. She worries, though, about her older son who is withdrawn and is not doing well in school, and is convinced that the violence between her and her husband is to blame.

Guadalupe, a recently married woman in her early 30s, is the only example that I was given during the interviews, of a girl who defended her mother against her father. Although she now is in a healthy and non-violent relationship with her husband, as a child she witnessed the violence between her father and her mother. She is the only woman that I interviewed who witnessed IPVAW between her parents when she was a child, but did not grow up and get involved in a relationship that replicated the violence
her parents’ relationship. One of five girls (they had no brothers), Guadalupe was the only one who would try to defend her mother and her sisters against her father’s violence; her sisters would hide, crying and screaming.

I have lived it, in my own home we lived through violence. My dad would come home drunk and he would want to find food ready. If he only found some rice he would throw it. He would drag my mom by her hair. We would hide under the bed, but who would jump on his back? Me. So that he would let her go. What was the threat? “If you go and tell your aunt I will kill your mother. If you talk, I will kill your mother.” He would threaten all of us like that. That's why we would all be quiet. Until one day I got sick of it. He had Lidia in one hand and Elva in the other hand, both by the hair. He had been like that because they hadn't saved food for him. He didn't realize that I had come home. He hadn't left one sol for food. So what did I do? I grabbed a frying pan and I hit him over the head with it. Bang! So what happened? When he reacted he thought it was my mom or someone, but it was me. I was standing there with a frying pan in my hand. He told me that what I had done was a sin. That hitting was a sin. But it is also a sin to hit your children. Lidia was just a little girl. He practically traumatized her. “If you say something to your aunt,” he had bought a gas stove, “if you say something at your aunt's house, I will blow the house up with the gas.” That is what he would say to Lidia. When I got there she was crying. [she imitates her sister’s crying] “He says that he is going to blow up the gas and kill my mom.” He would threaten us. My mom got sick of it. He would come home drunk and ask for food. At six o'clock in the afternoon we had gotten home with my mom he wanted food but my mom was still cooking. So what happened? He was drunk. My mom told him to wait, that the food was not ready. She said, “Did you leave any money to buy food?” And he grabbed her by a fistful of her hair and he grabbed a knife. My sisters and I were all in the bed. We just had one room. I got up, and I gave my mom the sickle that was for cutting rice. It was hanging near the front door. I grabbed it and I gave it to her. I, myself, gave it to my mom. I said to him, “If you kill her, she will also kill you.” And I stood behind my mom, pushing her so that she would react and stab him. Because my father would go like this [she imitates her father swinging the knife]. My sisters were screaming. But instead of screaming for help, they were yelling, “My mom is going to kill my father, Guadalupe is going to kill my father.” And I don't know what happened next, but José [she calls her father by his first name] was on the ground… My mom grabbed the knife and hid it. She threw a bunch of water on him, and he calmed down.

The next day, since my mom left very early at 6 AM to go work in the market with me, he threatened the others. When I got home I found Lidia crying, “My

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22 I suspect that this is in part because Guadalupe had the support of her aunt (her father’s sister) and uncle who outwardly denounced the violence and helped to raise Guadalupe and her sisters after their mother left.
dad says that he is going to blow us up, and that the police will come and that they will take us.” Until one day Lisette [she also calls her mom by her first name] got sick of it, she grabbed her things, she packed us up, but she did not tell us where she was taking us. My mom never told us. And she took us there to San Martin, to my uncles’ house - the brothers of my mom. What did my mom find there? The opposite. Everyone took my dad's side. The sisters took my dad's side. So my mom said, in that case, I cannot come here with my daughters. Flor, she was older, she said, “Those who decide to leave, will go on their own. And those who go with my mom do not know what they will be missing.” I got my things and I went with my mom with Elva and Lidia. Flor would come here to my Aunt Olivia’s house more often. So we would go to San Martin, and we would come here, to my aunt’s house.

One night my dad showed up. He wanted my mom to come back to him. My mom said no, that he hit her. That he abused his daughters. Her sisters did not believe her, they did not believe her. Until one day there was a dance in San Martin. My mom said to me, “I will make sandwiches for you to go sell them.” “Okay mom, make them so we can take advantage of this [opportunity].” But then, José… a scandal in San Martin. He had my mom by the hair. And instead of her sisters defending her, they just sat there. So what did I do? He was another one that liked to be hit. I grabbed the big bowl of sandwiches, Bam! I hit him over the head with it. It was a big white bowl that my Aunt Olivia gave me. That's what I hit him with. That is also why he hates me. And when there was this problem in the house, the first thing he did was grab something to hit me in the head.

One begins to analyze these things, right. The treatment that José gave us was as if we were women of the street. I don't know what kind of brain he must have. He would always say, “If you live and die in the street you are a [euphemism for “whore”].” But he would pray the whole rosary backwards.23 That was the last thing I lived through. But it wasn't just from him. The abuse also came from the sisters that basically defended him. So, one can also live through abuse of words, and even a look. Even a look can have a psychological effect.

Guadalupe’s childhood experiences left her very sensitive to issues of domestic violence.

One of the things that she values most in her marriage is that her husband is a “good man” who is not violent. Her relationship with her father and sisters, though, continues to be strained at best (her mother died of cancer several years ago). While her sisters and father now pretend that everything is “fine,” Guadalupe is the outcast of her family because she refuses to simply ignore the past.

23 A local saying meaning that he lived in sin.
Most of the children of the women I interviewed never got involved when their fathers abused their mothers. Similarly, most of the women I interviewed that had witnessed their own parents violence did not get involved either. There seem to be two main explanations for the lack of intervention by children: age and fear. Sometimes the children are simply too young to defend their mothers against their fathers. The most common explanation, though, was the fear that the children had of their father, usually as a result of violence to the children by the father. Like Guadalupe’s sisters, most children who are also abused by and scared of their fathers will hide or leave the house when there is violent conflict between their parents. Luz’s nine children (now ranging in ages from 29 to 13), for example, have never gotten involved when their father abuses their mother. Several people that Luz and I both know mentioned to me that they thought it was strange that Luz’s older children do not defend her against her husband’s attacks, especially because she has sons that are “old enough” (in their 20s) to fend off their 58 year old father. I asked Luz about it one day and she explained that her children are terrified of their father because he would beat and abuse them as children. Because of that abuse, now when the violence against Luz begins, her children simply leave the house. She also said that her husband often is abusive when her children are not at home, making sure that there is no one there to defend her.

Violence Against Children

Domestic violence against children often begins at a young age for kids in Lambayeque. Husbands that beat their wives often also beat their children. Parents, both mothers and fathers, who are in violent relationships (and many who are not) often resort
to violence in dealing with their children. Harvey (1994) attributes some of this violence to the household kinship hierarchy in which husbands hit their wives and children, and women hit their children. Mothers like María and Dolores (a 37 year old, separated mother of 4 with an elementary school education), who admit to beating their children, feel ashamed about doing so. They say they do not understand why they hit their children and worry about whether or not their physical actions will contribute to making their children violent when they are older. While not excusing their behavior, the violence that these women direct at their children seems to be a response to the violence they have experienced at the hands of their partners.

María, for example, hits her sons when they act in ways that remind her of her husband or her in-laws. During the time that I was conducting my field work, one Sunday a group of us went to the beach, including my mother-in-law, Guadalupe and her husband, Ximena, Fabian (my godson), and María and her three kids. María’s two year old daughter is a real handful and she put her two boys in charge of watching her while she and my mother-in-law served lunch to everyone. The rest of us were playing in the surf with Fabian. After a few minutes María looked up and saw her boys playing in the water. Her daughter was nowhere to be seen. María began screaming and we all began searching frantically for her daughter. We found her about 100 feet down the beach playing in an inflatable baby pool with some other kids. Though relieved to have found her safe and sound, María was furious with her boys for not watching their sister. They stood side by side as she verbally berated them, telling them that they were irresponsible, just like their father. She yelled at them, telling them that what made her the most angry
is that they were acting like their father. She then smacked them both across the face in one fell swoop.

A few days later when María came to the house to wash my clothes I talked with her about what had happened. She began to cry, saying that she felt bad about hitting her boys and that she knows that she should not hit them. She said that it makes her angry and frustrated that her boys act irresponsibly because she is afraid that they will turn out like their father. I agreed that it is frustrating, but said that hitting them is not going to make them responsible. She agreed with me, saying that Pilar gives her the same advice, and that she was trying to stop hitting them. She then began to cry again, asking me if I thought that her hitting them would make them violent as adults. I said that I really did not know – that sometimes it might and sometimes it might not – but that either way it is not the best way to correct her children’s behavior. She agreed, saying that she hoped that she was not responsible for “ruining” her children.

Dolores, on the other hand, would hit her children out of her frustration with her family’s socio-economic situation, lack of resources, lack of outside support from friends or family, and her desperation with her own situation of violence. But, not only did Dolores hit her young children; she planned a murder-suicide in which she was going to poison her children and herself in order to end their suffering at the hands of her husband. During the years I have spent in Peru, I have seen numerous news reports (mainly from Lima) detailing the stories of abused women who kill their children and themselves, often by poisoning milk. In the news reports that I have seen, the desperate women are usually portrayed as selfish for killing their children, while there is little effort to uncover the
reason that she resorted to such extreme measures, and harsh judgment is rarely passed on abusive partners. Thankfully, Dolores decided at the last second not to kill her young children and herself. She worries now that her violence towards her children has caused her son’s misbehavior and problems with the law and she blames herself for her son’s delinquency.

[My son] says that I got him used to being beaten. He says that he is used to it [and now does not mind getting in fights in the street]. Because yes, I did hit them.

AND WHY WOULD YOU HIT THEM?
I don't know. If they made me mad, I would hit them hard. I would go to work, come home, and if I found anything out of place I would punish them, all of them. I don't know. Now I ask myself, why would I hit them like that? [She began to cry] It hurts me, it hurts me that my son says that to me and that I am guilty. … The only thing is, if I could go back in time, I wouldn't punish my children like I did punish them. I hit them hard [crying]…
After my mom died it was worse, I didn't have any place to take my children. I didn't have a family. I felt so alone. I felt so alone [begins crying again], then one day I was going to poison myself and my children. I put poison in the milk. They would give us milk where I used to live. And I bought some poison to poison us. I wondered, why continue living? Why should they live if they are only going to suffer like I did? Because if I go I will only make them suffer, and if I stay they will suffer with me. And so I went to buy poison. I put sugar in the milk. But it was because of my daughter, the youngest one, I thought, we're all going to die. What about her? She will stay here…
So I thought, how can I leave my daughter with [my abusive husband]? If I'm going to die we all have to die. I look at my daughters and my picture of Jesus, and as I looked at them I began to cry. I threw the milk out. I began to cry and I hugged my children. What am I going to do, my God? I thought, no, I have to get ahead with them… I threw it out. I didn't give it to them. Look how far a person can go when they are desperate. [still crying, she sighed heavily]…

Dolores hit her children when they were older, too. When her daughter was 15, Dolores hit her because she was dating a boy that Dolores suspected of cheating on her daughter.

She hit her daughter to discourage her from dating the boy. Dolores was afraid that the
boy would treat her daughter in the same way that Dolores was treated by her husband. It is something she now regrets.

I hit her very hard.

Who?

My oldest daughter.

You hit her hard?

Yes. When I found out. At first she told me, mom, he teases me… But the boy is not a good boy. I always tell them, “Tell me things, I prefer to find out from you rather than from other people, and if I find out from you I will not punish you.” Because they used to be afraid of me. I allowed her to be with the boy. My daughter was at least 15 years old. And they said that her boyfriend was running around with another girl. I got mad and said, “No, you're not going to be with that boy anymore because he is already with another girl.” But my daughter stayed with that boy, and one day I found her with him. I grabbed her and brought her home and hit her very hard. I hit her very, very hard. Her dad always was cheating on me with other women, and I thought, this boy is going to do the same thing to my daughter. If he is with my daughter she will begin to love him, and he is going to have other women like that. He will eventually hit her like her father hit me. And as I hit her, I said to her, “Do you want him to be like your father having lots of women and forgetting about you, and then he would come home and hit me?” I punished my daughter, but that was the last time I hit her because from that moment I said, no, I am not going to hit my daughter like this. My daughter said to me, “Mom, don't hit me. Don't hit me anymore.” And that was recorded in my mind. That's when I thought no, I will not hit my daughter any more…

Dolores feels guilty about having hit her children, admitting that she was unfairly taking her own frustration out on them. She desperately wishes that she could go back in time and not hit her children.

While physical punishment (hitting, slapping, etc.) seems to be somewhat more common for boys than for girls, girls and adolescent women in Lambayeque are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse in the home. Because households in Lambayeque regularly include extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.), there are often many adults in the house, in addition to the parents, who may physically punish or sexually abuse children. I was regularly told by people in Lambayeque that rape of girls
by their fathers was fairly common, and that I would be surprised to know how common it is. While I was unable to acquire statistical data on the prevalence of daughter-rape, most people that mentioned it to me knew personally of at least one case, and often more. When I would ask, trying to clarify if they were talking about fathers or stepfathers, I was told that, sadly, biological fathers in Lambayeque regularly rape and/or molest their daughters, as do step-fathers. Although many people seemed to know about specific cases, I was repeatedly told that because daughter-rape is considered such a taboo that it is carefully covered up and hidden by the families. Because of its taboo nature, it is rarely something that is reported to the police or other authorities. When I expressed surprise during a group interview when I was told that daughter-rape is common in Lambayeque, Olivia and Pilar explained to me that while some girls do report being raped by their fathers, many mothers are unwilling to file a police report against the abusive father. Unfortunately, if the mother is not willing to file a report against the father, there is nothing the school or the abused girl can do to legally punish the abuse. Often the only action that comes out of the girls’ disclosure is that they are thrown out of their homes or they are prohibited by their abusive parents from going to school.

Olivia- There are many cases here, in Lambayeque, when they [girls] are school-aged and the mother knows that the father abused the daughter. But because there is no income, she allows it. The father is with the mom and with the daughter. There are many cases.

With the daughter or with the stepdaughter?
Everyone- [In unison] With the daughter! The daughter!
Olivia- It is enough to make you faint! When Joaquín’s mom told me, she would say, OBE [Orientacion de Bienestra del Educando], OBE will make you sick. You leave there bad off, psychologically, because there is every type of case! But the worst is when the mother, because of her economic situation, accepts that the

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24 Herman and Hirschman (2005) note that father-daughter incest occurs most frequently in homes where family ideologies are based on extreme paternal dominance.
father is with the daughter and with her. I would say to her, “It must be the stepdaughter.” She would say, “No Olivia, his own daughter!” How the little girls would cry with their teachers at OBE at Sara Bullón [an all-girls school in Lambayeque]? But they would never get anywhere, because the first thing that they would ask is for the mom to go to talk with them.
Pilar- And the mom is never going to go.
Olivia- They want her to file a report, but she won't.
Pilar- Instead they leave with the mom hitting the daughter. They throw the daughter out of the house.
Olivia- She says to the daughter, “If you say anything, we will throw you out.”
Pilar- Or, “You will not go to school. We will lock you up.” They lock you up.
Olivia- They threaten you.
Pilar- They lock the girl up and then she does not have any education. Because sometimes the parents do not have an education, they are ignorant; they allow things like that to happen to their daughters. But it's easy; you get rid of that man by stabbing him with a big knife. You have him in the hospital for three months. Die there, you piece of shit! Why would I want a man like that? Or give it to him a little bit lower [in the genitals] and you have solved your problem.
Olivia- But they feel bad for him, they say, poor thing. And you stay in the same shit. Poor thing!

Interviewees stated that molestation and rape in the home are also common abuses by uncles, grandfathers, and cousins. Teachers at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels also sometimes molest or rape students, especially females (molestation/rape of female students by teachers will be discussed in chapter 6).

Because of social stigmas surrounding step-children, and remarriage in general, children living with step-parents and step-siblings have an increased risk of violence. There are more chances of molestation and rape by step-parents than by biological parents since step-parents do not face the same biological taboo and face a less severe social taboo. Molestation and rape of step-daughters is often dismissed and legitimized by comments such as, “Well, it’s not his real daughter.” Often, people commenting on cases of step-daughter molestation and rape engage in victim blaming, suggesting that the step-daughter seduced her step-father, since he is not her real father. In Lambayeque in
general, teenage girls are often seen as hyper-sexualized seductresses of older men; although most of what I have personally witnessed during my time there was that older men openly and unabashedly go after young women who may or may not be receptive to their aggressive advances. For step-daughters their “seductress” status is even more complicated by close living-quarters.

It seems that step-sons are considered to be less of a threat in this situation than step-daughters. This is largely in part to the fact that teenage boys are not seen as a sexual temptation for step-mothers in the way that teenage girls are seen as sexually tempting to step-fathers. Many women fear that their partners’ affections may be alienated by their teenage daughters’ perceived sexual attractiveness. Based on the stories I have heard, the sexual advances of step-fathers towards step-daughters is largely unsolicited and undesired, although it seems that in many cases the step-daughter is held responsible as the “seductress,” while the molester/rapist’s behavior is explained away as he is seen as a man who simply “could not resist” sexual temptation.

Within Lambayeque’s machista society, very few men view the possibility of living with and caring for another man’s children in a positive light. Many men will simply not “accept” a woman with children from a previous relationship, or they will accept the woman but force her children to live with their father – creating a situation involving step-mothers that can be equally dangerous for the children. When children do live with a parent and a step-parent, there is often a difference in treatment between one’s own biological children and one’s step-children. In Lambayeque, where economic resources are often limited, jealousy can run high between step-parents and step-children.
Both can be seen by the other as usurping economic resources that could be given to them instead. Step-daughters in Lambayeque are regularly treated like maids by their step-parents and are often sexually abused by step-fathers or step-brothers, and physically and emotionally abused by step-mothers and step-sisters.

As a child, Camila faced a number of types of physical and sexual abuse by her step-mother, step-siblings, and her grandfather. Camila’s step-mother was the most aggressively abusive towards her, both abusing Camila physically and using Camila to manipulate her father. Later, when Camila returned to live with her mother, she and her sister were both molested by their alcoholic grandfather. She also faced the emotional abuse of her accusations being dismissed by her mother and father when she would try to report the abuse.

I have suffered since I was a little girl. The problem was that my parents separated. I was only seven months old, my sister was two years old. My father separated from my mother and he went off with another woman who wasn’t worth it – she was of a bad lifestyle. He went off with her and left my mother. He wasn’t worried about whether or not we ate… When I turned five my mom took me to my dad’s house. I stayed with my father and my sister, we lived there. When we first got there my dad’s woman acted like she was a good, nice person, all of that. And we saw that and we decided to stay. She had four children two boys and two girls. One of the girls was the oldest then the two boys and then the other girl was the last one, she was 15. I was five. My sister was seven. She [the stepmother] would mistreat us; she would hit us without having any reason. For example when it was time to go to school her children would hide our shoes; she would create reasons for our father to hit us. They hid things, or we would sit down to eat and her children would knock the wind out of us, mistreating us. I was conscious of this; I would cry. I was five years old. Her oldest son was [she hesitates] kind of crazy, but he was older than 20. He pulled my shorts down. I just looked at him, scared. He came up to me, he also pulled down his pants and then he came up to me, but he didn’t do anything to me. I thanked God that he didn’t do anything to me. When I came out I looked up… I have a sister that is dead, she was the oldest, she died when she was only a few months old, and I remember that I would always look up at the heavens and I would say, “Sister, why don’t you take me with you?” I was just a little girl, a
little creature, but I would ask, “Why don't you take me with you? Why do they
do this to me?”

My dad worked, worked at night. And what would my stepmother do? When my
dad worked at night she would make us sleep with her sons, but when my dad
didn't work she would make us sleep with her daughters. They would threaten us.
What would the oldest son do? He would threaten us; for us to sit down or go to
eat we would have to ask for his permission. To go to bed we would have to ask...
for anything we did we would have to ask for his permission. And that hurt us.
Anything that we would do we would have to ask permission…

My stepmother would take a bucket of water and put me in; she would drown me
without any provocation. She would hit us with the little lead bars that are used as
fuses in the electric meter and she would leave marks. She would do whatever she
wanted with us. But after so much, my sister escaped. My sister ran away and left
me alone. She left.

_How old was she?_

She was probably about nine years old; she was older than me... I suffered, I cried
begging her to take me with her, but she didn't. And what did my stepmother do?
With a piece of metal from the stove she busted my head open... [My stepmother]
was practically the devil. She treated us like servants. My father would say,
“When I get home I want to find you already bathed.” But she would say, “You
had better not take a bath.” She wanted my dad to get home and beat us. She
would purposefully make our school uniforms dirty. Everything she did was pure
evil. It was all pure evil. She even burned me, I was eight years old and she
grabbed me and burned my stomach. A few days went by and she burned her leg.
What she did to me, she paid for it later. She was boiling a pot of tripe and the pot
fell over on her. And what did she do? She tricked my dad, saying that I was
folding my clothes and that she had told me not to fold my clothes, and because I
didn't listen to her I went like this [raises arms] and knocked over the pot on top
of her. That was a lie. She said to me, “This way your dad will buy me medicine.”
One would suppose that if he's her husband that he would have to buy her
medicine. But she would lie to him. It was all mistreatment, hitting.

Later her son and her daughter... they would make knives, when I would say,
“No, why do I have to do that?” they would grab me and they cut my back… She
had hit my sister and she left her eye green [bruised]. And she had burned me...
[My stepmother’s brother] had... it was like a big box. You could get inside and
cover up. And he would make my sister get in. And then later he would say to me,
“You don't know what I've done to your sister.” I would look at him. “Don't you
know? Ask your sister what she has done with me.” My sister was a little girl still.
I would look at him. I didn't even know what to think…

My dad didn't know anything, because she would threaten us. If we told my dad
anything she was going to kill us and then kill my dad. And she would grab me,
and they say its witchcraft, but she would take me, she would take a pair of my
dad's pants and a photo. I would see them put it on the witchcraft table; on the
table they would put candles, my dad’s things, a pair of pants. I would watch. She made me see all of that. She would always take me. Then she would make me take food to… she was with another man. One who would fix cars, she would send me into taking his lunch. She would be cheating on my dad, that’s one of the things that made me feel like this. And she would say to me, “Poor you if you tell your father anything, because I will kill you.” I would look at her. And one day my dad came home quietly, and he caught her throwing a hammer at my head. And he went after her. “Why are you touching my daughter?” “No, I haven't done anything.” And she would look at me, and just with her face she would threaten me. I wouldn't say anything. “Tell me, tell me, she's not going to do anything else to you.” I just looked at him, I wouldn't say yes or no. I wouldn't respond. As the days went by, as we grew up, everything was traumatic there. There was hurt, hitting, almost practically sexual abuse, all of that between me and my sister. Later, I escaped. I came here, with my mother…

And did your mom know [about the abuse]?
Yes, she knew, it's just that… [she gets off on another subject, never explaining what her mom knew about the abuse]

Let me ask a question, why do you think that woman wanted you to come back and live with them so badly?
She wanted to dominate my father. My father always looked out for us, she wanted to dominate him. She knew that my sister and I were not with my dad, my dad might get back together with my mom. She was afraid of that. But she didn’t want us because she loved us; she mistreated us, she treated us horribly. She wanted to use you to manipulate your dad.
Yes, that's what she wanted. So then, we were living with my mom… And I have my grandfather, my mom's dad, he was alive and he drank a lot, drank, and drank, and drank. And he would drink cañazo, yonque,25 that's what he drank. And when he would come home drunk we would be afraid, and we would crawl under the bed, we would hide ourselves. Hidden there, I would cry, and say oh, he's drunk, he's going to hit us. When he would fall asleep, we would come out. And he would say that he wanted food, and all that. It happened every day. My mom would have her stuffed animals, or perfumes, and he would take them [to sell to buy alcohol]. I would look at my mom and tell her, “No, don't say anything to him; wait for him to go to sleep.” We'd come out from under the bed after he was already asleep, when he was really asleep.

Then one day when we were sitting outside, in the street in front of the door, we’re there sitting, and right then he showed up, my grandfather. With me he would always laugh, joke around, I was eight years old, and then one day he told me, “Make my bed.” He was drunk. And I went to make his bed, and then my grandfather came in and pushed me hard, and he began to fondle me. He said to me, “Hijita ven (come here little daughter), just for a minute.” I was eight years

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25 Cañaazo and yonque are two regional names for home made rum from sugarcane. It is known for having high alcohol content and for getting people very drunk. To “drink cañaazo” often implies that you like to get drunk.
old, I didn't know about those things. I just looked at him. And with I don't know what force I pushed him, and I ran out. My sister asked me, “What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you?” And I began to tell her. I told my mom, but my mom didn't believe me. She didn't believe me. She asked me why I would invent stories like that, she told me not to lie. I cried and cried.

Right around that time, [my mother’s boyfriend] came back. My mom slept with him out in the living room, and I slept in the bedroom with my sister. We were sleeping. My mom was sleeping in the living room. My grandfather came out of his room and he came into our room. He climbed up on top of the bed and began kissing my sister. I began to scream, and my mom got up and saw him and yelled, “Dad!” And he went running out. My mom went and she talked to her oldest brother; she told him. And since my uncle took care of my grandfather, he would sit with him, he'd give him food, everything, he went and asked my grandfather about it. My grandfather said no, that he didn't remember… that he didn't remember. But I was afraid of him. There were so many things, there was always something, everything that happened from the time I was five until the time I was eight is stuck in my head. I never had therapy with a psychologist.

Camila’s childhood was traumatic, but was somewhat balanced by periods of time that she spent living with her godparents: the years that she considers to be the happiest and most peaceful in her life. She blames her biological parents and her step-parents for the current situation she is in: impoverished and with an abusive husband who she does not love. She now thinks longingly of the times when she lived with her godparents, the only ones who cared for her properly, and wonders how her life might have been different had she grown up with them instead of her own parents.

I also had the opportunity to interview Eloísa, Camila’s biological mother. Her interview was my last, and was one of the shortest. She was the least forthcoming of all of the women I interviewed. I have no doubt that she supported the goals of my research – she allowed me to conduct interviews inside her bodega and she recruited women from the neighborhood for me to interview. I interviewed Camila before Eloísa, and was surprised at how openly Camila was talking about Eloísa’s shortcomings as a mother.
Although Eloísa was not present during most of Camila’s interview, I am sure that she heard bits and pieces of our conversation as she bustled in and out of her store attending to customers. Eloísa hesitated and seemed somewhat uncomfortable when I asked about Camila’s childhood, and I was very careful to not come across as passing judgment on her as we talked. It seemed as though she was afraid of what Camila may have told me and my resulting opinion of her. Nevertheless, Eloísa shared her side of the story with me. Eloísa faced the same issues that many mothers in Lambayeque face. When her husband left her she had no way of taking care of her children on her own and working enough to maintain the family economy (See chapter 5 for discussion on the economics of violence against women). For this reason, her daughters spent time living with their father and with their godparents. When Eloísa found out about the abuse from the stepmother, she did her best to support her daughters on her own, since their father refused to give Eloísa child support.

The stepmother is the one that took them out of school because their father was sick, she took them out. Days came and went. Camila had been burned from here to here by her step-mother.

*She had burned her?*

Yes she had burned her… I brought my daughters back. So they came back to live with me.

*Was it hard for you to let your daughters live with someone else?*

Of course. But I would rather them live with my family a thousand times before they lived with a stranger. Later, Milagros, everything her stepmother told her about her father, she believed it. They left marks on my daughters back. On her eye, too. She was just a little girl. I went and filed a report. And then I told him, “Fine, if you don't want to pay for your daughters, just leave them with me.” I asked him, “You took them out of school for this? This is the last time,” I told him. “They are your daughters, not your slaves.” He said this and that, “They are bad.” “All kids misbehave,” I told him. “They are children, they are not bad; they are your daughters.”

And every time it was time for them to go to school, the woman would come here to get everything for the list of supplies. They were still living with their father.
She would come for Milagros’s list and for Camila’s list of supplies. And then she would come so that I would pay their registration, for Milagros and Camila. I would give it to her. I would buy their uniforms. And what did she do? She would give the new uniforms to her daughters and she would give my daughters old uniforms. According to their dad, he didn’t know anything. He said he gave her money. According to him, he just now found out about everything. He asks why they didn’t tell him then. “Dad,” they say, “you didn’t believe us. You didn’t believe us because you believed her more.” Their dad just sits there thinking.

As we talked it was clear that Eloísa felt that she had made mistakes as a mother, but it was also clear that the cards were stacked against her from her own childhood on. She made difficult decisions that many mothers in Lambayeque are forced to make on a regular basis.

Step-sons, in addition to being less of a sexually-alienating threat than step-daughters, also appear to be more desirable than step daughters because they have more access to wage labor and are thus more able to contribute capital to the family economy. Violence at home combined with the economic needs of large, impoverished families often forces children (mainly boys) out of the home to work to contribute to the household income; whereas, girls are often relegated to domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for siblings. It seems that step-daughters are sent to work outside the home more frequently than biological daughters, since they are seen as less valuable and therefore less worthy of “protection” by the (step) parents. In some cases, like Dolores’s, children are told they are allowed to stay with their parent and step-parent under the condition that they work to pay for their own expenses (food, clothing, etc.), and in-turn forfeit their education.

Dolores and her siblings were abandoned by their mother who was escaping their abusive father. When her father became increasingly abusive towards her, Dolores ran
away, looking for her mother. Every time she found her mother, she was rejected. Her mother told her repeatedly that she was unwanted by her step-father, because she would be an economic burden. Once her step-father finally accepted her in the house, under the condition that she would drop out of school and work to support herself economically, he sexually abused her. When she told her mom what had happened, her mother did not believe her. She was afraid to tell her mother after it happened again, because she was afraid that her mother would make her leave and go back to her abusive father. Dolores was right to be afraid. When her step-father made repeated sexual advances, Dolores’s mother told her that she had to leave. Later, her mother took her back in, but the sexual abuse continued. At age 15, Dolores, after the death of her abusive father, in a desperate attempt to escape her step-father’s sexual abuse, got involved with a man in an informal marriage.

Why did your mother separate from your father?
My mom said that she left him because my father hit her. That's what she would say. I have an older sister, she said it wasn't true, but I remember it. Because when my mom told me, I was still a little girl, I remember seeing my mom once with a black eye. My mom said that she separated from him because my father hit her. My father was older than her. And that's when my mom left him, she left. She left me and my sister [Dolores begins to cry]. She left. I looked for my mom. I said to my older sister, “Take me to look for my mom.” I wanted to be with my mom. I loved my mom so much. I loved my mom. I didn't love my father very much. My dad hit us, he hit us very hard. He told us that we would end up like our mom. He would hit us [she gestures, imitating her father hitting her and her sister] and say, “You had to be just like your mom. “

And then your mom got involved with your stepdad?
Yes, my mom went with him. She left the house to go with him. I remember, I was young, I was sick when my mom left. I saw her getting out her suitcases. I asked her, “Mommy, where are you going?” “No daughter, I'm just going to drop off these suitcases.” “But you are packing your clothes.” “No daughter, I will be right back.” I was sick. They took all the animals from the house. That's when I saw my stepfather, but I didn't know that he was with my mom. They left. Maybe my dad knew. My dad sold things in the market. When he got home he asked me,
“Where's your mom?” “She's not here,” I said, “she went out with her suitcases.” “Your mom left us,” my dad said to me, “she left us, and she left you there sick.” When I cried, looking for my mom, my dad said to me, “It would've been better for her to leave you to die. You cry for your mother after she abandoned you.”

_What did he say to you? That it would've been better for you to die?_

He said, “You should die for your mother.” All because I cried for my mother [Dolores begins to cry].

**Of course you cried!**

One time we ran into her in the monte (the countryside where the agricultural fields are), I begged her, “Mom I want to stay with you.” “No daughter, go on, go on.” She sent me away. She preferred to be with my stepfather. I ran away from home.

**How old were you?**

I ran away when I was eight, I think. I ran away, I remembered the road my sister had taken me down. I went to look for my mom. I found her near the river that we had to cross. I jumped in the river. How did I get out of the river? The river was huge. I had to cross it to get to the monte. I remember that there were a lot of plants, I grabbed onto them. I got out and found my mom. My mom said, “Why have you come?” I said, “I want to live with you. I want to live with you, mom.” She said, “No daughter, you have to go live with your father.” My stepfather didn't want me to live with them. When everyone found out that my mom was here with my stepfather, my dad sold the house and moved to Chiclayo. She said, “No, you have to go back to your dad.” I cried.

_**And she didn't tell you why you had to go back to your father?**_

No.

**She just said that you had to go?**

Yes. Well, the only thing that she said was that my stepfather didn't want us to live there, because I was the daughter of my father. But my other sister and my brother were not children of my father. They could live with him.

**They were the children of your stepfather?**

Yes, they were the children of my stepfather. So I came back. My dad punished me. So I lived there for a while... My dad hit us... My dad hit me and my little sister. He hit us very hard, with a wire. He would hit me hard, hard, he made me bleed [Dolores begins to cry]. I was so afraid of his poundings [she used the word *maja* from the verb “majar” which means “to pound, crush, mash; to bruise” related to *majador* “pestle”]. When I would see that he was angry I would leave the house. I would go running to my mom. That's how I grew up. I would go to my mom and say, “I don't want to live with my father anymore. I want to live with you.” “Okay, but you have to pay for your own food here because José, my stepfather's name was José, because otherwise José won't accept.” “Yes mom, I will work, I will pay for my food.” And I stayed.

My stepfather accepted that I stay. [Dolores continues telling me her story, now almost whispering] And one night I felt a beard. I was sleeping. He had gone to
kiss me. I woke up, I screamed out of fear, “Mom! Mom!” My mom came in, “What? What?” “Mommy, I don't know, a beard!” He said, “No, it was a rat, a rat! A rat went running there!” My stepfather was there in the room that I slept in. I thought, maybe it was a rat? A rat? I slept with my sister. It happened once, and then again, but it was my stepfather. He wanted to grab me and touch me. I told my mom. I said, “Mom, José grabbed me and kissed me, he touched me.” “How can that be?” My mom didn't believe me. No. I put up with that because I wanted to live with my mom. I thought, I won't insist with my mom because she will say for me to leave. And it happened again. I told my mom. She said to me, “No daughter, you have to leave. You are big now and you have to leave.”

*How old were you?*

I was 14. She said, “It would be better for you to leave.” So I went back… My father said “No, if you are going to be like that, you will go with your brother to Lima.” My brother came and he said, “No, no, no, *hija,* 26 we are going to Lima.” “Okay, let's go.” I went with my brother; I lived there until I was 15. When I was 15 years old my mom came to take me away from my brother. She said no, she asked why I was with my brother, because my brother was a man and he could disrespect me. And we went back to Lambayeque. My mom brought me back. When she brought me back it was another martyrdom here. She took me back to live with my stepfather. And those things continued, and I said no. That's when my dad died, and that's when I left with the father of my children.

*When you came back from Lima you went to live with your mom?*

Yes.

*And the same things happened again with your stepfather?*

Yes. Yes. He would touch me, stare at me, he would tell me I had nice legs. We would have to work and give him money for our food. On Saturdays, we would work from Monday to Saturday. Sunday was our only day off, and I would have to wash my siblings’ clothes. I was practically the servant in the house. It bothered me because I was big already, I realized what was going on. I said, no, if it's going to be like this, it would be better for me to go off with this guy. So I went with the father of my children. It was my way of getting out of there.

The Inability to Resist Childhood Violence and the Link with IPVAW as an Adult

Resisting violence is, in some ways, more difficult for children than for adults.

Children’s physical resistance and retaliatory violence are first limited by physical size and strength relative to their adult abuser. Secondly, acceptable cultural behaviors dictate that children are to “respect” their parents, which in practice often translates into not

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26 *Hija* (daughter) or *hijita* (little daughter) are terms of affection that anyone can use for a woman or girl that they care about.
questioning one’s parents and simply doing what one is told. Inequality in the parent-child power relationship significantly limits children’s physical and cultural ability to resist violence. For boys, resistance through violence is more culturally accepted and sanctioned. Boys are expected to be physically tough (an indicator of one’s manliness), and fighting is considered normal (although not necessarily desired) behavior for boys and men. Girls and women, however, are expected to be submissive, and acts of violence are not deemed socially appropriate for them. When girls and women resist violence by using physical force or retaliatory violence they are violating cultural-behavioral norms. Grant (1993:167) recognizes female violence as “a major gender crime” because it violates “the rule that women must be passive, nurturing, and caring.” When these norms are broken during interactions with their parents, a sign of being a disrespectful and “bad” child, there is a double-violation of age-specific roles and gender roles. For this reason many of the women I interviewed expressed feeling guilty about using physical force and retaliation or strong words to protect themselves or to retaliate against abusive parents and step-parents. Acting in ways not considered appropriate for women and disrespecting their parents violated their culturally-prescribed sense of self as women/girls and good children.

The women whom I interviewed that had been abused emotionally, physically, and sexually as girls were also very aware that their abusers were individuals whose role it was to protect them, rather than harm them. This contradiction in prescribed role and actual behavior was upsetting to the women who felt that their parents and step-parents did not fulfill their parental duties and care-giving roles. Seemingly abandoned by the
everyday, this experience reflects what Das (2007) describes as a loss of context. Their parents’ shortcomings in care and protection were particularly detrimental to the women’s wellbeing as children and in the construction of their adult intimate partner relationships. As girls, when they would confide in their parents (often their mothers) to denounce the abuse that they were experiencing, as Camila and Dolores did, their claims would often be dismissed or ignored. Once their mothers witnessed the sexually abusive situations, they were forced to acknowledge the abuse. In both cases, however, the girls were sent away from their homes, giving them the sense that they were being punished for being abused. Camila was sent back to her abusive step-mother and Dolores back to her abusive father and step-father.

Girls in Lambayeque are often blamed for their abuse, being accused of not behaving properly (physical or emotional violence) or of seducing their abuser (sexual violence). Especially with sexual violence from a father or step-father to a daughter or step-daughter, resentment and jealousy seem to be common reactions of mothers who worry that their daughters will “steal” their husbands. Rather than trying to protect their daughters from molestation and rape, many women blame their daughters for the abuse they are experiencing. Parental inaction is for many girls an early lesson on silencing and hiding violence. When the girls realize that denouncing abuse only leads to victim-blaming, rejection, and displacement, they are “taught” that it is better to simply keep quiet and that seemingly normal opportunities for help and protection are, in reality, not options. This pattern of silencing often carries over into their adult lives when they realize that the institutions designed to protect victims of violence do not fulfill their role
effectively (see chapter eight for discussion of institutional silencing and victim blaming).

Many of the women that I interviewed felt that had their parents been better at parenting, their own lives would have turned out very differently. María provides a clear example of this sentiment, blaming her father for abandoning her, and blaming her mother for sending her away to live with her grandmother because her mother’s new husband did not want María.

My dad is in Mexico. That’s what my sister told me. He’s my father, but he’s a dog. He didn’t raise me. May God forgive me [for speaking badly of my father], he is a womanizer. He left me and my sister for another woman. He went off with another woman. I told him then, “I’m not going to call you dad.” I grew up with a step-mother. But my step-mother told lies to my father, and then he hit us hard.

My mom also had another relationship. He loved my mom, but he didn’t want us. He didn’t want my mom to have us there, with her. So, what did my mom do? She divided us up. She sent my sister to her mom, and she sent me to my dad’s mom. That’s why my sister and I feel some resentment towards our mom. A [good] mother never would do that! If a woman falls in love with a man… for example, if I fall in love with a man, if he loves me, then he has to love me with my kids. Right? He has to love me with my kids. If not, it’s over. Because, there are things that happen. There are step-fathers that rape their step-children. For that reason I resent my mother a little bit.

*Does your mom know about your problems w/ your husband?*

No. Well, now she does. She gives me advice. She cries and says it’s all her fault. She says that if she had been with me (when I was little) everything would have been different. She says it’s her fault because she couldn’t give us advice, help with our education, she says. I tell her, “Mom, if you had been with us, it all would have been different. I wouldn’t have been this type of person. I would have been something in life. I would have had something in life with which I could defend myself. It would have given me the opportunity to become something in life,” I tell her… Everything that my dad did, I’m now paying for it. My dad was a dog, a womanizer. He left me and my sister for another woman, and now look how I’m paying for it. It’s his fault. Everything must get paid for… I grew up alone; I was raised without a father, without a mother. I worked. My grandmother took me to Lima… I worked because our father didn’t support us. If I would have had the support of my father, I would be a different person. I would have been a professional, but since I grew up with my grandmother [she trailed off]…
For María, there is a cause-effect relationship between her own abusive childhood and the rejection by her parents and her current situation as an impoverished mother who is separated from her abusive and neglectful husband.

Marriage as an Escape from Abusive Childhood Homes

In Peru, like in most of Latin America, it is typical for children to live with their parents into adulthood, only leaving their parents’ home once they themselves are married. In Lambayeque, due to generalized poverty, adult children that are married often continue to live at home with their partner, either at the husband’s or wife’s parents’ house. It is especially common for young couples to live with their parents, as they do not have the economic stability to own or rent a space of their own. In Lambayeque, when a girl leaves her parents’ home it is usually because she is pregnant and/or she has been married off (formally or informally).

The socially “appropriate” way for a woman to leave her home is through a properly arranged marriage – ideally before the couple is sexually active, but especially before the woman becomes pregnant. While the parents do not usually decide who their daughter will marry (although that was often the case in Lambayeque a mere 80 or so years ago), they should approve of the man that the daughter chooses to marry. After a period of courtship, during which the couple dates (but should never spend the night together), the man is to arrange a formal pedida de mano (asking of her hand) with both families present. At the pedida the two families come together and the man declares his desire to marry the woman. He speaks in front of the woman’s family and his own family, explaining his intentions and making promises to care for her and treat her well.
After he speaks both the father of the woman and the father of the man have the opportunity to speak, either accepting the proposal or rejecting it. There also may be a negotiation of terms of the marriage between the fathers and the to-be-husband, including where the couple will live once married.

In some families the *pedida* is considered an antiquated formality that is only acted out in keeping with tradition. In other families the *pedida* is considered to be an important tradition that demonstrates respect for the bride-to-be (who, as a woman, needs to be protected) and deferral to the authority of the parents, even by adult children. If either family feels that the couple is not a worthy match they may reject the *pedida*, which, depending on how rebellious the couple is, may or may not actually end their relationship/ prevent their marriage. If the *pedida* is accepted by both families then the couple is to wed. At that time, both the man and the woman are presented with engagement rings by their *padrinos de aros* (godparents of the rings) and the marriage arrangements begin.

In some families a more informal version of the *pedida* occurs when a young man would like to begin courting a young woman and seeks the approval of the woman’s parents. As is seen in Camila’s case, her mother’s approval of his courtship did not reflect Camila’s own wishes, but ultimately did end in Camila marrying the man her mother approved of.

My daughter’s father would come and see me as a friend. We would talk, we would sit with his friends and talk. And then one day he declared me his girlfriend. “Oh, no, no, no! So that I can be tricked again [by a man who treats me badly]? No,” I told him. “Everything is over. I don't want to know anything about anyone.” “Please,” he said, “I'm not going to make you suffer. I am really in love with you.” “No,” I told him. “Please, I will talk with your mom.” “No, no, no,
no!” Bien macho he came to talk with my mom. I told my mom, “Tell him no, tell him no, tell him no!” And he said, “Ma’am, I’m in love with your daughter, I know everything your daughter has been through. I want you to consider me.” “Okay,” she told him. [Camila gasped, replicating her initial shock as she told me the story] I looked at her with such rage. I didn't like him. I wasn't attracted to him. I didn't feel comfortable with him, nothing. “Come on, hija, give him a chance.” I said, “My God, what choice do I have?” [deferring to her mother’s decision] We began to go out. After a week I thought, I can't do this anymore. I don't want to be with him. How I cried.

Additionally, there are two main “non-ideal” categories into which women fall when leaving their home: escapadas (escapees) and robadas y violadas (stolen and raped). Escapadas are young women who try to escape or run-away from their own home. Sometimes young women “escape” because they are in love with their boyfriend but their parents disapprove. When young women in love get pregnant out of wedlock they are usually thrown out of their own house as a sign of disapproval, and are forced to go to live with a relative, friend, or with the baby’s father’s parents. This was the case for Lucía who got pregnant at 16 when she was seeing Joaquín. Because I had the opportunity to interview both Lucía and Joaquín, I was able to hear two sides of the same story.

LUCÍA’S VERSION OF HER STORY:
Why did you go to live with Joaquín?
Because when I got pregnant, the reality was that my [widowed] mom was a burden in her parents’ house. Having me would have been another responsibility. My mom said to me, “They are going to be complaining to me all the time [about the pregnancy].” We thought they would feel bad [i.e. be unhappy about it]. And my father-in-law, Joaquín’s dad, is a very good person. He has defects, but his virtues are what matter. He is a person that helped me a lot. He accepted me from the first moment that I was pregnant, he helped us. But, at the same time, I think it was detrimental for Joaquín. He never really let him learn what it is like to have a child, to know what it means to work, to know what it means to maintain a family.

27 Very macho, meaning in a very manly and brave manner.
JOAQUÍN’S VERSION OF LUCÍA’S STORY:
Lucía got pregnant and I brought her to my house. Because they threw her out, the
classic move: you have to leave. My dad said, “Okay, I will take her like another
daughter.” That’s what my dad said, so I took her to my house. My mom didn't
speak to me for half a year. We lived under the same roof.
She didn’t talk to you?
She didn't talk to me.
And with Lucía?
I don’t know, even less I think. When the baby was born things changed.
It's always like that, isn't it? Everyone is very angry until the little baby is born
and then everyone is happy.
Everything changes. Of course. The thing is, you can't just welcome them with
open arms either… When I told [my dad], “Dad, Lucía is pregnant, the only thing
he said to me was, “Now you've really fucked up. You really fucked up.” Nothing
else. “Yes, you need to go talk to her mom.” “Okay, just tell me when.”
Your dad had to go talk to Lucía’s mom?
Yes
Why?
To arrive at an agreement.
Explain to me how that works, because really, this whole system of the parents
needing to talk, I don’t understand it very well.
It's because we were not adults. Here it is typical that if you get pregnant without
being married, the guy’s parents have to go talk with the girl's parents to
formalize it and to come to an agreement about how things are going to be. If
there's going to be a marriage, if there's not going to be a marriage, what is the
situation going to be. To see if she's going to stay in his house, or if she is going
to go to the guy’s house. It's a formality that happens here… So I took her to my
house. She cried every day. It was traumatic for her.

18 years later, Alejandra, the daughter that forced Lucía out of her own home and into
Joaquín’s, got pregnant out of wedlock with her boyfriend. Alejandra was successful in
hiding her pregnancy from her parents for around six months. Lucía found out first, and
when she and Alejandra told Joaquín, he was very angry and he left the house to calm
down. Lucía and Alejandra decided that it would be best for Alejandra to leave the house
for a while and go live with her aunt (Joaquín’s sister) in Chiclayo until the baby was
born. Alejandra was embarrassed, ashamed, and afraid of her father’s disapproving
reaction. Lucía, who is less reactionary and who had experienced the same thing when
she was pregnant with Alejandra, was looking out for what she saw as best for her daughter – keeping her away from her angry father. Once the baby was born, Alejandra moved back home with Lucía and Joaquín.

JOAQUÍN’S VERSION OF ALEJANDRA’S STORY:
In my case, I threw my daughter out. I didn't throw her out directly, I told Lucía, “She's leaving with whatever she has on.” First, because they were disloyal to me. I found out on the street and they denied it. [He had heard a rumor on the street that Alejandra was pregnant, but when he confronted her, Alejandra denied it] I had even had an argument with Lucía, and she said to me, “No, why are you going to believe people in the street? Why are you going to listen to people? You should trust your daughter.” I got myself into a huge argument. So much that my daughter cried and denied it. But if you do the math, she was already about five months pregnant, maybe six months. And she denied it. The best thing would have been for her and her mother to tell me. That would've been the best, and not for me to find out on the street. It was a complete deception. That is why I decided that. Let her leave with whatever she is wearing. And I threw her out.
Did she actually leave?
She left. But she wasn't stupid, because she went to my sister’s house. Because in the house of the father of the baby, they are poor. They're not going to give her the comforts that she's used to having within our economy. So, that's how things were. She came back here to my house when she gave birth. It would’ve been one thing for me to find out after a month or two, but she was seven months pregnant. During which she did not have one doctor’s appointment, they put my daughter’s health at risk! They're both irresponsible. All of those things made my position very hard.

Joaquín felt that if he did not throw Alejandra out of the house, allowing her to stay would suggest that he approved of the pregnancy and that she hid it from her parents. He felt that it was necessary to show his disapproval of the pregnancy and the way Alejandra was handling the situation. The reason that Alejandra hid her pregnancy, though, was in part because she was afraid of her father’s reaction.

As was shown in Joaquín and Lucía’s story, when an unmarried woman gets pregnant, the man and his parents must then go arreglar (make arrangements) with the
woman’s parents. The women who participated in the group interview explained the social rules to me:

*It seems like all of the women that are not married then get pregnant, do not want to tell their families. They hide it. When people find out they end up crying. They are afraid.*

Pilar- That is because they hide it.

*Why do they hide it?*

Olivia- Because they're afraid, or embarrassed, they don't know how their parents will react.

Pilar - They think that the father or mother will react badly.

*So then, if so many women are afraid of telling, one could suppose that it is because of something, right? Supposedly it's because of something within society that they have heard about from their friends, or the neighbors, or whoever. But what are they afraid of?*

Pilar - Exactly. They are afraid that they will get hit. Or that they will get thrown out of their house.

*They are afraid of their parents?*

Everyone- Yes, of course!

Pilar - They are afraid that the parents will say that she has to go off with that man, and where will they go? If she goes to a friend’s house, her friend's mom will say, “What? Now I have to take care of two little packages?” That's the case if she goes to a friend’s. It's also very rare to go to a sister's house. They will help you for a little bit, up until you give birth. But there is a point where you can't help anymore. That's when they began to nag and nit-pick, “Yes, because it's your fault, this and that, you are pregnant.” Because if it is not the father, it is the mother. Sometimes at home it's the mom who bothers you, sometimes it's the father, or a brother who nags and nags you. Until you finally end up fighting with them. And because they don't have any problem [i.e. they aren’t the pregnant one], they end up throwing out the girl. “Go off with the father of your child. What? Don't you have money to eat? Doesn't he have a job? What does that boy do?” So then she asked him for money, and he hits her. That is the way it is. At least here, that is the way it is...

*But it seems like they are almost always thrown out, then the baby is born, then they come back.*

Guadalupe- It's because they fall in love with the baby.

Pilar - But sometimes it doesn't happen. Sometimes they won't take you back…

Olivia - Before, they would give you over. Here, the custom was to leave your house. To leave before you were married to the man. They would drop the girl off at a house that was trustworthy. They would leave the girl there. And then they would make arrangements for marriage. Once arrangements were made…

*What do you mean they would drop the girl off?*
Pilar - They would go and leave the girl at another house. The man would not be responsible for the girl.
Olivia - He would not be responsible for her, because they were not married yet. They would prepare her for matrimony.
Pilar - But she would be at a house other than her family's house.
Olivia - It might be in her godparents’ house. They would leave her there. And that is where she would learn to cook, she would learn to wash, she would learn how to make things. Since they were her godparents…
Pilar - She would serve her godparents.
Olivia - She would learn and at the same time she would serve them. She would not go to her parents’ house, nor would she go to her parents-in-law's house. And, for example, if my godparents were not here, they would have to look for another house. They would look for a family member, a friend that wanted to have her there. They would prepare her for marriage. They would prepare her for her new responsibilities of getting married, taking care of children, and running the household. Like they say here, you have to know how to run your household. She would learn how to cook so that she could attend to her husband. She would wash, iron. There were many things. In the countryside it is worse. They would drop the girl off at the godparents’ house until the parents were not angry anymore, and until the parents-in-law were not angry anymore.

Angry about what?
Olivia - That he had been with the girl [sexually]. That he had gotten her pregnant. But, those who planned to get married, it was different. There was the pedida, everything he had to do. But for the girls who were pregnant, they would drop the girl off, rather than letting her go home where she would be abused. The family would hit her. It was better to drop her off in another house. And from there she would get married, she would leave that house when she was married.

In cases of pregnancy out of wedlock, the pregnant young women are almost always thrown out of their homes. The men who get them pregnant, though, are not punished for their “bad behavior,” except for the possible disapproval of the woman’s parents and the potential resulting conflict (insults, etc.) when “arrangements” are being made between the two families.

Other times, as was the case with some of the women I interviewed, such as Dolores, the women simply got involved with the first man they met as a way of trying to escape the violence of their own homes. By going off with a man and spending the night
with him, regardless of whether or not they are sexually active, the woman is assumed to no longer be a virgin and arrangements must be made between the families. In the case of *robadas y violadas* young women may be taken (essentially kidnapped) by a man who is interested in them. *Robadas* are usually raped by the man that steals them, essentially “sealing the deal” by taking the woman’s virginity. Dolores shared with me her story as a “want-to-be” *escapada* at age 15. Her abusive father had just died, and she was unwanted by her mother and her step-father, who repeatedly abused her sexually. When Dolores got scared and tried to go back home, she became a *robada* and a *violada*. As is highlighted in Dolores’s case, because there is such a high social value placed on virginity, rape is a tool that many men use to gain “possession” of a woman who is then considered “his.” A woman that is no longer a virgin is considered “damaged” or “used” and is therefore no longer desirable as a wife.

My dad died. My dad lived in Chiclayo. I lived here in Lambayeque with my mom and my stepfather. They came to tell me that my father had died. I went to the burial, and that's where I met him, at the burial. And I went out with him. I went out with him to escape from my house because I lived with my [abusive] stepfather [she begins to cry]. My mom didn't want me to live with her either. So I said, it would be better for me to get engaged. … I was practically the servant in the house. So I went with the father of my children. It was my way of getting out of there. I thought it was going to be nice, that we were born to live well together. I asked him, “Do you work?” “Yes,” he told me. But in the end he didn't even like working in the countryside like I worked. I went with him only to end up suffering even more. Because look at everything I went through with him … I went out with him and I did not know that we were going to have sex. I thought that we were going to kiss. When he was ready to be with me, he said, “Dina, this is normal.” So we were together. After two or three days we were together [sexually] but I didn't want to.

After three days it was time for the *arreglo* (arrangement), because we escaped. I escaped. I went quietly without telling my parents and he did not come to make arrangements. So he took me to his dad’s house because his mom and dad were also separated. He took me to his dad’s house and that's where we were. His sister came to his dad’s house. She said, “Julio, they are looking for you, the girl's mom
is looking for you. She's going to cause problems for you because you took her daughter.” The girl seemed very aggressive, very angry. It surprised me that she was that way, angry. I thought, these people are like that, they have problems. I thought, maybe it would be better for me to go. I should go to my house, and I will tell my mom that I was at my aunt’s house. I have an aunt in Chiclayo. I thought, yes, I will trick my mother. Even if she hits me, let my mom hit me. And I escaped from him over a bridge; there was a bridge near where he lived. To get to the highway you had to cross the bridge. I was crossing the bridge, crawling because I was afraid to cross it standing up.

He found me crossing the bridge. He said, “Dina, are you leaving?” “Yes,” I said. “Why are you leaving?” “Because my mom is going to cause problems for you. Your sister is angry. I'm afraid of the problems.” “No Dolores,” he said to me. He said, “It hurts me that you are leaving.” He served in the Navy. He said, “I left the Navy for you, I gave up everything for you, and you are going to leave me like this? No Dolores,” he said. “Let's go.” “Okay, let's go.” And that day he made me his woman [he had sex with her]. It wasn't because I wanted to.

Did he physically force you?
Yes.

Or was he convincing you with words?
No, no. He forced me. And when he was with me like that, it was the first time, we had sex for the first time. He said, “Now if you want to go, go on.” That's what he said to me. It hurt me.

Desgraciado! [He is disgraceful!]
That's what he said to me, “Now if you want to, go on; leave me. But no man will ever want you.” That's what he said to me. “No one will ever want you because you are no longer a señorita [meaning: a virgin].”

Desgraciado!
I just looked at him. And my mom always told us that you had to save your virginity for the man that was going to be with you your whole life. So she had instilled that in me. And even after we had had our children, he would say to me, “If one day you separate from me, and you have another man, he will never love you. He's going to treat you badly. Because when a woman has already belonged to a man, no other man will want her.” That's what he would say to me. “It's not like when a woman is a virgin, then they want you.” He would say, “Never be with another man because he would treat you badly. Who is going to believe you?” he would ask me. “Who is going to want you with four children? You are now ugly. You are very ugly. Look at yourself, you are very ugly. Who would want you?” And I felt bad.

Like in Dolores’s case, rape often leads to forced marriage (formal or informal). Parents often accuse their raped daughters of wanting to have sex or of allowing themselves to be raped (victim blaming). Because the woman is seen as wanting or allowing a man to have
sex with her, and because she is no longer a virgin and thus less desirable to other men, her parents arrange for her to be her rapist’s wife.

This same social pattern sealed the fates of Eloísa and Luz. Eloísa was also 15 when she got involved with the man who became her husband. She was robada and violada and thus forced into marriage by a man that was 20 years older than her. Despite her father’s disapproval and refusal to participate in making “arrangements,” Eloísa’s mother and uncle arranged for her to marry the man who had stolen and raped her.

I got married when I was 15, I had my daughter when I was 16 [this is the sister that Camila mentioned that died when she was only a few months old]. There were many problems, my marriage lasted seven years…

Was he older than you?
Yes, he was 20 years older than me…

And how did your relationship begin?
The idea wasn’t for me to stay with him. The problem was that he was my boyfriend, but we could only see each other from a distance because I worked in the house of my father's brother. I worked there, and he lived nearby. One day, I washed my clothes and I went to my other uncle’s house, my father's other brother, to hang the clothes up, and right then he walked by. My uncles lived near the house of the man that was my husband. Right then I was walking by with my cousin and the woman that became my mother-in-law called me over. My cousin said, “Go on, they're going to think you're stuck-up.” So I went over and I said hello to the woman. That's when she began telling me that her son was in love with me, that he wanted to ask for my hand, to get married, this and that… So we were talking with the woman there, and in the living room and dining room of her house they were drinking. My mother-in-law had finished talking to me, and my sister-in-law called me, and before you knew it, it was nighttime… Later he showed up, the man that became the father of my daughters, and he came to say hello. We sat down to eat, and when I realized what was happening there was no one else there. When I wanted to go back to my uncle’s house I couldn't; he had locked the door. It wasn't a situation where two people love each other and that's why they went off together. My case wasn't that way. He locked me in. I said to him, “Let me go, my uncle is going to come home and he is going to hit me. I have to leave.” “No, you are not leaving…”
The next day it got light and my uncles were looking for me. My dad lived in Chiclayo. My uncles were there looking for me. They went to tell my family that I had left the house. My sister-in-law went to talk to my mom, she said that her brother me había robado (had stolen me).
What happened that first night?
We were together [meaning: we had sex]. But not in the way that a couple that loves each other should be. No, it wasn't for love, like other couples. It wasn't for love. He made me his. So my mother-in-law, my father-in-law, several of his aunts and uncles went to my house to make the arrangements. But my dad did not want to. He said no because those people drank too much. They drank too much; they drank too much and my father did not want to make an agreement. The people that made the agreement were my mom and my mom's oldest brother. We got married, we got married, and I had my first daughter who died.

I got married in a civil ceremony, not Catholic. Because I was not an adult the priest did not want to marry us. So I just got married in a civil ceremony…

And when your first husband stole you, how did your parents react? How did your family react?
My dad was not happy. He did not want to know anything about it.
But he didn't try to recover you either?
No, he didn't want anything to do with it.
He was just mad?
Yes.
But he didn't try to take you back home?
To my home, no. He didn't want anything to do with it.
Why?
Because he said the people were drunks. That they liked to fight.
So why didn't he take you back?
He didn't want to; he didn't want to be part of the arrangement. He left that to my mom and my uncle, her older brother. They arranged for me to get married. My dad didn't want to. My father didn't go to the wedding. My father was never in agreement with that relationship.28

Because Eloísa had spent the night with the man who later became her husband, even though she was robada (stolen) against her will, she was obligated by her family and his family to marry him. She was no longer a virgin, and since he had “made her his” her only “choice” was to marry him.

Luz’s story is somewhat more complicated. She did not have a particularly violent childhood like many of the other women I interviewed. I chose to include her story here, though, because of her startlingly violent entry into marriage. At 19 years old she became

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28 Eloísa’s father is the one who later, as Camila explained, liked to drink cañazo and who molested Camila and her sister (his granddaughters).
pregnant with her boyfriend. Her grandmother suspected her pregnancy, which Luz was hiding, and was angry because she had rejected Luz’s boyfriend as an acceptable partner because of his family’s economic situation. In what should have led to her status as an *escapada*, Luz’s pregnancy was overshadowed when her now husband entered her home and raped her. Luz believed that she had failed twice as a woman because she had become pregnant from her boyfriend out of wedlock and because she had sex with another man, even though the second man raped her. Her story exemplifies the extremely high value placed on women’s virginity and women’s monogamy in Lambayeque, as well as how women are often blamed for being raped.

So how is it then that you got together with [your husband]?
That's another very sad story. It's the worst of my life. [There is a long silence as Luz is holding back her tears.] When I was in high school, I was going to get married. I was going to get married to the father of my oldest daughter. I never went out, and my aunt invited me to her birthday party. I went there. And my aunts really liked the father of my daughter. He never got drunk. And he had gone to ask for my hand in marriage (*la pedida de mano*), but my grandmother didn’t accept. She didn't accept because they were a very humble family. And since my family had something [meaning: had some money], they didn't value him. But I loved him; I liked him because he was a hard worker. He would make adobe bricks and sell them. I would think: he's a hard worker, and I'm a hard worker, we can get ahead together. We started going out when I was 13 [and continued together] until I was 19. And when I was about to turn 19 we did it [had sex]. He was about to go to do military service. My aunt invited us over and she got us tipsy, and what happened, happened. Only once and I got pregnant. I was scared, I was already two months pregnant.
And at that time, I would go out into the countryside and work. And I met the family of the father of my [other] children, all of them. But I only knew his family, I didn't know him. I studied at night. I worked half a day, then in the afternoon I would study sewing from two in the afternoon until five, then I would grab something to eat and then I would go to high school because I studied at night. And every day my boyfriend, the father of my daughter, and I would send each other letters. And in one of those letters I wrote to him that I was pregnant. And he wrote back, “But it was just one time” [that we had sex]. But after just one time I was pregnant. And my grandma said to me, “No stupid, surely you're

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29 Military service used to be obligatory for men in Peru.
sick. I'm going to take you to the doctor because I can't have you here like this.” She already imagined that I was pregnant with the guy who had asked for my hand, because he was the only one that they saw that would come around. She said, “He's the only boy I see around, surely it's him but tomorrow I'm going to take you to the doctor.”

And you didn't say anything?
I didn't say anything, but I had morning sickness, all the symptoms. And because of that I had to lie down on the floor, so that they would not hear me. How was I going to be working in fields like that?
And before I had the baby, he had sent me a letter saying, “Wait for me because I'm going on leave.” They had given him permission to go on leave. And he said to me, “If you have any problems, go to my mom’s house.” But his family didn't like me either. They didn't like me because they knew my grandma had money, and they didn't. And they would say to him, “How are you going to go to a family like that, that has more than us when you don't have anything? We don't even have one piece of furniture.” They just had adobe bricks stacked up like benches. But even so, I loved him. So he said to me, “I'm going for you, Luz.” I would send a letter and at the same time pick up a letter. He said to me, “Leave the door open because I'm going to arrive at night to see you.”
I arrived home from high school at 11 o'clock at night and I left the door open. And this man [her now husband] surely was following me, and he went and he pulled the little string [to unlock the door], because I had left the little string outside. And he pulled the little string, and he came in. And when he came in, I thought it was the father of my daughter. And when I felt that the only thing he did was grab me here [Luz covered her mouth with her hand], and he covered my eyes, I panicked. I said, “Who is it? Because they weren't the hands of the father of my daughter. They were very soft hands. The hands of my boyfriend, on the other hand, were big and full of calluses, because he worked. This other one had very soft small hands. I barely got to see him; he had a beard and a mustache with long hair. I thought, what? And he was smoking. I didn't know what it was. And with that which he was smoking, he blew my face; he blew all the smoke in my face. After that I don't remember anything. I only remember that I saw lots of butterflies of different colors. And then I didn't see anything else. I fainted. When I woke up, I wasn't the way I had been. I had been working on my sewing, because I came at night and I had to work on my projects for the next day. I found myself thrown over a bench, lying down and with my pants down. And I asked, “Why? What happened here? Why am I like this? That wasn't the father of my daughter.”
The next day the same thing happened. This time I was more prepared. He had come in again. He knew how, he knew how it was, the one who is now the father of my children. He came back in, he enjoyed me [raped me] again. The third time [he raped me], he didn't do it while smoking. He was sober. He came in the house.

Both menstruation and pregnancy are commonly referred to as sicknesses in Peru, especially among older people.
What was he smoking, drugs?
Based on what I told my teachers, it seems like it was drugs. Because they said, “A cigarette doesn't make you drunk. A cigarette doesn't make you see those things. No, that was drugs,” they told me. But I didn't know. Before, no one knew about those things.

If someone isn’t a part of that world, often they don’t know.
Exactly. I didn't know. The thing was, my grandma had told me that she was taking me to the doctor. And I thought to myself, No, how am I going to trick the doctor? They're going to know that I was cheating on the father of my daughter. He hadn't arrived yet.

Did you feel that you were cheating on him?
I felt dirty because of what happened. I was there scared and in shock, and I thought, what can I do? The only option I have is to continue with him [the man who raped her]. Stay with him.

With that man?
With that man, the one who would come into my house, to use me. For that reason I told him, I had to ask him who he was. I had to ask him, “What's your name?” “My last name is XXXXX.” When he told me his name I said, “What, are you the brother of the girls that I work with?” And he said yes. He was very quiet, he almost didn't talk. “Yes,” he said, “is there anything wrong with that?” He had the gall to ask me that. I said, “Look, if you are in love with me you should've told me that you were in love, because the truth is I was going to get married. What's more, I'm pregnant.” When I told him that I was pregnant he didn't even ask who the baby’s father was. He didn't ask anything. He didn't care about anything. He just said, “Okay, let’s go.”

And at that same moment that he said, “Let's go,” I went, thinking that he was a good man. You see, I was really scared that the father of my daughter would say that I was cheating on him with this other man, and that when he got back that I would just go back to him. So when I thought about that, I thought, no, I never cheated on my boyfriend. I never had another partner. He was the only one. Now, if this one abused me, I would have to stay with him. And my grandmother told me, when you fail once [meaning: having sex outside of marriage and getting pregnant], and then fail again, you can't go back. And that followed me. In other words, I thought that going back to the father of my daughter was a big sin.

As if it was your fault.
Yes. I blamed myself. That's what happened to me. And when all of this was over, I didn't know if he [her rapist and now husband] worked, if he drank, I didn't know anything about their lives. I went straight to Motupe.

So, at the time, where were you living?
I lived on Huascar St. (in Lambayeque), and I went to Motupe. I thought, well, maybe I'll be better off there, without anyone that I know. How will my life turn out? And it was the biggest failure in my entire life to have stayed with him. Because every day, it was every day that he hit me. There wasn't one day that he
didn't. He would lock me in the house. He would leave me there locked in. That's what happened to me, and that's my situation.
When the father of my daughter came back, after almost a year, when my baby was going to be born – he knew when the baby was going to be born – right then he got his discharge papers. When he got discharged he went to see me at the hospital, because he kept track of when the baby was going to be born. He kept track, to see if it was his baby or not. So he went to see me, and I had already left the hospital. If he had found me there, maybe I would've been able to explain to him what happened, but who knows if he would've believed me. Or I don't know if he would've just taken the baby away from me. Because, when I ran into him later, he said, “If you would've told me what happened, I would have received you, because it wasn't your fault. Now, if you had been with me, and at the same time with someone else, but with what happened to you, no Luz, you made a mistake. Come back with me,” he would say to me, “Come back with me.” But I didn't want to. He wanted to take me back even after I had three babies. I had his daughter and I had two boys. My sons weren’t recognized by their father. He said that he would recognize them [as his own and sign as the father on their birth certificates]. He said, “Look, we already have our daughter and two boys, I will recognize them, I'll give them my last name.” He offered so many times, he would say, “Luz, let's go.” But I didn't accept.

Why didn't you accept?
I didn't accept because I was really afraid of the other man because he hit me. I would think, he's going to kill me. Maybe he'll find me, and he'll kill me. No, no, no, I can't say yes. And so I stayed up until now… But there are always memories. We were in love for seven years. But it's over now. [She thinks about the possibility of getting together again with her first boyfriend.] But what do I want with another husband? If I separate from this one, no more. Why have another husband?

Luz’s rape forced her into an abusive marriage, despite the fact that she was already pregnant out of wedlock with another man’s child. Because she had “failed” twice at being a “good woman,” Luz felt that she had no other options. Her shame at being pregnant and having sex with more than one man caused her to hide both her pregnancy and rape from her family. Even though the second man raped her, she feared that others would accuse her of cheating on her boyfriend. But even after her family found out, they made no attempt to separate her from her rapist. Luz was forced into a marriage with an abusive man whom she did not love because he had raped her. Her status as an escapada
after she got pregnant with her boyfriend was overshadowed by her status as a *robada* and a *violada* after she was raped by the man who then became her husband.

This regular and normalized exposure to IPVAW throughout childhood in Lambayeque contributes to the naturalization of VAW within wider society and often helps to legitimize and normalize violence within one’s own relationship as an adult. Almost all of the women that I interviewed who are or were in violent intimate partner relationships also had experienced significant violence as a child and as a teenager. Their previous experiences with violence informed and continues to inform their understanding of their violent adult relationships and contributes to their semi-acceptance of normalized violence. As the next chapter will show, both childhood experiences and adult observations often lead women in violent intimate partner relationships to believe that “that’s how marriage is.”
CHAPTER 5: “MAN WAS MADE TO BEAT WOMEN; MAN WAS MADE TO CRUSH WOMEN’S THROATS” – IPVAW IN ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter will describe the dynamics of psychological, physical, and sexual violence in adult intimate partner relationships. It will show that emotional violence is used to regulate women’s behavior, while physical and sexual violence are used as punishments for women’s perceived “bad” behavior. This chapter will also explore some of the ways in which women respond to and resist violence in their intimate partner relationships, and how these responses to violence can challenge women’s own self-concepts. Finally, this chapter will demonstrate how the familial response to IPVAW serves to contribute to the silencing of intimate partner violence.

Gendered Power Dynamics and the Normalization of IPVAW

In Lambayeque, women are usually younger than the men in intimate partner relationships. It is not uncommon for the man to be several, sometimes ten or more, years older than the woman, as is the case with several of the women I interviewed. For example, one of Camila’s boyfriends was 8 years older than her; Luz’s husband is 10 years older than her; and Eloísa’s ex-husband is 20 years older than her. The difference in age has an effect on the power differential between the man and the woman when entering a relationship. The man is culturally viewed as dominant not only because he is a man in a machista society, but because his age puts him in a position of power with authority over the younger woman. These dimensions of power and authority are particularly strong when women are using the relationship to escape from violent situations at home. Knowing that the woman is unable or unwilling to return to her
parents’ home or ask her parents for support/ help, the man is able to exert additional control over her.

The power and control that the man exerts over the woman in a violent relationship in Lambayeque, however, is often seen as a normal enactment of gender relations. For women who witnessed their parents’ violent relationships and experienced violence against women as girls and teenagers, violence in relationships can become naturalized. As was mentioned in chapter four during the group interview, I was once told of an acquaintance of mine who used to beat his wife. When some of his male friends, who disagreed with his violent actions, challenged his behavior, he responded that he had seen his father beat his mother and that if violence was “good enough” for his parents then it was good enough for him and his wife. Not only had intimate partner violence against women become natural and normal for him, he refused to change his own behavior based on the justification of respecting and replicating his parents’ way of life. I have been told, though, that since he became involved in the Evangelical Church he has stopped beating his wife (see chapter eight for discussion on the role of religion in IPVAW). This way of thinking, however, is common in Lambayeque.

While the women I interviewed were cognizant of the fact that violence is not good, healthy, or desirable in a relationship, they struggled with deciding if violence is an inevitable and normal part of being in a relationship with a man. Many of them expressed that they knew that a non-violent relationship is theoretically possible, but few of them seemed to think that it was a viable option in their own lives. During her interview, Camila articulated her surprise and disbelief at her godfather’s treatment of her
godmother. His “outstanding” qualities included not cheating on his wife and not beating his wife or children. Camila’s reaction highlights the perceived scarcity of “good men.”

In Lambayque, as is common in wider Peruvian and Latin American culture, there is a strong sense of fatalism (Behar 1993). Many of the women that I interviewed felt that they were doomed to be victims of violence for a number of reasons, including that they were abused as children and did not have the support of their families; they had children, making them no longer desirable to any “decent” man; and that they were poor, uneducated women who would have to depend on men for economic support. Because of their own histories and experiences with violence, many of the women I interviewed had begun to believe that violence was a natural and normal part of intimate partner relationships for them.

Emotional Violence in Intimate Partner Relationships: Using Insults and Threats to Regulate Behavior

Intimate partner relationships in Lambayeque regularly include emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence. Emotional violence seems to be the most prevalent, and in intimate partner relationships often occurs in terms of insults and threats. All of the women that I interviewed who were in violent relationships had been called names and had been insulted by their partner. Insults and name calling ranged from the relatively benign fea (ugly) or vieja (old) to the inflammatory puta (whore), with the worst insult (for a man or a woman) being la concha de tu madre (your mother’s cunt). With the figure of the mother held as sacred (one’s own mother is seen as sacred, but one’s wife/partner who is also a mother is not necessarily held in the same regard), a vulgar
reference to her sexual organs is the ultimate insult. However, this insult is not only a personal attack, but an attack on women and women’s sexuality in general. When a man insults a woman saying *la concha de tu madre*, not only is he understood to be attacking her, but he is seen by women as attacking her mother and women in general. When a woman uses the same phrase to insult a man, the attack is understood in terms of only insulting the man’s mother’s honor – a grave offense, but not something that attacks the man’s (or men’s) own gender or sexuality.

To avoid certain types of verbal attacks, women in Lambayeque are regularly faced with the challenge of trying to balance taking care of themselves physically to look “nice” and not fixing themselves up so much that they will be accused of looking for another man. If they spend too much time on their appearance they are accused of (desired) infidelity, as was the case in Luz’s relationship with her husband. When Luz used long skirts her husband told her that she looked like an ugly old woman. When she began using shorter (knee-length) skirts, he began doubting her intentions and her fidelity.

I didn’t use to dress like this either. I used to use long skirts. And what did my husband say to me? That I looked like an old woman. He said that I was ugly, this and that. And when he saw that I began to change, that’s when his jealousy began because I started fixing myself up more. And he said, “Why is she changing overnight?”

If women do not look “good enough” their husbands berate them, telling them that they are ugly, old, and *acabada* (washed up). Telling a woman that she is *acabada* is often a way of blaming the woman for the husband’s infidelity: she did not do enough to keep his interest. Telling a woman she is *acabada* is also a manipulation tactic that abusive men
use to coerce women into staying in violent relationships. When women threaten to leave their abusive partners they are often told that they are *acabada* and that no other man will ever want them. This verbal abuse has a heavy toll on women’s self-esteem, and several of the women I interviewed told me that over time they began to believe their partners’ insults.

As was shown in chapter four, after Dolores’s husband raped her the first time, he told her that no one else would ever want her because she was no longer a virgin. He used this manipulation tactic to discourage Dolores from leaving him, which she had intended to do before he raped her. Her husband continued his verbal assaults throughout the years they spent together, and his mother would also verbally abuse Dolores and blame her for the problems in their relationship. Dolores’s self-esteem was severely diminished by their comments. Even as I interviewed her, Dolores wondered if the things that her husband and his mother told her were true.

I felt bad. I thought, yes, I am ugly. I'm not like before. He would say, “Look at yourself; look at how you are!” I would keep quiet. And that's how it happened the first time… His mom told me that it was my fault that he looked for other women because I [didn’t want to have sex] with him. I would think, maybe that's true.

*No! [I interjected angrily]*

No, right? [Hesitantly]

The insults not only changed the ways in which the women behaved, but also how they perceived themselves as women and wives. Luz felt that her husband’s insults killed her spirit, resulting in her departure from the evangelical church that she attended. She also began to act in ways that she considers “disrespectful” to her husband and to herself.

When he was drunk, yes, he would yell and insult me... A lot of times he would insult my mother. I didn't like him insulting my mother.
No one likes it.

I told him, “You don't know my mother and have no right to insult her.” God gave me love, but [my husband] rejected it. When he rejected it by insulting my mother and things like that, it was like an arrow went through my heart. It was like he killed me spiritually. I felt an arrow through my heart, and since then I've been like this, because there wasn't any love. It was the opposite, I began to be disrespectful. And then I left the church congregation. I thought, what good is it for me to go and kneel there, I come back tranquil with peace and he is always abusive, ready to hit me, to yell at me, to insult me, drunk…

María’s husband has also been effective in lowering her self-esteem through insults.

Rather than being honest with her about the nature of their relationship, Marí’s husband insults her. Marí has tried to explain to her husband that she would prefer him to simply be honest and forthcoming with her, to no avail.

The truth is that I do love him. But what can I do? What am I doing trying to force him to be with me if he doesn’t love me anymore? Like I tell him, “I want to hear it directly from you. I want you to say to me, you know what, Marí, I don’t love you. But don’t lower my self-esteem saying I’m a bitc, that I’m old. Don’t say those things. I want you to say, you know what, I don’t love you anymore. I’m in love with such and such woman. … If you’re in love with another woman, OK. … Although I’ll suffer for half a year, all wounds eventually scab over,” I tell him. “I’ll get over it. What’s it matter? What more can I do? My children will give me strength,” I tell him. “The only thing that will give me strength and valor are my children,” I tell him.

Because Marí derives her inner strength from her children, the fact that Marí’s in-laws taught her sons to insult her is very upsetting to her. As Marí’s testimony shows, verbal abuse is particularly hurtful for women when abusive men or the men’s abusive families teach the children to treat and talk to their mothers in similar ways.

Oh, [my oldest son] also would repeat things from his [paternal] grandmother. When he was younger, 9 years old, they taught him to call me a *perra*. One day, my son said to me, I had punished him, “Shut up, *perra!*” “What?” I said. And bam, I hit him in the mouth. “Since when do you call me a *perra*?,” I asked him, “you bad-mannered kid.” “No, my grandma…” “Who taught you to call me that,

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31 *Perra*, literally “bitch,” implies not only that the woman sleeps around and cheats on her partner, but that the woman is worthless, like a street dog.
you rude little kid, knowing that your mother sacrifices herself for you, and
you’re going to come and call me a *perra*?” “No, Mom,” he said, “no, Mom.”
“Right now I’m going to punish you!” “Mom, my grandma told me, my uncle told
me that you’re a *perra*.” “Ah, that’s what a *perra* is? OK. I don’t want you two to
go over there anymore. What kind of things are they putting in your heads so that
you will go against me? Do you see me as a *perra*, son? What’s a *perra* to you?
You don’t know what a *perra* is.” “No, my uncle told me to call you that.” So I
punished my son. I didn’t let him go out in the street or watch television. Shut up,
*perra*!

In addition to hurtful insults, threats of violence are also very common and serve
to modify and regulate women’s behavior, as well as to keep women from leaving violent
relationships. Abusive partners often threaten physical violence as punishment for certain
behaviors, such as not fulfilling household duties, not preventing/ solving problems with
the children, not attending to the husband’s every whim, spending time in public spaces
where there are other men (i.e. not in the home), having extended family or visitors in the
home (where they may witness or hear about violence), telling friends/ family/
government officials about violence, etc.

One of the first things Luz told me about her relationship was that her husband
doesn’t let her go out and he doesn’t let her family come to visit her (except for her
children). Because her family is now poor and her ties with them are not very strong, due
in part to her not being allowed to visit them, she has little family support and no
opportunity for sanctuary from the violence. During the time I was conducting my field
work, Luz invited my mother-in-law and me into her home on several occasions. Luz
taught my mother-in-law how to weave baskets and my mother-in-law paid her for her
time. I didn’t generally spend a lot of time in Luz’s home because the weaving classes
would take place when I was down the street at Eloísa’s store interviewing other women.
There were a few times, however, when I would sit on the cement blocks that formed a bench at one end of her living room and talk with Luz and her children. Sometimes I would take my godson along and he would play with her kids on the dirt floor. Luz’s children at first sat shyly, stealing glances at us and weaving in silence, but once I offered to help braid the handles for the baskets they quickly opened up. Luz’s husband, however, always passed by without so much as a hello.

While in her home, Luz and I never talked about her husband or the abuse. It was clearly a taboo topic that would have put her at risk had he overheard us. I always wondered if our simple presence in her home would provoke him, but I always followed her lead and we visited several times without incident. However, Luz was “punished” by her husband towards the end of my time researching in Lambayeque. I had told Luz that I would try to connect her with a friend of mine that owns a popular restaurant in Lambayeque that has a small gift shop where she might be able to sell her baskets. I set up a meeting for her with the restaurant owner for a Saturday morning at 10:00. Luz ran a little bit late because she was finishing up the lids for the last of the baskets – she had been up all night working. She was nervous about meeting with the restaurant owner. I coached her on how to negotiate with him and convinced her to raise her prices, though only slightly, since she sells her work at such a low cost. She felt like she was cheating the restaurant owner but I convinced her that it is better to ask for a higher price knowing she may have to negotiate down. When we met with the restaurant owner Luz was shocked that he did not try to haggle with her. He bought 90 soles (around $33 US at the time) worth of baskets, which is sometimes more than what she is able to sell in a week.
After making the sale she came back to our house and chatted with my mother-in-law and my husband’s aunt who knew Luz from elementary school. At the house she sold a few more baskets, bringing the day’s total earnings to over 100 soles. She was excited and relieved to have sold so many baskets in less than an hour. After about 20 minutes at the house, Luz said she needed to get going because she wanted to get to the market to buy food for her children. I walked her to the corner and she told me that she was embarrassed because her children had not eaten breakfast that morning or dinner the night before because she did not have any money for food. She said that she would buy enough food for her children for the whole week.

A couple of days later when I went to visit her at her home to pick up some baskets that I had bought from her to take back to the US as gifts and to say goodbye to her and her children, she had her arm in a homemade sling. I asked her what had happened and she told me that she had fallen down and hurt her arm, but as she told me she gestured towards the interior of the house, where her husband was, and then gestured that he had twisted her arm. She was very upset because she was behind on the baskets that I had ordered from her. I told her not to worry, reminding her that her health was more important than the baskets.

A few minutes later, after her husband left the house, she quietly told me what had happened. The day she had sold all the baskets to the restaurant she had also gone to the market. When she arrived home her husband wanted to have sex with her, but she resisted. He grabbed her arm and twisted it, hard, accusing her of being with another man and asking her why she had been out of the house for so long. Despite her trying to
explain that she had sold her baskets and then gone to the market, he continued insulting her. Just as he was about to force her onto the bed to rape her, her children came home and he instead threw her down on the floor and walked away.

When I saw her, her wrist was swollen. She was doing her best to weave, but because it was painful her children were helping her to do most of the weaving. She was worried about what she was going to do for money, especially because the school year was starting and two of her children would not be at home to help her make baskets. I left Lambayeque two days later, not having the chance to see Luz again. Two weeks after my return to the US my mother-in-law told me that Pilar had seen Luz at the market and that her arm was still in a sling. I wonder and worry that my presence may have been part of the instigation of that episode of Luz’s husband’s violence. I always followed Luz’s lead in terms of when it was or was not okay for me to be in her house. On two occasions she had one of her older sons come to the door to apologize that she could not receive us, explaining, embarrassed, that his father had come home drunk and that his mom was “taking care” of him.

By backing up threats with physical violence when these “rules” are violated, violent partners, like Luz’s husband, set a precedent of violence that then serves to dictate the woman’s future behavior choices. It is also for this reason that many women do not leave their violent relationships. Because they have experienced so much violence already, and threats of violence have been consistently carried out when promised, many women are afraid to leave. They are told that if they leave the man will find her and hurt and/or kill her, her children, and, if she has one, her new partner. Even if the man has one
or more women on the side and has no apparent romantic or loving interest in the woman, he does not want her to leave him and, most of all, he does not want her to be with another man. This fear is legitimate for these women as cross-cultural research shows that the most dangerous time for victims of IPVAW is when they are trying to leave a relationship.32

Luz is acutely aware of the potential for escalated violence if she were to leave her husband. Her husband repeatedly threatened to kill her if she ever filed a report against him and/or left him. Luz’s fear of her violent husband began to control her life, and she hid rather than go to the police – a decision that she made in the interest of self-preservation. He had convinced her that his threats were serious enough that she thought it was safest for her to not seek outside help.

I couldn’t go file a report against him because of how he threatened me. Maybe he’d find me in the street one day and he’d kill me. I didn’t file a report. And I let time pass and pass. I gave up on myself. I started becoming, how can I tell you, like a crazy person who didn’t want to know anything about anything. When I saw him I would shake. I would shake like this [imitates shaking]. My legs would fold up. Or I would run to my room and shut the door and I would sit in the corner like this [rocking back and forth].

Camila’s husband would similarly use terror tactics to prevent her from leaving him. He would inflict injuries upon himself in order for her to pity him. He would also kill the animals that he gave her as presents, an act that is often a predecessor to or in conjunction with violence in intimate partner relationships. Her fear of his actions, combined with her religious beliefs (as a devout Catholic she believes that she should be married to her daughter’s father) and her desire to help him convinced her to stay.

32 Lucía’s sister was killed by her violent husband when she tried to leave him. This will be discussed more in-depth in chapter eight.
He, too, had lived through psychological problems. His dad beat his mother. He lived through all of that. He was really jealous. He did not want me to have any friends. I couldn't talk to anyone. I couldn't wear a short skirt, nothing. I said, “What? You are wrong.” I couldn't even talk to him because he would get so angry.

On Valentine's Day he gave me a little bunny. A real one, a rabbit, with a little ribbon. Every day he was bringing me a rabbit… And they grew to be big rabbits, I fed them. But I thought, no, he was so jealous.

One time I went to an Internet café with a girlfriend who had gone with a guy. He was looking for me. He asked me, “What are you doing with him?” “What? You know what, I can't be with a person like you.” I was wearing a top with a strap here and a strap here [she pointed at her shoulders], he ripped them. Oh my God. People were yelling, “Leave her alone! Leave her alone!” But he wouldn't let go of me. How embarrassing for me, with my shirt ripped! Oh my God, my God!

“No,” I told him “No, I don't want to ever see you again.” “Please, forgive me.” He began punching himself, and he has a little broken vein in his nose, he began bleeding. He knows I panic at the sight of blood, that's why he did it. I got so nervous. I told him, “Okay, as long as I didn't have to see blood, okay.

I thought I would give him another chance; I would stay with him until he got over this.

It couldn't go on like that. This is something psychological. It is because he is traumatized, and he passes that on to me. Time went by. Even the rabbits, he would strangle them, he would leave them there strangled. I thought, my God. My mom said to me, “You're with a psychopath.” My God, I thought, how can I help him?

Physical Violence in Intimate Partner Relationships

Physical violence is often used in violent relationships to reinforce emotional violence. It presents itself in a variety of forms ranging from a slap or a shove to lethal forms of violence. In Lambayeque, physical violence in intimate partner relationships is usually from men to women. There are cases, however, of violence from women to men.

Socially this is seen as less acceptable as violence against women, and the societal assumption seems to be that the women who abuse their male partners are “crazy” and manipulative, and are simply looking to push the man so far that he will retaliate with violence so that she can then go to the police and file a report against him. Because
violence from women to men is less common in Lambayeque, I did not have the opportunity to gather in-depth information about it.

While I was conducting my fieldwork a man I know was having problems with his wife and she physically attacked him on more than one occasion. Despite the urging of his sisters and myself, he declined to go to the Centro de Emergencia Mujer (Women’s Emergency Center) for help. The name of the institution is misleading since they deal with all types of family violence. One of the women that works at the CEM told me that she thinks Centro de Emergencia Familiar, or Family Emergency Center, would be a more appropriate name, and I agree with her that CEM is a misleading name. Because of its titular focus on women, I was told that men feel embarrassed about going to ask for help. For that reason this particular man chose not to go for help. He thought that an institution designed to help women would discriminate against him as a man (for more discussion about the CEM in Lambayeque see chapter eight). I suspect that he was also embarrassed to admit publically that his wife was physically abusing him. His sister said that he responded to his wife’s physical violence with physical violence, and I asked his sister to ask him if he would be willing to allow me to interview him about his relationship, but he declined. He did not want everyone to find out that his wife hits him.

Physical violence against women is much more common in Lambayeque and is used as intimidation and punishment. Women who do not do as they are told by their husbands are often beaten into submission. There are several factors that influence IPVAW that were routinely mentioned during the interviews I conducted. The two
factors that were most often mentioned are the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs, and the “restlessness” of men (i.e. cheating).

In Lambayeque, alcohol and drug use and abuse influence physical violence in intimate partner relationships. The women I interviewed agreed that when men are drunk or on drugs they are usually (increasingly) violent. As Olivia explained, part of the issue of drug and alcohol consumption is an economic issue. When there are no employment opportunities men have more time to consume alcohol or drugs. This causes increased conflict in the home, however, because the already limited household resources are being used on non-essential items. When women complain to their husbands about the misuse of resources, violence escalates. In Olivia’s opinion,

The problem is that there is no work. They have nowhere to get money for food. They have children. There are many problems. Children can be a problem, especially if they are not of an age where they can work. They have to be able to contribute something to the house. But if there are many, and the dad does not have a job, it is a ticking time bomb. Where are they going to get money, for example, for school? So the dad comes home worried. There's no money. I want shoes. The woman begins to yell, and he beats her up. They beat each other up, sometimes both of them fight. And then the man will go drink, and after he has been drinking all day he comes home to hit her. And on top of that there is no money. Because what the woman will always do is ask him, why are you drinking if there is no money? Why are you drinking if you do not work?

Although Luz does not blame her husband’s violence on alcohol or drug use (she explained that in her case, “Sober or drunk, it's the same thing. It doesn't matter. There is no excuse for him.”), throughout my interview with her she made many references to her husband being drunk and beating her, and to her son going home drunk and having problems with his wife. She also pointed out that her husband was on drugs when he first
broke into her house and raped her. Eloísa, on the other hand, directly linked her husband’s most extreme violence towards her to his abuse of alcohol.

*Did your first husband hit you?*
Sometimes, but not a lot, not like you see now. No. Only when he came home drunk, or when he was running around with other women. But other than that, like they hit women now, no.

*How would you respond?*
I just cried. I just cried. [long pause] I just cried until he was over being drunk.

Iris’s husband, like Eloísa’s, was more violent after he had been drinking.

Her husband would go out drinking with his friends while she was be in her home with her children. When he came home drunk he would pick fights with her and insult her.

Many of their arguments stemmed from her husband’s misuse of the family’s economic resources.

On top of that, he would come home drunk and insult me! He would insult me! “You’re just a fucking woman that is being cheated on!” This and that. I saved all of that. I wouldn’t fight with him when he was drunk. What I would do is wait until the next day at 5:00 am when I woke up, and I would wrap a belt [around my hand] and I would hit him. Because I slept alone with him, I didn’t sleep with my daughters. I would hit him. First I would say, “Why did you come home drunk to insult me?” “I didn’t say anything.” “I have witnesses, my daughters. My daughters, the older ones, they’re the ones that hear all your drivel and the bullshit you talk about.” … “You surely were with some slut, some whore, and then you come home to bother me! I am IN my house. I don’t leave my house. Do you give me money? Give me the money as you earn it. When you have 50 soles give it to me, instead of going to drink, so that I can take my daughters out, because I’m not going out with some man. Or do you want me to get a husband? I can get a husband for Sundays, he’ll only come see me on Sundays, and from Monday to Saturday I’ll take care of you, dumbass!” I say to him. He shuts right up. And on top of that I would hit him. Sometimes he’d say, “No, this or that”… But hitting him would only cure him for a week. The next week he would go back to being sly, he would come to bother me all the time.

For Dolores, too, there is a very strong link between a man being drunk and a man being violent. She told me, poignantly, “When I see a drunk man I see aggression. When
I see men that do not drink I think that they must not be violent.” In her own relationship, her husband regularly abused her when he was drunk. Much like the scenario that Olivia explained, much of the physical violence that Dolores experienced was in direct response to her outspoken discontent with the way her husband spent the little money he earned.

When he would come home drunk, he never liked to go to work. When he would come home drunk, and he wouldn't bring home money, and I would say to him, “And the money for the food? You have been drinking, and now for the food?” He would grab me and beat me hard... Time went by, he always hit me. I had three children. We went to live separately. He would still show up drunk, he would beat me very aggressively. More years went by, and what he did to me wasn't normal anymore. As soon as he would get home he would slap me, hit me. He would come home and kick me... So time went by and we went to live separately, and he became more aggressive. He would show up drunk, I didn't even recognize him. He would throw me on the street. He would throw me out into the street, and I had my daughter who was just a little baby. He would throw me out into the street and beat me... He kicked my daughter when he was drunk; as he was hitting me he kicked my daughter. That's when I thought no, he has begun hitting my children when he was drunk.

Dolores’s understanding of the violence she experienced at the hands of her husband is demonstrative of how IPVAW has become naturalized for Dolores. As a child she witnessed violence between her parents and she was also the victim of childhood violence. What was shocking to Dolores as an adult was that her husband’s violence was not “normal” anymore. His violence was so extreme that it did not correlate to Dolores’s naturalized understanding of IPVAW. The fact that he kicked their infant daughter while he was drunk and beating Dolores was particularly despicable in Dolores’s eyes.

Now, it upsets Dolores very much to see her son acting in similar ways to his father. Dolores is afraid of her son because, like his father, he comes home drunk and is very aggressive. Dolores's son also beat his girlfriend, which was very upsetting to her
because of the extreme violence she had experienced at the hands of his father. Dolores tries to reason with her son so that he will not continue to act like his father.

My son is this way too. He got himself a woman and he beat her. Sometimes I see that he acts just like his father. He comes home drunk and he looks at us angrily. Or he yells. He acts like his father.

_and when he comes home like that, do you let him in?
_When he comes home drunk? Yes. Because one time… at the beginning it wasn't like this. Everything started when he became a young man. He came home drunk. I yelled at him, and he got very angry and he broke the windows. [She began to cry as she told me the story] and my daughters cried. I am afraid of him... I tell him, “I suffered with your father and now I suffer with you.” When he would hit his woman I would be strong. I would tell him, crying, “You are not going to hit this young woman. You're not going to hit her. You are not going to be like your father: bad. You are bad,” I told him. “Would you like them to treat your little sisters like that?” “I will kill whoever touches my sisters,” he would say, “I will kill them.” “But if you don't like them to touch your sisters, don't hit this young woman.”

Dolores’s experience with violent, drunk men extends outside of her own family. She witnessed the abuse of her neighbor by the woman’s husband when he was drunk.

Because of her own experience with IPVAW, hearing her neighbor screaming was very traumatic for her and solidified in her mind the link between alcohol abuse and violence.

In many homes the husband hits the wife. Here, for example, we have examples like my neighbors where her husband would come home drunk. From the time he got home he would insult her mother, one time he even threw the tank of cooking gas at her. The only thing she would do is cry, and scream. He would insult her mother. He would say that he was going to beat her hard….

With the exception of Luz’s husband who was smoking drugs when he raped her the first three times, none of the women I interviewed mentioned their husband using drugs. Many of the mothers, though, were concerned about sons who had dabbled in drug use. Drug use has a generational aspect in Lambayeque and seems to be much more frequent among younger men (in their teens and twenties). Both younger and older men
participate in alcohol consumption, and most men go out with the intention of getting drunk. It is not uncommon for men to go on multiple-day “benders,” during which they drink with their friends for several days straight without ever going home, and sometimes even going to different towns to “continue the party.”

The other reason that most women gave for the violence in their relationships was their husbands’ *inquietud* (literally, “restlessness,” i.e. cheating). Literature on VAW in Peru supports the views of these women by drawing a connection between a man’s infidelity and his violence towards his wife. According to Harvey’s (1994) research on violence against women in the Peruvian Andes, men who are unfaithful to their wives are often more violent towards their wives as a result. It is believed that this is because men are unable to control the women that they are seeing in extra-marital relationships because of the informal nature of the relationship and the potential power of blackmail that the “other” woman holds over the married man’s head. Since men lose power within gendered power structures when in extra-marital relationships, it seems that they are then increasingly violent with their wives (women over whom they do have culturally-sanctioned power and control). As Moore (1994a:69) explains, “The inability to maintain the fantasy of power [in extra-marital relationships] triggers a crisis in the fantasy of identity, and violence is a means of resolving this crisis because it acts to reconfirm the nature of a masculinity otherwise denied.”

Of the thirteen women I interviewed at length, eight self-identified as being in, or having been in, a violent relationship. Of those eight women, seven attributed a significant part of their marital problems and the resulting violence to their husbands’
cheating. Dolores, for example, clearly correlated her husband’s “restlessness” with the abuse she suffered.

He would throw me out into the street and beat me. But the reason he came home like that was because he was restless. He was with another woman.

Eloísa attributed her ex-husband’s violence in part to his cheating, explaining that the only times that he hit her were when he was drunk or going around with other women.

Luz’s husband has also cheated on her regularly throughout their relationship, abandoning her and their children for weeks at a time. She believes that the only reason her husband stays with her is because she has a house and she works to maintain him and their children. María, unlike Luz, is still in love with her husband and is deeply hurt that he goes around with other women. Just in the last couple of years she had begun to reject him when he came back to her because she was afraid that he would just cheat on her again, re-opening the already deep wounds that he left on her heart.

Camila married her husband in the Catholic Church in part because she was in love with him, but also because she felt that he (and their relationship) would benefit from the guidance of the priests. She had hoped that marrying him would solve many of their problems, including his cheating. In the five or so years that they have been together, she has caught him cheating on her numerous times. The last time she caught him cheating, she went to the rice mill where he and his girlfriend worked and she confronted them. What is especially interesting about Camila’s story, though, is that she blamed the other woman for her husband’s infidelity. When she went to the mill to confront them, she wanted to attack the other woman for not having rejected her husband’s advances. Even when the “other” woman tried to explain that it was Camila’s
husband who was making the advances, Camila blamed the woman for not discouraging him.

I went to the mill [after seeing pictures of a woman he worked with on his cell phone]. I told him, “You think you're funny don't you? You're running around with her but saying you're not. You'll remember me because I will make them fire you from the mill for being shameless.” … [I told her,] “You are shameless. You are a young girl, but you are shameless.” “He is the one that comes after me, he bothers me.” “If the woman pays attention, the man will keep trying. If you stop a man he's not going to keep bothering you.” I was ready to jump on top of her. My husband came running over and grabbed me, in front of everyone, he really beat me up. He threw me on the ground. He did whatever he wanted with me. The older women that were there told me that I should go to the police. There was a rock just a tiny bit away, if he had thrown me just a little bit further I wouldn't be here talking with you today. I always say to him, “I would've liked to have fallen on that rock just to see what you would have done in that moment. You in prison, me dead, our daughter growing up, what would you have told her? Why did you do that to me? All to defend another woman.”

When husbands are *inquieto* (restless) they go looking for other women in the street. These women range from company at the table and dance partners at bars and clubs to long term partners (essentially a second wife) who may mother multiple children with the man. Interestingly, all of the women I interviewed used the word “*inquieto*” (restless) to describe their husbands, rather than coming out and saying that he was cheating. While *inquieto* is commonly employed to describe men’s behavior, I have never heard it used to describe women who cheat on their husbands. The concept of being *inquieto* plays on somewhat antiquated (in the US, but fairly standard in Peru) notions of gender and sexuality in which men are simply unable to control their sexual desires, and therefore are unable to control their behavior. In Lambayeque there is a gendered double standard for adultery which normalizes and celebrates men’s cheating as a sign of
masculinity, while any woman who cheats on her husband is considered a worthless whore.

During the interviews, Iris was the most outspoken about this gendered double standard, explaining that peer pressure to be “macho” from the man’s friends influences his behavior significantly, and usually in a negative way. Iris gives her own story as an example of how men and women are treated differently when they cheat, highlighting how her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law made excuses for her husband’s cheating, telling her to be patient while defending his *machista* behavior.

I also think that the friends, some of them influence violence against women, men against women. Because, what do they talk about? They don’t talk about work; they talk about their indecency, their womanizing. So then they say, “Hey, you know what, you’re controlled by your woman…” And so the man goes on listening to this and absorbing it. Or, “Hey, your woman stopped me and was asking me about why I was out drinking with you. Shit, she made a huge scandal in the street. Where are you as a man? Who raised you like that?” So, he listens to that and when he gets home he attacks the woman… He either hits her and she allows it, or he starts abusing her verbally. So, in all of this the friends have a lot of influence on the men.

*Besides that, what I have observed is that the friends celebrate the stupid things that the others do, and those who don’t do all that crap are told that they’re pisado [walked all over], a saco largo [literally: long jake, meaning: dominated by a woman], that their woman has them on a short leash. And that the man is sneaky and a womanizer*

[She interrupts me] He’s the KING! He’s like the lion, the king of the jungle! *

And the guy who behaves himself…*

[She interrupts me] He’s a dumbass, in their society; he’s a dumbass, walked all over. But they don’t realize the kind of damage they’re doing… Here it’s like that. The man who is responsible and honest in his home, who goes out with his woman, the others who are womanizers don’t like it. Why? “Leave your woman at home. Look at us; we’re with the girls here.” All the time Lambayeque lives like that because of how many men there are like that. They congratulate them when they have one, two, three women on the side. Or when they clown around womanizing.

*But if a woman has three men…*

[She interrupts me] That’s what I was going to tell you! Even the family agrees. You no longer have the right to be part of the family because, “You cheated on
my son! And why did you do it, if you have EVERYTHING!? My son gives you everything, and why did you cheat on him? You’re a *mañosa* (slut), you’re a *perra* (bitch). You like to be drinking in bars with men.” That’s what the majority say. But why don’t they say the same thing to the son that cheated? *Why isn’t he a dog? Why isn’t he...*

[She interrupts again] Look, I have an experience, when my husband was unfaithful, 7 or 8 years ago, with a young girl, well, not so young. They introduced him to her in a *chicherío*. You know that men, when they come and go, the last one to find out was me. His friends knew. The friends knew; everyone who lives around our house knew. They would laugh when this girl would walk by… So, when I asked for support from my mother-in-law and from my sister in law… “You know what, I have come because Antonio is restless. And Sara and I have discovered that it’s true…” And do you know what they said to me? … My mother-in-law told me, “He’ll get over it, daughter. Because since he’s a young man, he’ll get over the craziness of going around with that woman.” My sister-in-law said, “Yes, sister-in-law, my brother will get over it. Be patient. Stay with him, don’t get separated, because separated you will go crazy.” I thought, what? He’ll get… have patience for what he’s doing? It was like they were supporting what the brother, the son was doing. Oh, no, it was okay in their minds. Because he’ll get over it… [disgusted]

*It was something normal*

It was something normal. For me, I took it like, I would have been better off to ask strangers for help than to ask my mother-in-law. I came back disappointed… But, what I ask is, being the daughter-in-law of my mother-in-law, why didn’t she say to me, “I’m going to talk to my son”? “Son, why are you doing this? What’s going on with you? Why are you doing this to Iris after you’ve been together so long.” But no, she said, “He’ll get over it.”

Now, I say to my father-in-law, because Antonio’s parents are separated, I tell him, “Father-in-law, what would have happened if I had cheated on Antonio? What would my mother-in-law and sisters-in-law have said then? Oh, because she goes out and drinks, Iris is a fucking slut. A whore. A bitch. She likes to go around with men. I saw her!” That’s what they would have said. Right? Would they have said to Antonio, “Leave her alone, she’ll get over it”? Never! Never! The first thing they would have said was, “Get separated! You know she’s like that, why continue?” That’s why I don’t understand; that’s the truth.

Joaquín, the one man that I interviewed at length, was also willing to talk about the double standard that is applied to men and women in regards to cheating. I was very interested to hear his position on the subject because of his own history of cheating on his

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33 A place where one drinks *chicha*, a traditional fermented drink that can be made from corn, manioc (yucca), peanuts, fruits, etc.
wife. While he acknowledges the double standard and agrees that it is unfair, his attitude is that things are simply that way. For Joaquín, because Peru is what he considers a “machista society,” men are naturally expected to be unfaithful and women are considered whores if they do the same. For Joaquín, the tenets of machismo are so naturalized and normalized that it is impossible to question them. He blames his own infidelity on the picardía (slyness or roguishness) of being a young man in a machista society.

And why are there so many cases in which men can cheat on women, but the women can’t cheat on men? That is because of society, because of a machista society that takes the power to decide and outline that. You don’t see that just in Peru, you also see it in other places. Especially where the countries are machista. Because the man cheats and he is the best. He’s a real man. Everyone celebrates it, his friends. They don’t celebrate it, but friends say, “That’s cool.” If a woman does that, you treat her like a whore, a slut, the worst thing you could be. But that’s the evil that society gives us. It’s not any one person’s fault. The machista society is the cause of that.

Logically, in other countries they are “open mind,” 34 each individual lives his or her life, right? Well, it’s not really like that. Well, there are cases. There are cases. It might not be everybody, but there are cases. Something for everybody… And how did you end up going off with the neighbor woman? It was a moment of… I never went off with her. Ok, well how is it that you were with her? Even if it was just a choque fuga [literally: a hit and run accident, used colloquially to refer to a one night stand] I was running around with her, and I got the devil inside me. The devil got inside of me. What needed to happen happened, they found out. I separated from Lucía [his wife]…

34 “Open Mind” is a Peruvian usage of English that projects and image of a society in which all people have liberal group sex and swing regularly. This image is especially projected onto Americans and Europeans. I suspect that this idea comes from the US pornography industry (pornographic videos, mainly from the US, are widely available at low costs from street vendors and via the internet). The idea of being “open mind” seems to be a fairly common Peruvian male fantasy. During the time I have spent in Peru, numerous men, both acquaintances and friends, have asked me about, or made comments about, people in the US being “open mind.”
Did you separate from her or did she separate from you?
She left my house. She left with my daughters and my things. I was completely irresponsible... It would have been one thing to have one child [with the other woman], but there were two. That has had a huge impact on my relationship with Lucía. It was too much. Regardless of how much I ask her to forgive me, for forgiveness, that I try to vindicate myself, things are different, because of my disloyalty.

It was a friend of Lucía, right?
Yes, it was her friend. And what needed to happen happened. We never had a stable relationship, it was choque fuga. Things like that.

What motivates you to go after other women? Or, why do you accept others going after you?
I don't accept that others go after me. Before, yes, because I was younger. I was a young man. It was the picardía [slyness or roughishness] of a young man. Being out at parties implicates a lot of things that could happen. Things that you don't think through. Things that happen.

Moore (1994b) has noted that women are frequently beaten by their intimate partners for “imagined infidelities.” She likens this preemptive “punishment” to a type of social control that creates fear in women, thus regulating their behavior before they deviate from what is deemed “acceptable.” While all of the women I interviewed say that they have not cheated on their husbands, although many of the women’s husbands have accused them of doing so, María acknowledges that there are some women that do cheat on their husbands. In María’s opinion, though, there are good reasons that some women cheat on their husbands, such as men not fulfilling their role as husband and father.

Sometimes a man thinks that a woman is cheating on him. But, like I tell my husband, sometimes men are at fault. Sometimes women cheat on men because sometimes men don’t fulfill their role in the home. Plus, they don’t pay for their kids’ things. What can a woman expect? They depend on men. “What you do isn’t what I’m going to do,” I tell him. No way. Because he’s a man, a man can have ten women, but that’s not right. God didn’t say that in the Bible.

This gendered double standard plays on the socialized private versus public dichotomy that relegates women and children to the home while the street is the domain
of macho men. Women are expected to be in the home, only going out when absolutely necessary. This is less so in more liberal families, but even then men have more freedom in the street than women. Women who work outside of the home are often accused of only wanting to have a job so that they can find a man with whom to have an extra-marital relationship, and not because they want to better themselves or the family economy (for further discussion of women’s work in and out of the home, see chapter six).

**IPVAW During Pregnancy And With Children**

Pregnancy does not appear to be a condition that halts or slows physical violence. Some of the women that I interviewed reported that their husbands beat them even harder and/or more often when they were pregnant. When pregnant, not only is it harder for women to resist physical violence due to physical limitations, but having children makes separation from a violent man harder because of the permanent kinship ties that are created. The first times Alejandra’s boyfriend hit her were during her pregnancy.

So, one day, I was talking with him in his living room. I have always liked to talk. And they played a song. I was pregnant and was very melancholy, they played a song that made me think about my ex. And I tried to hide my face because I began to cry. I turned to hide my face, but he realized it. “Yes, you are remembering your ex,” this and that. And I exploded. I exploded and told him that, yes, I missed him. That I still remembered him. And I told him, “Damn the day that I said yes to you!” And that's when he began to slap me. That day they were slaps in the face…

[A few weeks later], he came to pick me up, and we went to his house for his birthday party. He got drunk and he began again. “What the hell are you doing with that asshole?” [He was accusing me of cheating.] And he began slapping me hard, pushing me, pulling my hair, pulling me. He's a man, he's stronger than me. So it didn't matter what I did. I did everything I could; I scratched him very hard with my long nails. He never punched me, he never kicked me; we never reached those extremes. Never. But yes, slaps, hair pulling, arm pulling, hard.
Luz’s husband, although always violent with her, was most violent when she was pregnant. He would punch and kick her in the stomach, and often wanted her to abort her babies.

*Has it always been like this [violent]?
Yes. Always. From the time that I agreed to be in a relationship with him until today. Before it was almost very terrible (*casi muy terrible*) because he would hit me every day. Every day. There wasn’t one day that he would stop hitting me. He would grab me and bam, he would punch me. If he didn’t hit me in the mouth he’d go for my stomach. Or he would grab me here [reaches for her throat], in the throat and he would strangle me. He would take my voice away. All of that made me timid, because he would put knives here at my throat. Two big knives. And that made me more scared. Every day more and more. Over time he would say, “No, I’m going to fix myself. Yes, I’m going to change.” He would go off with his friends, he would always abandon me. Every time [he would rape me] I would get pregnant. I had to work to save up money for the birth, to buy clothes for the baby, as if I had made the babies all by myself.

*Yeah, like you were the only one making the baby!*
All alone, practically… What has he taught his kids? He’s only taught them about mistreating the wife, everything he does to me, the insults. Right? By hitting me, pulling me, dragging me, putting his feet or his knees here in my stomach every time I got pregnant.

He wanted me to abort my last baby. When the baby was already getting big, he would hit me, and drag me by my hair and he would drag me across branches with thorns. All of my dresses, he would rip them up… When I was 2 1/2 months pregnant with my last baby, he wanted me to inject myself with something to abort. I said no. I cried, no and no and no. I said, “You are not giving birth to him. You aren't even going to see him. You don't spend anything on them. The one who breast-feeds him is me and the one who is going to take care of him is me. Not you. I am going to have him, I'm not going to kill my child.” And I had him…

*[When I was pregnant was] when he hit me the hardest. It was worse. He would break my dishes. He would throw food at me. Everything, everything. He would come home drunk and, bam! Otherwise he would insult me. His thing has always been grabbing my neck and hitting me in the stomach. The neck and stomach. It's always been like that.

Luz’s oldest daughter, her only child that is not her husband’s child, has also been a victim of her step-father’s violence. He was drunk and tried to throw the television at Luz’s head. Luz was able to duck out of the way, but her pregnant daughter was hit.
As was shown in chapter four, many children in Lambayeque witness violence between their parents. The stories shared in chapter four are the childhood stories of the adult women that I interviewed. However, several of the women also talked about how their own children witnessed violence, which the women fear has set the stage for the replication of violence. Men in Lambayeque do not seem to be particularly concerned with whether or not their children are present when they physically abuse women and will often beat their wives in front of their children. María’s husband, for example, has abused her physically and emotionally in front of her children for years. Witnessing the abuse has negatively impacted the relationship that her children have with their father.

*Does your husband hit you in front of your kids?*

Before, yes. They were so little. And he hit me then, he stepped on my throat. He threw me against the wall, and he left me there, knocked out. My son told me, “Mom, you laid there and didn’t get up until much later!” He would go to his mom’s house, and he’d leave me there, thrown on the ground.

**Marital Rape and Sexual VAW In Intimate Partner Relationships**

Sexual violence against women is common in Lambayeque, both inside and outside of relationships. It is not uncommon for a man to try to grab a woman on the street, and stranger or acquaintance rape is not uncommon (for discussion of stranger violence against women, see chapter seven). Marital rape, however, seems to be even more commonplace. Marital rape was not illegal in Peru until 1991. Prior to the adoption of the new penal code, marital rape was considered “a fulfillment of the wife’s conjugal obligation” (Kirk 1992:11). Five of the eight women in violent relationships that I interviewed have suffered marital rape on a regular basis. For women like Luz, even though they love their children, they are a constant reminder of marital rape.
Even though [my children] are not the fruit of a true love, I love all of them. But I see mothers that when they are raped they throw away their babies. They don't love them. They say horrible things to them… As if the little creatures [small children] were at fault. I think, they didn't ask to be brought into this world.

My children are here, because he raped me. Every time that I became pregnant, he had forced me to have sex. He would rip my underwear. He would rip my bras. He would rip up my clothes. The same thing happened about two months ago, he ripped my dress. I have the dress saved, that way if he does something else to me I will take this dress as evidence. I told him that dress was new. But for him to abuse me, he has to drag me. He was dragging me and I grabbed onto something and my dress ripped. I tell him, I'm a human. If one wants to [have sex] that's their right. But that's not the way. That's what I don't like. I've lived like this my entire life, I don't want to continue like this. I don't want to live my whole life like this, but it continues…

Every time that he has wanted to be with me, he hugged me and kissed me, it disgusted me. I would cover my mouth; I wouldn't want to kiss him. I didn't want to be with him. Like he says, it's just to satisfy him. But he has never satisfied me. I would like to feel the love of a man that really loves the other person, for him to love me and for me to love him – for it to be reciprocal. I don't know about that. For me it's something that I don't feel. For me it's something that is very ugly, because one doesn't feel anything; at least I don't feel anything. I've never felt anything.

But with my daughter, sometimes she asks me, and I tell her, “Sometimes a man wants to [have sex], and we also want to; we hug and we begin to play with a little kiss, and we begin feeling. But I tell her in my case it's not like that. In my case, when I'm going to bed, I don't sleep with him anymore. I sleep with my daughter, but sometimes my daughter isn't there, for example when she was at school and wasn't here in the afternoons, he would find me resting sometimes. And he would say this or that. [Luz apologized to me for what she viewed as talking extremely explicitly] “I want to get some, I need you, I want to be with you.” “Leave me alone, you only think about dirty things.” I don't want that. I don't feel anything for him. But he is abusive, and when I don't want it that's when things begin, he pulls me; he rips this, [she tugs at her blouse] on his chest. They say that when one kisses a woman here [points to her neck] and here [points to her shoulders] on their breasts, one feels something. But not me. I don't feel anything…

My niece, she is a teacher, one day she came to ask me some questions. I was embarrassed to answer her, because the truth is I don't know, because I've never experienced that. And she said to me, “You, Aunt, are older, and with your experience you know what relations are like between your husband and you. Do you love him? Do you give yourself to him with love?” And I told her, “No, I don't know what it must be like because I'm covered up, and when I'm like that with all my clothes, and he is with me, he doesn't see my body.” I don't let him see my body. He doesn't know my whole body. He doesn't know if I have moles are not, because everything is done like that. If he kisses me
or bites me it’s here [on my neck] and he does leave marks, but it's him, not me. I don't feel anything. He is satisfied, but not me. It disgusts me. It is as disgusting to kiss him as it is to have relations; because those things come out [I think that here she is referring to a man’s ejaculation]. I don't know, it's disgusting to me. That is what I have felt.

Eloísa, too, was a regular victim of marital rape. Her husband not only raped her, leaving her to take care of her two young daughters, but he also infected her with a sexually transmitted infection that rendered her infertile. She felt like she was still being punished by her ex-husband because she was unable to have children with her current husband.

After that first night he locked you up, what was your relationship like? Did you ever love him?

No.

Never?

No. He would travel to Chimbote. He would travel and come home about every 15 days, or once a month. I was embarrassed about him, and a little bit afraid. If he wanted to be with me [sexually] I didn't want it. My mother-in-law would say, she would say to me, “He is your husband. He is coming home after a long time and he wants to be with you.” There were always problems because of that. [His family] would say to me, “Then go back to your house.” Whenever I didn't want to be with him they would tell me, “Go home.”

...Was there always conflict?

Yes. Even more when I got pregnant with [my second daughter]. My first daughter died. When I got pregnant with [my second daughter] I came here… And then I went back to Chimbote. When I went back I began to feel bad, my [intimate] parts itched. I thought, what? I went to the doctor. The doctor told me, “Hija, you are pregnant.” “Yes,” I told him. He asked me, “Are you doing well with your husband?” “Yes,” I told him. “But you are infected,” he told me. He told me I was infected. My husband had been with another woman, one of those women of the street [a prostitute]. “They have infected you,” he told me. I was filled with rage. How I cried, because every day they gave me injections. Every day for nine days they injected me. I cried, and he would say, “My love, forgive me.” “You went too far,” I told him. “You went too far.” Later, they cured me. I thought they cured me because they had given me the injections. But later, after I got engaged to my partner, they operated on my gallbladder. They operated on me; it's been two years since they operated on me. To do that you get all kinds of tests. And they took an x-ray, a private doctor did an x-ray. He called my partner, he said, “Are you the partner of the woman?” “Yes,” he said. It made me
think that there was something wrong with me, in my stomach. In other words, those microbes had not been killed completely. Because after I had Camila, I couldn't get pregnant again. Not anymore, after that I never menstruated, I never got pregnant, and I never used birth control. Never.

A week and a half ago I went to get a Pap smear, and I told the young woman. I told her, “Miss, I'm here to get my Pap smear. It's time for me to get it.” “Okay, hija,” she examined me and everything. She asked me, “What do you feel?” I told her, “This part here hurts me.” “Maybe it's inflammation,” she told me, “I'm going to give you a note so that they will do a urine analysis.” “Okay, Miss.” She asked me, “How many babies do you have?” I told her, “Right now I have had three. The first one died and now my daughters are married.” And she said, “And you don't use protection?” “No, Miss.” She told me that I have my fallopian tubes obstructed. She told me, “Hija, maybe you have had something, a disease, maybe that's why you never got pregnant.” And that's when I remembered. That's exactly what happened with my partner, with the father of my daughters…

Do you know what it was that he had infected you with?

No.

They didn't tell you the name of the disease?

No. They didn't tell me. They told my husband when they operated on my gallbladder. They told him.

And the first time, when you were itching and you went to the doctor?

There, they called my husband [at the time]. They didn't tell me. They called him. They said, “Sir, your wife is pregnant, what has happened?” He said, “Doctor, the thing is I was with a girl.” The doctor said, “But she is pregnant.” I cried because every day they stuck me with a needle. For nine days they were injecting me while I was pregnant. I was so full of rage. And now, my daughters, Camila is 24, or 23, practically 25. Look at how all of this has happened. And I think that maybe that's why I never got pregnant.

For most of the women I interviewed, however, marital rape without the use of contraceptives led to frequent pregnancies and having more children than they would like due to the limited access to contraception, abortion, and sterilization services (see chapter eight for a discussion of reproductive health issues and VAW). Luz, for example, told me that in all of her adult life she never once menstruated – she was always pregnant. But, sometimes men will try to force women into having an abortion, even if the women are opposed to it, as was the case for Luz (see Luz’s testimony earlier in this chapter for her discussion of the abortion her husband proposed). María experienced something very
similar with her husband who wanted María to abort their daughter when she was five months pregnant.

My daughter is still very little, she doesn’t understand. But I wonder, maybe when I was pregnant with her, maybe she perceived everything that I went through, all the crying I did? He even wanted me to abort her. He wanted to buy pills to abort her when I was 5 months pregnant. He would cry, not wanting me to have her… He wanted me to abort my baby. All because of the other woman. He hated me. He said that the only reason that I got pregnant was to make him miserable. *Oh, you got pregnant all by yourself?* Yeah. Imagine! I did it to make him miserable. How am I going to do it to bother you, if the one who is most affected is me? Men are in the street; who is screwed over? I’m the one that has to be in the house, watching the kids. And when there’s no money, who gives me some? I have to go earn it myself. Okay, no problem, don’t give me anything, but I’m not going to abort my child. I’ll throw you out before I abort my child.

**Women’s Responses To Violence**

Women’s responses and resistance to physical violence vary greatly. The women I interviewed often made points about how they *did* fulfill their role as woman, wife, and mother in order to de-legitimize their husband’s behavior. Even if the woman does not agree with the cultural sanctioning of certain instances of abuse, they do consider them more acceptable than other instances of abuse that are not culturally sanctioned. The women I interviewed and talked with in Lambayeque would make comments like, “If he would come home and not find any food ready I would understand why he is angry, but when he comes home I am here with the children, everything is ready” (i.e. I am doing everything I am supposed to do and he beats me anyway). Iris, Luz, Dolores, and María regularly highlighted the fact that they were behaving within the accepted gender norms, and that their husbands had no legitimate excuse to complain or abuse them.
María pointed out several times that despite the fact that she would work hard to maintain her own household and do work for her mother-in-law, her mother-in-law still did not value her. This bothers María because she feels like she has done everything that is expected of her as a woman, a wife, and a daughter-in-law. Fulfilling their duties as woman, wife, and mother is the first line of resistance for many women. By not giving the man any legitimate reason to be angry with her, women can avoid some violence. But, as the women I interviewed explained, most of the violence they experienced has been unprovoked.

When violence cannot be prevented, most of the women do not regularly fight back, in part out of fear of exacerbating the violent episode. Sometimes, though, women do get up enough anger and courage to fight back. Fighting back for some women, however, can have a negative emotional impact on them, as was discussed in relationship to violence from family in chapter four. While it is culturally normal and relatively acceptable for men to hit women, women hitting men not only breaks down the assumed power structure between men and women, but violates the prescribed gender roles of women. Women, who are expected to be submissive to their husbands, may feel like retaliation and self-defense through violence is a lack of respect for their husbands. Much like girls are afraid and ashamed to disrespect their parents and violate gender norms, married women often feel guilty about acting in ways deemed disrespectful and inappropriate for women. The women I interviewed felt guilty about using physical violence to protect themselves or to retaliate against abusive partners. Acting in ways not
considered appropriate for women and disrespecting their husbands violated their culturally-prescribed sense of self as women and good wives.

María felt as though her husband’s abuse was making her act in “crazy” ways that were not reflective of her true self and values:

Sometimes I threatened my husband… I didn’t have any sense left in me. I didn’t even know where I was standing. I told him, “The day I see you [with another woman] I’ll kill you. The jail won’t eat me alive. In jail I’ll just learn to work harder. But the worms will be eating you.” That’s what I would tell him. Later I would say, God, forgive me. Give me strength. And like that I started making my heart grow cold and hard. I cried. I was so filled with pain. I didn’t have the will to do anything.

Camila, María, Dolores, and Luz all said that they felt bad for their abusive partners at times; they would pity them, and would then try to forgive them. Dolores’s emotions in response to her husband’s violence would fluctuate between terror, rage, and pity. Her anger became so extreme that her own reactions began to scare her. Her own violent response to her husband’s attacks are what finally motivated her to leave.

I told [my son], “I never wanted to separate from your father, that's why I put up with it for so long.” I had a stepfather too and my stepfather was bad. That's why I didn't want to separate from his father. But he was filling me up with children. The problems continued. So I thought, no, I have to go, I’m going to traumatize my children here. Because I had begun… When he would get home and want to fight, I would fight too. I would throw things at him, my decorations, the lids of pans, one day we even grabbed knives. I grabbed a knife to kill him. I said to him, “Either you kill me or I will kill you once and for all.” I said to him, “Kill me.” Later I reacted, what? What is happening? It would be better for me to leave here…

In the beginning, I would just wait while he hit me. I would hunch down, I would try to cover my face. That was it. But then there were times when I would defend myself… When I began to defend myself it was even worse. He would get even angrier. One time he grabbed a rock, there where they had dug a well to get water, and then there were those clumps of dirt that were hard, and I threw one at him. I threw it at his mouth. It hit him and busted his mouth open. He grabbed me and hit me even harder. So then I thought, if I defend myself I’m going to make him
even angrier and he will hit me even more. Sometimes I would defend myself and sometimes I wouldn't. …

And then he would cry, after he would hit me he would cry. He would say to me, “It's your fault that I hit you, Dolores.” That's what he would say to me. “It's your fault that I hit you hard,” he would say. He would cry and hug my children. He would hug my children and cry. I wouldn't say anything to him. And when he cried, I felt bad for him. He would say to me, “Forgive me, excuse me, I won't hit you again.” A month would go by and we would begin again. I would forgive him thinking, poor thing. He feels bad about hitting me, I would think.

It took Dolores a long time to stop feeling pity for her abusive husband. He had done such a good job of manipulating her that it took years for her to realize that his behavior was not her fault.

Unlike Dolores, despite everything her husband has done and continues to do to her, Luz still feels pity for her husband. She even nursed him back to health after she beat him up while defending herself, because she did not want to be responsible for his suffering.

I grabbed a stick, and I hit him with it, and covered him with blood. His nose was bleeding; he was blinded. And after he was blinded he was saying that he couldn't see. After three days he still couldn't see. He was blind. I was scared. And I remembered that for things like that, hitting your head, that the remedy is breast milk with squash seeds ground up, and that you have to put it on his eyes. That's what I put on his eyes, and he began to see. Otherwise he would still be blind and he wouldn't be hitting me. He wouldn't hit me. He was blinded…

But why am I going to make him sick? Just so I can have a sick person to take care of? It would be worse. Then I would have to be taking care of him. That's what I say. If I blinded him, and didn't cure him, it would've been more work for me. To be taking him everywhere. Right? And since I had already been through that with my grandmother, who was blind, I said no, it's horrible to have that. To have to bathe him, do everything for him, no. I had to cure him. And when he went to his mother's, she said, “What's wrong with you son?” His eyes were green. “I got in a fight. They hit me. It was a big group of them, they hit me.” But he never told them that I had hit him.

*And why do you think that he never told them that it was you?*

Because his family knew that he was bad.

*Do you think that he was embarrassed that a woman had done that to him?*
Of course! He must have been embarrassed. That's why he didn't want to say it… Because he was full of bruises. I grabbed the stick and hit him in the face. And then, I knocked him down on the ground and I kicked him, as if I was a man. It hurt me, but for the first time in my life I did it. And my sister-in-law defended him. My sister-in-law said to me, “What have you done to him? He is bleeding. You broke him. Luz what have you done?” I told her what I did, and it hurt me more. It was because of my vaginal parts, he'd kicked them; they were so swollen. A little more and they would have burst! A little more and they would have burst with blood! It hurt me so bad, my stomach hurt. So I grabbed him with rage, I hit him and said, “Never touch me like that again.” After that he slowed down a little bit. There were about four years where it was less, he wasn't like before… Another time, I don't know what he did to me, when I looked at the whip that my brother had given me from the ronderos.35 He came to hit me, or he insulted my mother, or something else he did to me, and there was the whip. I said, “Whose mother are you insulting?” And I whipped him [makes whipping motion]. He screamed, “What's wrong with you?” I finished whipping him and I ran. I ran out into the street. And then I would just hang out in the street. Every day I would go out into the street. I wouldn't stay at home. I would work during the night, I would make food for my kids and then I would go out. When my kids would go to school I would go out into the street. I would go to Chiclayo, paying bus fare for no reason, just so that I would calm down a little bit. That was my freedom; that was how I recuperated a little bit, because otherwise I would've gone crazy… I feel bad for him. What I have for him, is pity. I think, if I leave him he will fall back into his vices, drugs, drinking. What will be of his life? And later he will be pitiful, going to his children. People will say, “Look, it is the fault of their mother who abandoned him, there he is.” And then my children will say, “Mom is at fault.” And that is what has held me back. That has always held me back a lot. I'm not sure why. But love him? To say that I love him as a husband? No.

She characterizes her violent response to his violence as acting “as if she were a man,” highlighting the fact that she violated prescribed gender roles in order to act in that way. When she began to “act like a man,” Luz felt like she was going crazy. Even though she was defending herself from his attacks, she felt that her behavior was fundamentally inappropriate. Part of the reason that Luz has not left her husband is for fear of the judgment that others will pass on her for abandoning her family and not taking care of her husband, yet there does not seem to be an outspoken condemnation of his treatment of

35 The ronderos were civilian vigilante groups organized by the Peruvian Government during the period of terrorism.
her. She seems to be expected to tolerate his violence while fulfilling the nurturing role of mother and wife.

In cases where women are pregnant and have numerous children from marital rape, their abilities to resist increasing physical violence are decreased and it becomes harder to later escape violence. Having children with a man creates a permanent social and economic link to the father (for a discussion on child support and the economic aspects of violence, see chapter six). Women are also less likely to separate from an abusive partner if they have children because they feel bad about separating children from their father and they are afraid to be single mothers, usually because of their economic limitations and lack of social support.

The Silencing Of IPVAW: The Familial Response

In Lambayeque, emotional, physical, and sexual violence against women is regularly silenced in a number of ways and for a number of reasons. Most women choose to hide the violence from their families and friends. While sometimes women are threatened by their partners with additional violence to convince them not to tell their families, some women make the decision not to tell their families on their own. Most do not want to make their mothers worry or suffer because of their relationship. Other times, especially if the woman was an escapada (see chapter four for a discussion of escapadas), she fears that her parents will blame her for her marital problems, reminding her that they had warned her about him ahead of time, and that she did not listen. These women are ashamed that they allowed themselves to get into a violent relationship. Violence is often hidden and silenced out of fear and shame and most women are afraid
that their partners will punish them with more violence if they tells their families or friends.

Abused women also choose not to tell their families about their problems with violence because they do not want to worry their families – especially their mothers. If there is a family member that is ill, or generally unwell or “fragile,” women are even less likely to talk about their problems. There is a constant worry that if a woman tells her mother that she is having problems with her husband that her mother will fall ill with one of a number of folk-maladies, such as chuquaque (caused by extreme worry and/or embarrassment and which causes nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, extreme headache, weakness, fainting, and exhaustion). Daughters do not want to be responsible for causing their parents worry. Nor do most women want to cause violent conflict between their husbands and their fathers/ brothers/ cousins etc., or between their families and their husband’s families.

Many women also know that telling their families about their violent relationships will only cause feelings of impotence on their parents’ part. Because of economic constraints and large family size, aging parents are often unable to support a victimized daughter and her children. Knowing this, daughters choose not to tell their parents because they do not want to be a burden on their families’ already tight budgets (see chapter six for more discussion on economics and VAW).

Women also fear that if they tell their parents, their parents will dismiss and legitimize the violence, telling the women, “That’s how marriage is.” This was a phrase that I commonly heard, both during interviews and in day-to-day life. The women who
participated in the group interview emphasized the tendency of family members to be
dismissive of their daughters’ claims of violence, even if they know that her claims are
ture.

_Something else that I have observed is that sometimes, for example, there is a
couple and the man hits her, he abuses her, he yells at her, everything, and when
she does tell her mother, or she does tell her father, they say, he is your husband.
[Olivia interrupts me to finish my sentence]
Olivia- You have to put up with him; that's the way it is.
Guadalupe- That is what you wanted.
Pilar- That is what they say. Why didn't you get separated sooner?
Guadalupe - What will people say if you separate?
Olivia - That is the other thing, what will other people say? They are afraid that
people will say, “Why are they separating? Because he hit her? No, surely she
cheated on him. That is why they are separating.”
Pilar - More often they blame the woman.
Of course, because if the man goes out with another woman. [Olivia interrupts me
to finish my sentence]
Olivia - He is very macho.
Pilar - And women are stupid; he is cheating on her and she is at home. But if she
goes out, there are no stupid men.
She is a whore, a slut.
Olivia- Yes, all of that.

When Guadalupe was a little girl she observed this behavior from her abused mother’s
family (see chapter four). When Guadalupe’s mother left her husband and took her
daughters to her siblings’ house, her requests for help were met with rejection. Her
siblings took her abusive husband’s side.

In Dolores’s case, her mother refused to help her abused daughter, even when she
saw the bite marks that Dolores’s husband had left on her. Rather than helping her
daughter, Dolores’s mother took Dolores back to her abusive husband, telling her that it
had been her “decision” to get married.

One time he bit me. I have a scar here; it's where he bit me. So I went to my
mom’s. I didn't tell her that he hit me. She asked, “What is on your neck?” I said,
“I scratched myself.” “Let's see, no, that is a bite mark. Why did it happen?” So I told her that he had come home drunk and that I had asked him why he had spent the money for the food. I was pregnant with my son then; I had just gotten pregnant with my son. I told her, “I asked him about the food and he got mad. That's why he hit me.” My mom said “No, no, no! Let's take you back home. You wanted a husband and now you will have to put up with him.” So I went. She left me with him.

When he would hit me he would say, “Go to your mother’s if you want, go.” Since he knew my mom would bring me back, I thought, of course he tells me to go to my mom’s because she will make me come back. So I didn't go anymore. I put up with it to the very end, until I had my fourth daughter; I put up with it until then.

Dolores was unable to explain why her mother acted that way towards her. The reason she got involved with her husband in the first place was because her father was very abusive and then died, and her stepfather tried repeatedly to rape her, after which her mother made her leave the house. In the first days of their relationship, her husband raped her, “making her his,” and thus sealing her fate as his wife, regardless of Dolores’s wishes. Her mother’s accusation that Dolores “wanted a husband” is not an accurate portrayal of the true reasons that Dolores got involved with her husband. But, as Dolores clearly stated, her husband, knowing that she did not have the support of her mother, took advantage of her lack of sanctuary to abuse her.

In Lambayeque, violence does not only cause shame for the woman, it causes shame for the woman’s family. Although I did not have the opportunity to interview many men in depth or the families of men who are abusive, I did not get the impression that an abusive man’s family faces the same shame that an abused woman’s family faces. Abused women’s families try to hide and silence violence to avoid gossip and to maintain the family’s reputation and image. In Lambayeque, despite the fact that there is little class difference between families (with few exceptions, aside from the distinction of living in
town versus living in a *pueblo joven*), individuals and families are extremely conscious of how they are seen by others. Being gossiped about can cause embarrassment for families who are perceived as having good reputations.

Some families, though, not only dismiss, legitimize, and hide the violence, they actually support and encourage the violence. Usually the man’s parents and siblings are the ones who support his violence towards the wife. The mother-in-law was the individual (aside from the violent husband) that was most criticized for causing and encouraging violence between husband and wife. Mothers-in-law are often jealous of their son’s wives, especially of the economic support that he gives to his wife instead of to his mother. There is a cultural expectation for adult sons to help support their mothers, and some mothers feel that their daughters-in-law are trying to alienate that support36 (see chapter six for more discussion on economics and VAW).

Iris was quick to point out the role of the mother-in-law in intimate partner violence against women. As Iris explained, meddling mothers-in-law are often jealous of the affection and economic support that their sons give to their wives. Other mothers-in-law simply replicate the violence that they experienced at the hands of their own mothers-in-law, seemingly as a type of misdirected revenge.

*Would you say there’s a lot of violence against women here in Lambayeque?*  
Yes. There’s a lot. At least, I say that… in the center, in the *pueblo joven*, or in the best house, there’s a lot of violence. At least, most of it is from men. Education comes from the home. The father and the mother raise the kids, but they don’t understand when they get married. Sometimes they get married young,

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36 Brown (1992:11), citing Sacks, notes that in a Marxist feminist analysis it is clear that the antagonism between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law serves to preserve patriarchal power. “If the antagonism did not exist and if mothers-in-law and brides were in a position to collude, their ‘enormous economically destructive potential’ would seriously threaten patriarchal power.”
both young, and sometimes they don’t get along. That’s when it begins. Or, the mom starts sticking her nose in – the guy’s mom starts sticking her nose in, or the mom of the woman, in things that aren’t her business…
And who puts [bad thoughts about you] in his head? The mother-in-law. That’s if she doesn’t like you, if you didn’t make a good impression and she doesn’t like you. She starts putting ideas in her son’s head: “Why are you letting her work?”
In a *pollería* (a popular Peruvian rotisserie chicken restaurant) you work from 4 pm until 12 at night. “Why do you let her work? Why don’t you go pick her up from work? Surely her [male] friend is picking her up. Or surely she’s going off somewhere else.” It depends on the parents. I think, too, that men grow up with that mentality because their moms influence them a lot.

*And why are mothers-in-law, not all of them are... but it seems like I hear a lot of stories about mothers-in-law who get involved, but to ruin the relationship.*
To ruin it! Because, sometimes I ask myself this, maybe they have suffered that. Their mothers-in-law have bothered them and as a way of getting revenge. I’m guessing, that it’s about revenge. Sometimes you might say, my mother-in-law is good, but then she begins to bug her son, “Why this?” If you buy clothes, she asks him, “Why is your woman using those clothes if she’s a married woman?” But, I think, they maybe have suffered that, too, and that’s why I say it’s a type of revenge.

*But it’s revenge that’s not directed at the correct person – “Because my mother-in-law did that to me, I’m going to do it to you?”*
Of course. The majority are like that. The majority. I know of several cases like that, that because of the mother-in-law the marriages have broken up…

*In the case of mothers-in-law, do you think it’s something they do consciously? Or do you think it’s a thing that they don’t even realize?*
Sometimes they do realize what they’re doing. Because, sometimes, they love their sons a lot. They love their sons a lot, and they want a woman that is perfect for the sons – a woman without any flaws. But we as women, we have flaws, like any person. But I think they do it on purpose, they bother them consciously. And then later, “Oh no, I ruined it, I messed it up, I already told my son and it wasn’t true.” No, that’s the meddling mother-in-law.

I am a person that got engaged when I was 17. I didn’t know how to cook. I didn’t know how to wash. I washed my clothes, but I wasn’t ready for marriage, like they say. When I went to live with my mother-in-law, because my husband asked me to, he was 19, and we had a baby already. My husband worked for construction companies and he got paid each week… At first my mother-in-law cooked for me. But I would eat breakfast and then go to my mom’s house. At lunch time, I would arrive at 11 am, when my mother-in-law had already gone to the market, and I would arrive to help. But since sometimes the mother-in-law doesn’t like the daughter-in-law to help, because, “No, just sit down.” They don’t ask you for help. Or they say, “Do this for me.” I would sweep. I would do my cleaning. And that’s how it was.
When my husband began working for another company he began to earn a little more. My mother-in-law would demand, before my husband didn’t work and he didn’t have a steady job, and then later when he entered to work, he earned a little more, she demanded [money] weekly… She started demanding, “You know what, you have to give me so much money each week, because you and your wife are living here.” And she began saying, “Your wife leaves in the morning and doesn’t come back. She doesn’t do anything.” But she never said it to ME! She would say it to my husband, when I wasn’t around. You understand? So I began to observe her. I didn’t go to my mom’s anymore. I began to help to avoid problems. Because he’d say, “You’re going to your mom’s but you have to be here with my mom.” I would say, “You didn’t buy me anything [with which to live].” And then later he bought me a stove and a tank of cooking gas. I told him that we should cook separately, and that we would pay his mom for the electricity and help with the expenses in the house. But, I wanted them to let me do my own things. So he bought everything.

Then there was, I don’t know if it was jealousy on my mother-in-law’s part, or my mother-in-law’s mother, saying, “Yes, your mother who gave birth to you,” she would say to my husband. “Your mother who raised you, you don’t even buy her a set of pots and pans, you don’t give her a stove. Now that you have a woman, you give everything to your woman.” So, that makes you think… Why do they meddle? That was always my question, why do they meddle? So I gathered my things, and I came to my house. I talked to my mom, and I built a room in the back, and that’s where I stayed…

In the end, the mother always meddled. She wasn’t content. Over the years, after we had more children, he matured more, we have our own things. I always have liked to get my own things – take them out on credit and then pay weekly… Jealousy was always lurking. “But why are you going to buy furniture,” she’d ask. “Can my son afford it?” “Yes, and if he can’t afford it, then I’ll have to figure out a way to stretch the money, because I’m the one who handles the money.” And she didn’t like that I tell her that I handle the money. “Oh, yes, she controls the money. She’s always at her mother’s. Surely she gives money to her mother. My son doesn’t give me anything.” All the time I dealt with that. Didn’t I tell you, the moms, both the mom of the man and the mom of the woman meddle in the relationship, even if she’s the best mother-in-law.

Well, now that I have four kids, my mother-in-law always comes to say something, or something else. And I try to avoid responding, you see. “Oh look, your daughter is too skinny, maybe she’s not eating, maybe this or that…” “Oh, she’s just like that.” That’s how I answer her. I try to get along. Because right now I’m the favorite daughter-in-law of my mother-in-law. The other two daughters-in-law are just the same as how I started. I tell them, I began like you. She would tell me, “No this is bad,” and she would meddle. But I knew how to earn her love, from her family.

*It seems like mothers here want you to be like a nun crossed with a maid*...
Yes. It’s the reality here. I say, if you’re already in a relationship, advice is fine. But meddling only to bother you would bother anybody. And since she’s your mother-in-law, you can’t, well, at least I can’t answer her badly. I say, “Look, ma’am, this is what I have planned with my husband, with your son.” I now tell her how things are, because I’m now 33 years old, look at how many things I have lived. I tell my sisters-in-law, “You need to do your own things. You live with your husband; you didn’t marry the mother or the sister. Even if the sister or the mother-in-law meddles, life goes on with your husband.”

While Iris’s mother-in-law would create conflict in Iris’s marriage, Dolores’s mother-in-law would make excuses for her son’s violence, saying that he was like his father, and blaming Dolores for doing things that “made” her husband violent. Dolores’s mother-in-law saw her son’s violence as something “normal” that simply had to be dealt with and avoided, when possible. Rather than standing up for her daughter-in-law, Dolores’s mother-in-law would simply dismiss the violence as normal.

I would go and tell his mother, ma'am, “Carlos hit me.” “Oh, hijita, he is just like his father; his father is just the same. His father would grab me by the hair and drag me the entire length of the house, that's how his father was.” She wouldn't say, “No, son, that's not right, it's not right what you're doing.” She would just say, “That's how his father was.”

Simply, that is how he was?

“That's how his father was, and he came out just like his father. Running around with women, he would forget about his own children and their food. Yes, hijita, that's how his father was… His mother only knew how to say, “But why do you yell at him when he is drunk? You are at fault because when he's drunk you shouldn't say anything to him.” But he would just come home drunk, and from the time he got home he was aggressive…

His mom, my mother-in-law! She said I was at fault. She asked me, “Why do you yell at him when he is drunk? When a man is drunk you cannot say anything to him. His food should be on the table covered up with a cloth.” …They say that [my father-in-law] had been even worse. Yes, they say that he would grab her very hard. They say that the father of my children would defend his mom a lot. He would defend her. And just like his father would go throw out his mother, that's how he would come and throw me out. I would ask myself why he was the same.

Of all the women I interviewed, María’s mother-in-law was the most aggressive in instigating violence between María and her husband. Her mother-in-law would
actively promote her son’s abuse, even encouraging María’s husband to kill her. María
does not understand why her mother-in-law hates her so much, especially because María
has always worked hard to try to help her.

He just wanted to be there with his mom. What must she have been advising him? His mom basically didn’t like me… When we lived in Jaen 37 he beat me hard; his mom couldn’t have cared less. She would grab her machete, her rope, and she would go bring firewood. She would leave me with him saying, “Kill her, hit her hard,” and there she left me. I tried to defend myself. When I defended myself, I would hide in the curtains, what else could I do to defend myself? But I ripped the curtains, oh how she yelled at me. She yelled at me for using too much water. Rain water! When my son was little. I would collect rain water to wash my son’s diapers. She would yell at me, “Now you’ve used all the water, the water to do the washing!” I would try to rationalize with her that it was rain water [and not water that we paid for]. Oh, I was so sick of all of it.

Despite the fact that I helped his mother, I washed the clothes, sometimes she would make adobe. So I would get up at 3 in the morning to grind my corn to make champús; 38 I would get up at 3 in the morning, with my stomach ache, with all the pains of my pregnancy, horrible with nausea, I got up to grind my corn and sell my champús with cachanguita. 39 Oh, the people would come before they took their kids to school, they wouldn’t even prepare breakfast, they would just buy champús with cachanga. That was my business. And even like that, that woman [my mother-in-law], she didn’t value me… I cried because my mother-in-law didn’t care about me. She didn’t value me at all. Even though I was the one who did everything! I cooked, prepared things, killed the ducks. Everyone else would just eat. I would serve them. That’s what really hurt me. But, even so, when my mother-in-law would get sick, even though she belittled me, I would send her chicken soup. At 11 in the morning she’d already be eating her soup, because she had to nourish herself. I would send breakfast over for my father-in-law, because there wasn’t anyone to prepare food for him, and none of the others would send him anything. No one! Even if I had to take things from the store on credit… My mother and father-in-law are still together. He really liked me a lot. But, she got it in her head that she didn’t like me. I sent him his breakfast. There wasn’t anyone to send it with. I used to send someone else to take it to him, because around there it’s dangerous and my daughter is little. It’s huaca! 40 What more could I have done for her to like me? But no, I didn’t accomplish it.

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37 A town in the mountains, near Lambayeque.
38 A beverage made from corn that is popular to drink in the morning.
39 A type of homemade cracker that is typically eaten with champús.
40 Huaca has a number of meanings. The first is: a place that was sacred in pre-Hispanic times, such as a pyramid, a temple, a tomb, etc. Huaca can also refer to uninhabited, open land that is considered to be
She gets offended that I complain to her son. And now I told her that her son is going around with another woman. She doesn’t believe me. She doesn’t believe me! Because her son brainwashes her! I think sometimes, maybe she’s not at fault. Maybe I shouldn’t be mad at her, because what kind of things must he be inventing to tell her?! I say to him, “It’s your fault that your mom is always mad at me.” There in Jaen she would grab a machete and give it to him and say, “Here, kill her! Do whatever you want!”

...And did or does your father-in-law ever hit your mother-in-law?

Oh, yes. Oh, drunk he would come and hit her. I told her, “You think I’m going to be like you. Just because your husband hits you, you want vengeance with me and you want your son to hit me. I’m not going to allow it. I’m not going to allow it. There are sticks and stones that I will defend myself with,” that’s what I said to her. “You’re bad-mannered!” “It’s not about being bad-mannered,” I said.” I’m not going to allow him to hit me, to mistreat me, to kill me, to do what he wants with me, because I’m not just some animal. I’m a person, just like you. You’ve been hit by your husband because you let him hit you. But not anymore, now there are laws that support us.” That’s what I told her.

And my father-in-law would say, “Man was made to beat women.” That is what he would say to me. “Man was made to crush women’s throats.” “Sure,” I would say, “just like you do to your wife. I’m not going to allow it to happen to me.”

undesirable because there are different types of spirits there. María uses *huaca* to refer to this second definition. Besides potential threats from spirits, many people are robbed when they are alone in *huaca*, and women are considered particularly vulnerable to both robbery and sexual abuse in *huaca* areas where there are few other people around.
CHAPTER 6: “IF HE DOESN’T GIVE ME MONEY, HOW AM I GOING TO GET AHEAD?” – THE ECONOMICS OF VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter will explore some economic aspects of violent relationships. Intimate partner violence against women is influenced significantly by both the economic conditions of the couple and the economic conditions of wider society, which may either facilitate or prevent the ability to escape from IPVAW. Women’s participation in reproductive and productive work greatly influence their families’ economies and help to determine the status of husbands and wives in society. Unequal availability of wage labor opportunities for men and women in the informal and formal sectors further skews the power balance between men (who have more access to all types of labor) and women (who have restricted access and are especially limited to informal work). Unequal employment opportunities further create a division in who has access to capital and who administers the household economy, potentially leading to a(n) (increased) power hierarchy within the home.

Women, Wage Labor, and Violence

In Lambayeque money, power, and gender are directly and closely linked. I was somewhat surprised (although in retrospect I am not sure why this would be surprising) while conducting fieldwork that women of all social classes had a keen understanding of the economic dimensions of violent relationships, while most men tried to deny any link. This scenario played out while I was interviewing Joaquín. His wife, Lucía, came in the
room while I was interviewing him and began to interject her opinions and challenge his.

Is there an economic side to machismo?
Joaquín- It doesn't have anything to do with economics. They’re behaviors. It doesn't have anything to do with it.
Economics doesn't have anything to do with machismo?
Joaquín- The behavior of men doesn't have anything to do with money. Money doesn't make you stronger or weaker. Do you understand me? It doesn't have anything to do with it.
Now let me ask you, how is it that you think machismo is related to money?
I'm just asking.
Joaquín- Oh, you're just asking [mockingly]. It doesn't have anything to do with it. It's not related to money. Machismo is a question of behavior. Behavior isn't dictated by money. [Lucía interrupts him]
Lucía- In some cases it is related. For example, if a woman works and the man works, since he works he doesn't want you to work. He says, “I'll give you everything you want.” And then the woman can't go out to work. She's just there waiting for the man to give her things. And if she allows herself to be dominated, she’s fucked forever.
Joaquín- But that doesn't have anything to do with machismo.
Lucía- Of course it does! Men always want to be the boss, to dominate. At least I see it that way.
Joaquín- Well that's in other cases.
[Lucía and I begin to laugh]
Lucía- Not in yours.
Joaquín- It's not my case, otherwise you would have never worked, right?
Lucía- Necessity made me work [laughing] because you never gave me anything!
Joaquín- That's the way necessity is, you have to work, dummy! What do you think?

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41 This was the only interview that I conducted in which I was not particularly concerned about the interviewee’s privacy during the interview. In all other interviews I was extremely careful to protect the women’s stories, making sure that no one else was present during the interviews. I was less concerned with this during Joaquín’s interview for the following reasons: firstly, he is a man, and as a man he is in an inherent position of power – I was not particularly worried that something he said would put him in danger; secondly, he did not seem concerned with issues of privacy, and made no attempt to hide what he was saying from Lucía; thirdly, I conducted his interview inside his home, where the only other people present were his wife, daughters, and infant granddaughter – all people who know him intimately and for the most part already know the ins-and-outs of his life story. When I interviewed Lucía, the situation was different. We arranged a time to meet when Joaquín was not home, and the interview ended abruptly when he came home at lunchtime.
Despite Joaquín’s objections, in Lambayeque “real” men are supposed to be able to support their families economically, and “real” men’s wives should not need to work. For many men in Lambayeque, it is embarrassing for the woman to work because it is seen as a signal to wider society that he is incapable of fulfilling his manly role as provider.

Wilson (1998) notes that throughout Latin America, gender expectations, which typically relegate women to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere, often instigate criticism of men whose wives work, mainly due to the fact that the men are then seen as being incapable of supporting their families and incapable of controlling their wives. In Lambayeque, many men view women who work outside the home as emasculating whores, who are only interested in working to embarrass their husbands and to meet other men. Women who work outside of the home are often accused of only wanting to have a job so that they can find a man with whom to have an extra-marital relationship – accusations that often lead to violent conflict.

I later interviewed Lucía, one-on-one, when Joaquín was not at home. During the interview she reflected on her experiences as the regional manager for an international cosmetics company that encourages women to become independent sales representatives. It is Lucía’s responsibility to manage, coordinate, and support the sales representatives, as well as to recruit new representatives. She is frustrated that many women do not to work only because their husbands do not want them to.

*Would you say that there is a lot of violence against women here?*
Here in Lambayeque? Yes.
*Why? What causes so much violence?*
In part, women depend too much on their husbands. And so they become submissive to them, and they allow themselves to be mistreated. But sometimes their husbands don't give them what they have to give them. Or they leave them.
When you say that they depend too much on their husbands, what do you mean?
How do they depend on them?
Economically. Economically. I think it is that more than anything, economically.
So if they leave him, they won't have money to eat?
Exactly, exactly. Because there are cases in which the man does not like for the wife to work, for her to go out. He wants her to just be in her house.
Why?
What must they think? So many things that you see, maybe they think that the women will leave them because she might meet someone else.
So, because they go to work, they're going to end up with someone else?
Exactly. For example, in my case, I see that women themselves are submissive. When I go out to make visits, if I offer them the opportunity to work, to have their own business, they say, “No, my husband doesn't want me to. No, I will have to ask my husband.” It makes me mad. I say to them, “Is your husband the one that is going to do the selling?” They say, “He gets mad. He doesn't want me to go out.” It's a lack of personality [meaning: independence, inner strength] too, in each woman. Because if she wants to work to support her family, for her children more than anything, and for her too, to be able to develop herself personally and professionally.
But here, the normal thing is for the woman to be in the house, right?
Exactly.
So to leave the house to work means breaking social norms?
Exactly.
Do you think that a woman who is working, earning her own money, is a threat to the husband, in the sense that he isn't the super macho man that he was? ...An economic fear that she will lose her dependence?
A fear that the husband has, that she will work and she won't need him anymore? That the husband thinks, she doesn't need me anymore, she has her own money. He loses power.
Of course! He definitely loses power. He loses! Men are machista, machista more than anything. Selfish too, I would say. Because if you were working to help him, supposedly it is so that the family will progress, and he doesn't allow those things, well… It also depends on the man's form of thinking. The level of education he has. His personality. And the level of trust he has with his wife.
It seems to me, too, that has a lot to do with how he was raised.
Exactly. The values he has.
Based on what I have seen, even more important than educational level, like if he finished the university, because you get every type of person coming out of university too...
[She finishes my sentence] …how they raised him! Sometimes they just do whatever their mom or dad tells them.
Lucía then continued to tell me about her own experiences as a working woman, wife, and mother. When their children were young, Joaquín was oblivious to the reality of his family’s economic situation (he was too busy living an hombre parrandero lifestyle); and Lucía, out of necessity, took on the responsibility of providing for her daughters.

*How did Joaquín react to your working?*

He lived on the moon… How was he even going to realize it? I was the one who bought everything for my daughters. Their school uniforms, I sewed them. Their dresses, I sewed them, so I didn't have to spend money on those things. He lived in another world. And sometimes I get angry with myself, why did I put up with him so much? From the very beginning I should have left him, I should have come to live here alone with my daughters.

But in part I didn't do it because I didn't want to worry my grandmother. As far as my grandmother knew, everything was fine, nothing was going on. Everything was perfect. Peace and love. But that's not how it was. But he was so charming that he could win over my family. My grandmother never really knew how things were. I'm glad. It's okay that she saw things as she did. So, I got ahead.

I always tell my daughters, there is nothing better than having your profession. No one can ever take your studies away from you. You are what you are anywhere, if you have a career, a profession. That's what I want my daughters to have – a career, for themselves, so that they know how to defend themselves. If they do well or if things go badly in their marriage or their relationship, they are not going to depend on another person. That's what I'm fighting for with Alejandra. Joaquín didn't want her to study at the University. He didn't care. Gabby is getting ready to go back to high school, do you think he asked her if she needed anything? No, he didn't buy her anything. Absolutely nothing. Alejandra just stood there wide-eyed, “Mom, my dad hasn't said anything.” I said to her, “Your dad is sick. It's because he is sick.” They see all of that, and they are resentful. But they are beginning to forget it a little bit. I tell them, “Your father is sick. He can't get angry, he can't get upset.”

You know, sometimes you get over being hit faster than you get over words. You don't forget what they have said to you. That's what I tell Joaquín. I asked him, “Joaquín, when you were in school didn't your mom buy you your things? Didn't your parents worry about you?” “Yes, they bought me such and such.” I said, “And couldn't you do that with Carolina this year? You didn't even care. The very next day she was going to school, and you weren't even worried. You didn't even say, 'I don't have any money.’” I could also say that, but I figure out what to do. I go and collect money, I sell something, I borrow money, I don't know.” He just

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42 She blamed his behavior on an illness he is recovering from, rather than on his disinterest, so that his daughters would not be angry with him.
says, “They are spoiled, they misbehave.” “But they are your daughters. Don't you want them to study?”

Although Joaquín has never objected to Lucía working outside of the home, he does get angry when her work interferes with what he understands to be her roles in the home. When she does not have lunch prepared on time, or she comes home late at night and doesn’t know where her daughters (ages 15 and 19) are, he will yell at her, telling her that she is not fulfilling her duties as wife and mother. He will often tell her that he does not care if she works, but that working does not mean that she does not have to fulfill her other wifely and motherly duties. Joaquín is even more angered that his daughters do not assume the domestic duties of cooking, washing, and cleaning when their mother is working. Regardless of whether in the formal or informal sector, women’s employment often creates a “double-duty” chain of reaction for women, burdening them with the responsibility of not only their wage employment but also with their domestic tasks. In cases when women do not take on their own “double-duty,” domestic tasks are often passed off onto other female relatives who assume the additional work. Kabeer (2005:20) explains that, “Despite their increased labour input into paid work, women (particularly married women) either continue to bear the main burden of domestic work, or share it with other female members of the household – often their daughters.”

Women in Lambayeque are increasingly frustrated by husbands who refuse or are unable to give them adequate money to take care of the household, but prohibit them from working outside the home in the formal or informal economy. Even with the established gender expectations limiting women’s roles, “In times of economic crisis, when women are responsible for the daily reproduction of their households, they turn to
the activities with which they are most familiar to try to provide for their families” (Vincent 1998:134). It is at this time that “… women come to consider their domestic products or services as exchangeable rather than as unquestioned household work, thus establishing the grounds for their commodification” (Vincent 1998:121). As a way of maintaining some semblance of gender roles, women working in the informal sector often assume responsibilities that are similar to their quotidian domestic tasks, which are often the only options that society makes available to them. Informal workers carry out a variety of tasks in a variety of locations, many of which include elements of “traditional” domestic women’s tasks (Draper 1985).

But, many women who decide to work in Lambayeque are physically and psychologically punished for working, formally or informally. Before Guadalupe’s mother left her abusive husband, she would look for ways to work to support her family. Her husband objected, despite the fact that he was out of work and also benefitted from her earnings, and would do everything in his power to sabotage her work.

Guadalupe- My mom had a store on 29th of May Street.  
Pilar- [Her dad] would eat everything  
Guadalupe - He would eat everything, and give everything away. And on top of that, he beat her up in the bathroom. He said that she had no reason to be selling. He told her that she had no reason to be smiling so that people would come and buy things. But, he ate from that money, because he didn't have a job. When he had a job we would never even see him. He would travel. He would travel. What must have changed? Because before, when we lived on 29th of May Street, he didn't hit my mom. Everything began when he lost his job.  
*And your mom had to figure out where to get money.*  
Guadalupe - Exactly.  
Pilar - But he didn't lose his job. They closed down the co-ops.  
Guadalupe - Yes, they closed down the co-ops.  
Pilar - They closed down the co-ops and there was no more work. But it wasn't that he was fired.
I find it very telling what Pilar\textsuperscript{43} chose to point out about why Guadalupe’s father was not employed. Although I do not think that Pilar was defending Guadalupe’s father’s violent behavior towards his wife, it was clear that she wanted to defend her brother’s reputation to an extent, by pointing out that he was not fired from his job. Other than Guadalupe, who openly condemned her father’s violence, no one else in the group interview (three of whom are his sisters) had much to say about it. I am sure that Guadalupe’s aunts did not support her father’s violent behavior because the aunts served as a support system for Guadalupe, her sisters, and her mother during times of violence. I suspect that they were quiet out of embarrassment that their brother had acted in such abusive ways, knowing that his bad behavior challenged their family’s good name.

María’s husband was outwardly and unapologetically violent when he found out she was working secretly to help the household economy. María still does not understand why her husband does not like her to work. She, like most women in Lambayeque, worked with the intention of helping her family “get ahead.”

I learned from a neighbor how to work washing clothes. But he didn’t want me to. He got angry. I would talk to this woman that everyone called Samba. She would see me here with nothing, because we didn’t have anything. I wasn’t dancing. He didn’t want me to dance.\textsuperscript{44} So, he would get home, and he would get angry with me [because there was nothing to eat]. What did I think? I thought, well, I have to do something too. So I talked to the neighbor, and she said, “I wash clothes for the guy who sells eggs. If you like, I can talk to him so that you wash for him instead.” But I did it in secret, so that he wouldn’t get mad. One day he found food, he said, “Oh, whose clothes did you wash? With what money did you make a meal?” Even though I was there waiting to serve him his food, oh, he hit me even harder. He hit me hard. The neighbor told him that he was shameless, she yelled at him. And by then his sisters were there, my brothers-in-law, my 3 brothers-in-law were in my room. I took care of them. I cooked for them. But not even like that did my mother-in-law value me. I wanted to leave. I

\textsuperscript{43} Pilar is Guadalupe’s aunt, the sister of Guadalupe’s father
\textsuperscript{44} She worked previously as a dancer with a band.
wanted to leave. I wanted to go visit my sister, but he didn’t let me. One day…
right in front of his brother, my husband grabbed me by my hair and dragged me
to our room. His brother didn’t do anything. So then, he went to work, and I went
to talk to my friend. “No,” she said to me, “you need to see how you can leave
here because he’s never going to change.” So I prepared him some food, and she
told me to leave him a note. She said to leave a note that would hurt him all the
way to his soul, that would make him repent for everything he has done…
In the note I told him, “You’re machista. Despite all the love I have for you, don’t
think that I’m going to stay by your side. Because if I stay with you, you are
always going to be mistreating me. So, it’s better, that we don’t have any kids, it’s
better if I leave. Here is your food. If you don’t trust me, it’s better that we don’t
continue.” I really did want to leave him. I went directly to work. And my
neighbor said to me, no, don’t go to work. Come to my house, and I’ll watch and
see how he reacts. I cried and cried like a dummy. Then my neighbor sent me to
her mother’s stand in the market. I helped her there. But I was a mess! How the
people looked at me! My eyes were really, really swollen… And then someone
told me, “Your husband received a load of bricks [at work], and since then he’s
been looking all over for you. He’s looked all over Chiclayo.” That evening I sat
in a park near our house, thinking about whether I should go back. But I knew I
shouldn’t. I was all beaten up. I had bruises all over. My skin was green, black.

Controlling Economic Resources

The control over how household income is used is a common source of marital
conflict in Lambayeque. The women I interviewed often brought up economic issues as
instigators of violent episodes. One of the most common conflicts between husbands and
wives concerns how to spend the family’s few economic resources. This conflict is
enhanced by the gendered private/public dichotomy that divides women and men into
two separate economic spaces. The most common economic complaint I heard from
women was about men’s misappropriation of economic resources outside the home. They
complained about their husbands’ spending money on alcohol, drugs, and/or other
women while their wives and children were at home living in poverty. Dolores said that
arguments over how money was being spent was one of the principle instigators of
violent episodes in her relationship.
When he would come home drunk, he never liked to go to work. When he would come home drunk and he wouldn't bring home money, I would say to him, “And the money for the food? You have been drinking, and now for the food?” He would grab me and beat me hard… When my son was born he got drunk, all the way to his shoes, celebrating that his son was born. But nothing for milk, nothing for food. He just got drunk because he was celebrating the fact that his son was born. He didn't even come home that week. I thought, maybe he's just celebrating because my son is here. Next week he will begin working. But, no. He would say to me sometimes, “Buy the food on credit and we’ll see how to pay for it later.”

Luz’s husband was similarly disinterested in providing for his children, and would flaunt things that he bought for himself, refusing to share with Luz and their children.

He would go around with one woman, with another woman. That's why I never saw him at my house. He was never home. Every 15 or 20 days he would arrive. Sometimes a month. He would leave, then he would come back. He would go to Lima, he would go to Piura. That's what his life was like. That's why I would say to him, “You never worry about the babies; you don't even give them anything to eat.” When he worked he would buy bread, cheese, olives, and milk for him to eat. I thought he would give some to my little children, because when they were a little bit bigger they started weaving [baskets]. All of them know how to work. And the littlest ones they would stretch out their necks and they could just barely see what he brought with him. They would get excited because they thought he had brought it for them. But it wasn't for them. He would get up, make his breakfast, and he would drink a big mug of milk, with bread, with cheese, with olives. I would think, what a terrible father. My heart would break; it would hurt my heart so much to see what he would eat all by himself. I told him, “If you want to eat alone, go somewhere else, but don't let the little kids see you.” I reminded him, “Your little kids work, you only come to eat. But just like you come and eat their food, you should bring them food. But not you, you do everything alone or with your friends.” Him and his friends, him and his friends, and the woman at home…

María, too, had problems with her husband over how he was using the little money he earned. She knew that he was running around with other women and spending money on them, but she had no way of proving it. Then, one day, there was a knock at her door. An appliance store’s delivery truck was in front of her house with a new stove. They told her that her husband had gone to the store and bought the stove on credit and
asked that it be delivered to his wife as a surprise. María, taken aback, told them that she was his wife, and the delivery men brought the stove into her home. They left the paperwork with her and told her to have a nice day. After they left, María looked at the paperwork and realized that the stove was not intended for her. The delivery men had made a mistake. It was her husband who had purchased the stove, but the delivery men had mixed up the billing address and the shipping address. The stove was supposed to have been shipped to another woman (whose name was on the slip) in Chiclayo. María was furious. She decided that the best way to get back at him was to use the stove before her husband got home, so that it could not be returned.

When her husband arrived home and saw the stove, he flew into a rage, screaming at her and asking her why she had accepted the stove. She calmly explained that the delivery man had come asking for the wife of her husband, saying that they had a stove to deliver. She said that since she is his wife, she accepted. He yelled that there had to be some sort of mistake, that he had not bought a stove. She slyly said to him, “But your name and address and signature are on the receipt.” He was defeated. He did not ever say another word to her about the stove. María considers it one of her greatest victories, although it angers her to think about what else he may have bought the other woman.

Because control over capital is an exertion of power, and in the largely impoverished Lambayeque capital is limited, women are extremely conscious of who controls the family income. María blames money and the economy for violence against women in Lambayeque.
Here in Lambayeque, what causes VAW?
Most often it’s because of the poor economy. How can I explain it to you? It’s to say, money. Money is what makes people fight; money is the devil. For example, my husband lies to me saying that he earns 70 soles [about $26 US]. But I don’t believe him. I don’t believe that a musician only earns 70 soles per concert. He must earn more. So that causes fights. “NO! You earn more.” “No I don’t.” “You’re lying to me. I need that money for my kids. You want to spend that money on another woman. Instead of giving that money to another woman, give it to my kids!” That’s what it comes down to. Money is everything.

In Lambayeque, most of the time it is men who control the money in a relationship. Because men work and women often do not, men often see themselves as having the right to control the money they earn. One of the funniest moments of all of the interviews that I conducted was also, perhaps, one of the most telling. During the group interview, I had my three year old godson with me. He was sitting on the floor coloring while I interviewed the women.

Who controls the money in relationships?
Pilar- Yes, who controls the money!
Fabi- [Looks up from his coloring and yells out] My DAD! [we all laugh]
Pilar - His father controls the money!
Olivia- Look at how he knows that his father controls the money!
Guadalupe- Doesn't your mom have any money?
Fabi- No.
Pilar - Look, his mom doesn't have money.
Guadalupe - He is well-trained.
What about your godmother [referring to myself]?
Fabi- No, she doesn't have money either.
Pilar - He has learned well [laughing].
Fabi- Yes, she has money!
Pilar - She has money, doesn't she?
Guadalupe - It is hidden [teasing me].
Fabi- Yes.

Despite the fact that his mother and father are separated, and his mother works full time in a professional job, his understanding of who controls the money and the dynamics of
Power and control are telling of how ingrained and naturalized these economic structures are in Lambayecano society.

In some instances women are forced to try to maintain the household on a shoestring budget allowance, dealt out to them by their husbands. I was also told of men who are so untrusting and jealous with their wives, they accompany them to the market to do the shopping, making sure that they do not speak with other men and paying for the purchases. These women never even handle cash. Other men, as a way of further controlling how a woman spends money, will make an agreement with the local bodega owner to sell the woman food, toiletries, laundry detergent, etc. on credit, which the man then pays at the end of the month. In this way the man does not have to give the woman any money and he has a running tab of all of her purchases.

This is the case with María and her husband. It angers María though, because she feels that it is a sign that her husband does not trust her, and because she knows that she could buy the same things for less money at the market. Some women, like María, also use this credit system to their advantage and as a form of resistance. When they sneak and work without their husbands knowing, they use the money they earn on things that the husband refuses to pay for. María, for example washed clothes to be able to pay for her children’s summer school. While I was conducting my field work, she asked me to give her an advance on payment for washing my clothes and she would ask me to hide money for her so that her husband would not find it (I agreed to do both). She told me:

Sometimes I trick him. I already paid, but I tell him that I didn’t. The thing is that when he gives me money, I recover what I’ve already spent, and then I have money to pay for other things. You see? For my son’s elementary school graduation, that’s what I had to do.
And when you earn your money?
[If he knows I earned money] he stops giving me money. He knows that for my kids, I spend money. He knows that I invest in my kids. He takes advantage of the money I earn to not give me more. That’s why I’m so mad at him.

Economic Limitations to Resistance of IPVAW

A lack of economic stability and independence makes it significantly more difficult for a woman to resist violence and to leave a violent relationship. As was noted in chapter five, women were often hesitant to call the police on their abusive husband for fear that the police would beat him up or that he would be sent to jail. They knew that their husbands were correct when they would remind the women that if they went to jail for abuse or for not paying child support, they would not be giving her or her kids any money with which to live. Dolores’s husband used that knowledge to manipulate her into not filing for child support.

He does it so that I don't file a report against him for child support. He says to me, “You left me; I'm not going to send you anything.” And it's true, I have gone to look for him and he always says, “I don't have any money, I don't have any.” And every time I would be ready to file a report against him, he would take my son… And he would say to me, “If you file a report against me, you know I don't have a steady job. I will give you whatever I want whenever I want.” So I didn't file a report against him. My children grew up, and I never filed a report against him… One time my sister said, “File a report against him.” She said, “File a report against him, let's go file a report against him.” I said, “Okay, let's go.” When I got to MUNA in Chiclayo, I didn't even know Chiclayo, I was from here in Lambayeque, when I got there they said, “Come in, come in so you can file your report.” I said, “No, you will put him in jail.” And I didn't file the report. “No,” I said, “poor thing. They will beat him up [in jail] and it will be my fault.” He would say to me, “If you file a report against me, I will never give you anything for the kids ever again. I will go far away because if you file a report against me the police will look for me and I will have to run. If I have to go, who will give you money for food for the children?” I thought, since I didn't know, I thought, the police will look for him and they won't leave him free, and who will give me money for my children? I didn't file a report against him. I went back home.

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45 The government agency where women used to have to go to file for child support.
Dolores was afraid to separate from her husband, but ultimately did so as a way of trying to escape from the violence. When she left her husband she did not receive any economic support from her children’s father or any support (economic or otherwise) from her family. Dolores’s story shows many of the economic factors that made her escape especially challenging, including not having a safe place to live, not having money, not having a job, not having options for child care, and not having a support network.

The reason I didn't separate from him was because my children were very little. I would think, if I separate from him what will become of me? [She begins to cry] I didn't have valor… I came with my children here, to invade [in Las Dunas as a squatter]. I brought them as little babies. I didn't have anywhere to work. I didn't have any support, not from anyone. My mom is dead, so is my dad. I came here to invade with not even one [rice] sack, with not even one stick to make a choza (shanty). Someone said to me, “Dolores, I have some sticks for you to make your choza. I would pick sacks out of the garbage and sew them together to make my little choza.

I thought, how will I work? My children are so little. There was a comedor popular [a locally run soup kitchen], and they said to me, “Don't you have a husband?” I said, “No.” They asked me, “How are you going to take care of your children?” I said,” I don't have any choice. I will register them at the comedor.” But you have to pay. So I said to the president, “I don't have any money to pay, but I can cook. I will cook here if you give my children food.” She said, “Okay, sure.” Thank God. “Yes, Dolores,” she said, “you cook and you will not pay.” That's where I began. My children ate at the comedor. Friends would bring me clothes to wash. “Dolores, wash these for me.” “Okay,” I would say. I would wash. My children got bigger, and bigger. I brought my daughter here when she was only seven months old, the last one… My daughter got bigger, but she was also malnourished. She got malnourished. I looked at my daughter and she was so skinny. It made me so sad to look at my daughter. When I washed they would give me things, milk, sugar, fruit. Once she was bigger I began working in the monte. I worked transplanting rice. [My kids] were old enough to go to school. I went and bought used uniforms. I bought them their things, I registered them, and I sent them to school. When I came here I thought, I will never go back to him. He will just hit me again. I prefer to suffer hunger then suffer hitting, because my children were traumatized.

My son and my older daughter would scream. It was traumatic. I had gotten used to it. I wanted to fight him back. It had become something normal. But later I reacted, no, this is not right. My children scream. I scream. I wanted to die. I would say to him, “Kill me once and for all. Kill me once and for all because I
don't want to live.” I thought, if I leave, how will I raise my children? They were so little, and I had so many. If he doesn't give me money, how am I going to get ahead? But you can get ahead, because look at me. I am here with my children. Even though my older son is a rogue, he misbehaves…

The women were also aware that impoverished individuals receive less support from the police and other government officials than wealthier individuals do. Even free services are not really free. Dolores’s attempt at getting help from the Centro de Emergencia Mujer (CEM – Women’s Emergency Center) was thwarted by her lack of economic resources.

I went once to MIMDES46 here in Lambayeque, I told them. They said, “Ma'am, get the original copy of the birth certificates of your four children.” The original certificates are eight soles. Supposedly I am [asking for child support because I am] separated, I don't have one sol to even give them food to eat, where am I going to get eight soles each for four original birth certificates? I just stood there looking at the woman, and then I turned around and walked out. And I came here to my house. I thought, I guess I'll go buy some rice and fish for my children to give them something to eat. It was eight soles for each birth certificate. How was I going to file a report? I just came back home.

The issue of child support is a vital one, and women know that if they can get court-ordered child support, the ordered amount is usually not enough and it is difficult to enforce, as Eloísa learned.

When my Camila was seven months old he abandoned me. He abandoned me and so I began to work to take care of my daughters. I asked him for money, but he said he didn't have any. I said to him, “How are your daughters going to eat? I don't have any money, I don't have any. I'm not going to go steal.” I told him, “But they are your daughters, how do you maintain four [stepchildren] that aren’t even yours but you don't have any money to take care of your own? It's not for me,” I told him, “it's for your daughters.” “I don't have any,” he would say to me, “I don't have any.” Until I got tired of that. So I came and I talked to his oldest brother. He told me, “If you want him to give you money, file a report against him asking for child support.” So I went to see a lawyer, and he went to Picisí [a town near Lambayeque where the jail is]. That was the only time that he paid me child support.

46 Ministerio de la Mujer y Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Women and Social Development). MIMDES runs the CEMs.
support. That was the only time, he gave me 250 or 300. Only one time, never again.

*It was supposed to be that every month?*

Yes, it was supposed to be monthly, but he only paid once. After that, never again. I thought, I'm not going to stay here begging. I have two capable hands, I'm going to work. So I began to work. At ENTRAFESA, I had a kiosk where I sold candy. And at 5 PM the bus from Piura came by, and I would get on the bus to sell. I would get on the bus. A little further down there was another bus station, Cruz del Chacon, I also sold King Kongs\(^{47}\) for my older brother. I would also go there. I would get on the buses and sell King Kongs, and I never bothered him again.

Because women cannot rely on child support, they must either get involved with a man who is willing to support them and their children, or they must find work. As was described in chapter five, many men will not “accept” women with children of another man. Women with children are forever stigmatized and marginalized. If the man does accept a woman with children, the children are often abused emotionally, physically, and/or sexually. Access to wage labor is also limited for women in general, but is especially limited for women with children. There are few child care options available to working women, and most of them are costly. For women with many children, paying for childcare is usually impossible. This economic barrier forces women to leave young children home with older siblings (usually the oldest daughter) who may have to miss school to take care of their younger brothers and sisters, thus curtailing their opportunities for future education and employment. Even if a woman can get a job, she usually earns less than her male counterparts, and she is usually relegated to jobs of low prestige in the informal economy.

\(^{47}\) A sweet typical of Lambayeque that layers cookies with milk caramel. When the movie King Kong was very popular in Peru, a local company began making huge cookies with milk caramel, calling them “King Kongs.”
As was explained in chapter five, because the poor families of abused women cannot support them and their children, women must find housing for themselves and their children. Often women can only afford to rent out a single room, rather than an apartment or a house. Landlords sometimes will not rent to women with children. If the landlord will accept a woman with her children, the family faces problems of overcrowding and lack of privacy. Also, in one room rentals, there is no place for a woman to cook, meaning that the woman and her children must eat on the street, which is much more expensive and less nutritious than eating home cooked meals.

As I was finishing my fieldwork, María was looking for a room to rent for her and her children. She was not having any luck. Rooms were either too expensive or would not accept her with her three children. She said she was lucky because she did not pay rent where she lived with her husband, but she had to tolerate his abuse. Her previous home (a rented room) was flooded during a particularly bad El Niño so she had to leave and find a new place to live. She ended up “invading” some land on the outskirts of Lambayeque, where she has now lived for 11 years as a squatter.

Alejandra, the youngest woman I interviewed, is also now facing life as a single mother. She is fortunate to have the support, both economic and emotional, of her lower-middle class family. Because her parents and grandparent help to support Alejandra and her baby, and she has been relatively successful in securing semi-regular child-support payments, Alejandra has been able to continue her studies at the university, and does not have a job. She is happy with her decision to raise her daughter on her own.

But for real, getting away from him, even though being a single mother is scary and hard, not going back to him is the best decision I've ever made. It's the best. I
live for my daughter, and to see her smile is the most gratifying thing that I have. I can't imagine my life next to that man, my daughter seeing hitting and mistreatment, no.
CHAPTER 7: “OH, THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO PEOPLE” – PUBLIC PATRIARCHY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This chapter will explore some of the types of public patriarchy that women in Lambayeque face on a daily basis. When a woman or a girl tries to escape the private patriarchy of her home and the violence perpetrated by her family or by her husband, she is faced with the multi-faceted challenges of public patriarchy. Patriarchal notions and expectations may be (re)enforced publically by individuals, by the media, and by institutions. This chapter will focus on public patriarchal discourses and actions of individuals and the media. It will begin with a brief historical look at the social positioning of women in Peru and will then focus on contemporary manifestations of public patriarchy. It will specifically address how patriarchy is engrained in generalized violence (which may or may not take obviously gendered forms), language, the media, and popular culture. In addition to resisting private patriarchy and violence, women in Lambayeque also face this pervasive insidious public patriarchy.

The symbolic and literal use of women’s bodies as points of struggle has repeated itself throughout Peruvian history. Women are regularly expected to self-sacrifice for the benefit of their families and the larger community, as a way of compensating for the shortcomings of their husbands or the state. Women’s bodies and women’s sexuality are controlled by men to acquire and (re)enforce patriarchal power, and are directly manipulated for the purposes of creating and maintaining gender expectations. Ennew (1986:58), in her analysis of girls growing up in Lima, explains the restrictions that Peruvian women and girls face in the public sphere:
The supposed danger in which a lone female stands in Lima is sexual, but the real danger involved is the violation of the honour of her male family members. Men gain their sense of worth from interaction with other men, but through their treatment of women. A man’s honour is tied up in the sexual purity of his mother, wife, daughters and sisters. The logic of machismo is well known. It leads to the cult of premarital chastity, to the reification of maternity and a social distinction between two types of the female sexual object. The reproductive object is a wife/mother and the recreational object is a prostitute.

This fictitious binary between the reproductive object and the recreational object lays the groundwork for Peru’s gender dynamics, “good” women’s relegation to the domestic sphere, and the expectations of women to assume family responsibilities and care-giving roles.

Pre-Hispanic and Colonial Gender Roles in Peru

Dominant pre-Hispanic indigenous communities in Peru, while arguably more equitable than many western societies, had a clear male focus of power. While many pre-Inca Andean cultures were egalitarian and employed a system of bilateral descent (allotting inheritance and property rights to both men and women), the Inca empire was notably more stratified and patriarchal. The Inca Emperor (always a man, and the son of the previous Inca), held significantly more power than his wife, the Coya (a sister that he married to consolidate family power and domination), who had more (albeit indirect) economic and political power than most women at the time. Additionally, virgin women were often taken by Inca officials or were given by their families to serve the Inca or other elites, or to become virgin priestesses, in exchange for a reduction in obligatory

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48 The recent discovery (announced in 2006) of a mummy of a tattooed woman in a Moche (A.D. 100 to 800 on Peru’s northern coast) tomb at Huaca Cao Viejo, near Trujillo, has led to speculation about her position in the high ranks of Moche society. Her burial, which had an “unusual mix of ornamental and military artifacts” is similar to other tombs of very high status, and has archaeologists wondering if the Moche had women in some positions of high authority (Norris 2006).
tribute labor to the empire by the family (predominately carried out by men). Despite the highly stratified economic and patriarchal divisions of the Inca elites, however, the non-elite maintained many egalitarian behaviors from pre-Inca times, such as shared gender roles and authority based on birth order within sibling groups (Bonvillain 2007).

In the 1500s, the Spanish conquistadores brought and implemented European ideals of patriarchy and the Hispanic tradition of machismo to what is now known as Peru. The groups of men sent by the Spanish crown regularly raped indigenous women and emasculated indigenous men. African slaves brought to Peru were treated in similar ways, although they were often treated even more violently. Although both men and women were repressed, women faced the double oppression of being indigenous or Black women. These gendered and racial dynamics continued through colonial times, consolidating the public sphere for men, while women were relegated to the private, domestic sphere.

Women and the Independence of the Republic

Although Peruvian Independence from Spain was fought through a series of military battles, primarily carried out by men, individual women played vital roles in men’s successes. The roles women played, however, were regularly self-sacrificing and directly benefitted the men they were supporting, rather than women functioning as principle actors in the struggle. In Lambayeque, where Juan Manuel Iturregui performed the first cry of Peruvian Independence on December 27, 1820 (seven months before the official proclamation of Independence by José de San Martín on July 28, 1821), a woman now popularly known as “La Venus” sacrificed her body to save the patriots from a
Spanish attack. Iturregui and his men were meeting in his home, La Casa de la Logia (now a historical monument, also known as La Casa Monjoy), while a few blocks away at the Coraceros Cuartel (now an all-boys public school named “27 de Diciembre” to commemorate the date of Iturregui’s cry of independence) the Spanish soldiers were planning an attack. Iturregui and his fellow patriots needed to escape through the secret tunnels that connected several buildings in town to avoid capture by the Spanish. La Venus, in order to cause a distraction, stood in the main plaza of Lambayeque, in front of the Coraceros Cuartel, and removed her clothing. While the Spanish soldiers were distracted by La Venus’s naked body, Iturregui and the other men escaped, and the Spanish soldiers later found La Casa de la Logia completely abandoned. Iturregui and his supporters later attacked the Coraceros Cuartel, forcing the Spanish troops to retreat to the city of Trujillo.

Contemporarily, in Lambayeque, the central fountain in the Plaza de Armas features a statue of a naked woman representing La Venus. Although Lambayecanos proudly tell the story of La Venus, she is remembered as a nameless (few remember her real name) female body that is valued only for its sacrifice for the military glorification of Iturregui and the other men fighting for Peruvian independence. Iturregui, who may have been killed or captured by the Spanish if it were not for La Venus’s sacrifice, on the other hand, is recognized as a national hero and has a public high school bearing his name in Lambayeque.

Contemporarily, the racial and ethnic hierarchy set forth in colonial times continues, with those of African and indigenous descent still being marginalized within
Racial and ethnic discrimination is compounded by class relations that value the wealthy over the poor. The women in Lambayeque that I interviewed face the triple marginalization of being women, non-white, and poor.

**Generalized Violence**

Between my last visited to Lambayeque before fieldwork (September 2007), and the time I returned to Lambayeque to conduct fieldwork (December 2009), there was a significant shift in attitudes about personal safety in the town. As soon as my husband and I arrived in Lambayeque, it seems that everyone we ran into warned us that Lambayeque is not “like before” and to be very careful and vigilant. There is now a culture of fear of street violence in Lambayeque in response to the increase in violent muggings and robberies. Anyone walking down the street, day or night, is a potential victim of a drive-by or a run-by robbery, in which two or three young (usually) men drive by on a moto-taxi and snatch cell phones, purses, backpacks, and whatever else one may be carrying.

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49 While ethnic and racial identities are important in understanding the intersectionality of women’s identities, this study did not attempt to assess difference based on these variables.

50 This study was not designed to clearly assess class differences. None of the women I spoke to were economically resourced the way some women in Peru are, and therefore, none of the women I interviewed have the money to pay for private services. Informants did, however, speak about their own conceptualizations of other class experiences. While the women I interviewed suffered differing degrees of poverty, it is important to recognize that some were more economically better off than others. Of the thirteen women (private citizens) that I interviewed at length, six belong to Lambayeque’s “lower class” and seven belong to the “lower-middle class.” Of the women in the “lower-middle class,” three are professional women who largely support themselves (with help from family/partner), one depends on her parents’ economic support, two depend on their husband’s economic support, and one depends on the economic support of her adult son. In conversations I noticed that women in the lower-middle class were quicker to make unprovoked judgments or to denounce violence, while women in the lower-class were somewhat more hesitant.

51 A moto-taxi is the most common form of transport in Lambayeque. The front half is a normal motorcycle and the back half is two-wheeled, with a covered seating area for up to three people.
Prior to arriving to do my fieldwork, my mother-in-law told me about a woman who had been robbed by young men in a passing moto-taxi. They grabbed her purse as they drove by, dragging her, tangled in her purse strap, behind the moto-taxi for nearly a block before she finally broke free. They never stopped. The woman is now in a permanent vegetative state. Right before I arrived in Lambayeque, Ximena had been robbed in the same way while walking home accompanied by her son’s father. They grabbed a bag she was carrying as well as her purse, dragging her to the ground, covering her legs and arms with scrapes and bruises, and causing her to hit her head on the cement sidewalk. While I was in Lambayeque conducting my fieldwork, one night while I was visiting Joaquín, around 9:30 in the evening, Lucía came home upset. She had been riding her bicycle home when a moto-taxi came up beside her and a man grabbed her bag, pulling her off her bike and dragging her a short distance, ripping holes in her jacket and jeans. Joaquín’s reaction to Lucía’s story consisted almost entirely of victim blaming. Rather than questioning why women are targeted for these crimes, he asked her why she insists on being out in the street alone so late at night, reminding her that he always warned her that something like this was going to happen.

While seemingly economically-driven, these robberies also have an underlying gendered character. Usually perpetrated by young men, these crimes more frequently target women who are seen as “easier targets” and are assumed to be less able to resist and less likely to fight back than men. When men are robbed in this way they are usually intoxicated. The attackers frequently emasculate their male targets, taking them to secluded areas outside of town where they are stripped to their underwear, sometimes
beaten, and abandoned. These men then have to either walk home in their underwear or find a sympathetic taxi driver (something that is not always easy to find) who trusts that the semi-naked man is not un loco (mentally-ill) and will pay the fare upon arriving home. Men who are victimized in this way are extremely embarrassed about their victimization, and often face public ridicule and teasing. I personally know several men who have been attacked in this way. In one extreme case, a friend, who at the time did not regularly wear underwear, was left completely naked by a gang of robbers in La Victoria, one of Lima’s most dangerous districts, in the middle of the day. Attempting to cover himself with scraps of cardboard that he found on the ground, it took him over an hour to finally convince a taxi-driver to stop (most passed by without making eye-contact) and take him home.

These types of robberies are rarely ever investigated or prosecuted. They are so common that it would be almost impossible for the understaffed police force to investigate them all. Additionally, Peruvian law only allows prosecution if a minimum amount (around $250 US) is stolen. Since most robberies involve less than the minimum, investigations are never even begun.

Gang violence has also become a security issue for Lambayeque. Each pueblo joven has its own gang. These gangs were originally formed to supposedly “defend” the neighborhood from criminals from other neighborhoods. Now these gangs center on low-level organized crime, such as dealing drugs and robberies. Influenced by a convoluted understanding of US Hip Hop culture that is derived from television and movies, gang members try to imitate a caricaturized “thug life.” These gangs often fight each other in
the center of Lambayeque, a “neutral” space located between the rival pueblos. While, fortunately, there still do not seem to be many guns involved, the gang members are skilled at using rocks, sling shots, knives, and the street weapon of choice: rebar, filed to a point, which can be used to hit as well as to stab. Innocent passersby are often turned upon when they mistakenly come across gang violence. When those passersby are women, molestation and rape are very real threats. The police are largely unable and unwilling to deal with gang violence. Two friends who used to work as police officers in different cities in Peru have told me in different contexts that for the understaffed and underequipped police, it is easier and safer to simply let the gangs fight to the death, and then to go in and pick up the bodies, rather than trying to stop a fight between “savage” gangs.

Everyday VAW on the Street

Women face linguistic, physical and sexual violence on the street on a daily basis. Cat calls and grabbing women are normalized street behavior in Peru. It is not uncommon for a man to try to grab a woman’s breasts or buttocks while she is walking through a crowded market, on a crowded bus, or sometimes when simply walking down the street. Ximena, a young woman with large breasts, regularly has men on the street trying to grab her. After being away from Peru for two years, I had forgotten how intense the sense of dread a woman feels can be when approaching a group of men on the street, not knowing what they might say or try to do. Comments range from piropos (flirtatious comments), to vulgar comments, often about violent sexual “desires.” The culturally “appropriate” response is for women to ignore the comment and continue on about their business. I find
this hard at times, especially when the comments are particularly vulgar. When I asked other women about their experiences with strange men in the street, many of them expressed a common sentiment: it would be nice if they would just say something bonito (nice). Unfortunately, the things said are rarely bonito, and are often threatening and even terrorizing. When women feel particularly offended by what men say to them they may respond with words or with physical violence, depending on how threatened they feel in the situation. Ximena, for example, has slapped men who have tried to grab her body, but only when in places with lots of other people (men and women) around, where she feels there is less likelihood for the man to respond with violence.

While in Lambayeque conducting fieldwork, one night around 10 pm, as I walked the 4 blocks home by myself from Joaquín and Lucía’s house, a man began to follow me through the Children’s Park. I quickened my pace and he quickened his. Unsure of his intentions, and very aware of his proximity to me and the fact that there was no one else around, I began to worry. I was scanning the area of where I could go, but since it was Sunday night, every place except for one restaurant on the other side of the park was closed. He was going to catch up with me before I could get to the restaurant. Worried that he might try to rob me (or do something worse), I decided to make a bold move. I spun around, catching him by surprise, and got in his face. I yelled, pointing my finger at him, “If you take one step closer to me I’m going to beat the shit out of you.” He stepped back, surprised, and said, “My love, why do you talk to me in this way? I love you.” I told him to go to hell and to get away from me. He continued telling me that he loved me, yelling after me, but fortunately he did not continue following me. I suspected that he
was either drunk or high. When I got home and told my mother-in-law what had happened, she expressed her concern and disgust for men who behave in that way, but was not particularly surprised by what happened. The next day when I saw Joaquín and Lucía I told them what had happened. Lucía, sympathetically, told a story of her own about a man that had followed her recently, telling her what he would like to do with her sexually. Joaquín laughed hysterically at my story, joking that I was a mean woman for treating that man in such a cruel way, when it is obvious that he was in love with me. But, despite his laughter and teasing, after that, he always insisted on walking me home after dark. Despite the fact that I had previously rejected offers to be walked home, asserting my ability to “take care of myself,” and rejecting the idea that I needed a man to “protect” me, after that incident I was glad to have the company, but angered that I felt that I needed it.

Physical and sexual attacks on women in the street by strangers also exist. After María was attacked one day while walking home (rather than taking a moto-taxi, in an attempt to save money), she too decided that it was not safe to walk alone.

I go out to go to work, and from work I go home. Sometimes people give me money for my moto-taxi fare. Sometimes I walk from the bridge in order to save money to buy bread for the next day. I would save money by walking. But, it almost ended up costing me a lot! Because one day some guy rode by on a bicycle and he grabbed me by the throat. What happened was, the bicycle went by, and I was walking, and I even had said hello. The workers were leaving the rice mill. It must have been one of them. So he grabbed me by the throat, and he dragged me a little ways. I was walking with my younger son. “Ahhhhhhhhhh,” I screamed. “Aghhhhhhhhhhh!” And right then a car drove by and, bam, the man let go of me. And I even bit him. And the man took off on the bicycle, like a bullet. I never even saw his face. Where might he have taken me? Why would he have done that? I don’t know! I was just walking by. Sicko! Since he saw me alone with my son, surely he planned on taking me somewhere to do who knows what! But I bit him,
and right then, a car went by, and I screamed, and he let go of me and he took off on his bicycle. Since then I never go walking. No. I’m too scared. Where might he have taken me? And during that time, I would walk every day. But when he did that to me, I didn’t go walking anymore. Oh, the things that happen to people…

Rape

Rape seems to be fairly common in Lambayeque, and usually goes unpunished because of a lack of reporting and, in reported cases, because of a lack of appropriate government response. As was mentioned earlier, until 1991 rape was treated by Peruvian Penal Code as a “crime against honor” (rather than a crime against a woman’s body) (Kirk 1992, CLADEM and CRLP 1999). This treatment of rape meant that it was necessary for a woman to prove that prior to her rape she had been “honorable” (i.e. a virgin) in order for her complaint of rape to be taken seriously. This requisite excluded most adult women, who are sexually active with their husbands (Kirk 1992). Until 1997, rapists who married their rape victims were exempted from judicial punishment. An amendment repealed this provision for adult women and girls under age 14, but for women between 14 and 18 this exemption remains if the rapist is convicted of “seduction of an adolescent” and the rape is not deemed “violent” by the courts (CLADEM and CRLP 1999). This legal treatment of rape serves to replicate and legitimate the experiences of women like Dolores, Luz, and Eloísa, and often pushes raped women out of their homes and into violent relationships.

When I was living in Lambayeque a few years ago, I met a young woman from the US who was serving in the Peace Corps in Peru. While in Lambayeque she was raped by a police officer. The US Embassy immediately removed her, and at her request sent her home to the US. Because she did not remain in Peru to pursue legal action, the case
did not proceed. Rumors were spread around town that she was a drug user and that she was in *Las Dunas* using drugs when she was raped, as if her alleged drug use legitimized her rape. I was also told by several people that the police officer that had raped her had raped a number of tourists in Lambayeque. Supposedly, according to town gossip, his goal was to try to rape women from as many countries as possible, as if he were collecting souvenirs, with a preference for white women from the US and Europe.

Perhaps most importantly, though, I heard many women commenting on the fact that not even the police can be trusted for help in cases of rape, because the police themselves rape women and will not even help a *gringa*, let alone a poor Lambayecana (for additional discussion of the police and VAW see chapter eight).

It is more common for local women to be raped by local men. Firstly, there are far more locals than tourists, and secondly, local women are much less likely to effectively report and prosecute their rapists. Dolores shared the story of a fifteen year old neighbor of hers that was raped by her boyfriend and was unable to effectively prosecute him because of his family’s connections and the police’s disinterest.

They say that he was her boyfriend… The girl is 15. She had gone to talk to him, later she told me about it. She says that the boy said to her, “Let's go put the moto-taxi in the garage. So he took her to put the moto-taxi away and he forced her inside. He had his way with her. He had his way with her and the girl cried. She went to file a report, but his family is from the *sierra* (mountains) and they have money. What must they have done? The boy went free. He was also a minor, I think he was 17. He went free and she stayed like that [i.e. raped, no longer a virgin]. That's what made my son angry, that they let the boy go free. She is the one that told my son, she was crying. She had come to tell me, but she found my son here and she told him. She said that the boy would look at her and laugh at her. He made fun of the girl. Right now he is with his parents. Her father is older and he said that he could not do anything because the boy’s family has money. They did not give her justice.

*That happens a lot here, doesn't it?*
Yes. Yes, those things happen here. Sometimes people stay quiet because they are embarrassed about other people finding out. Sometimes it is because there is no justice. And now since they say that if you are 15 it is not rape…

*15 years old is not [statutory] rape anymore?*

It's not [statutory] rape anymore. 13 and below is [statutory] rape. That's what they say. Because, why else wouldn’t they give the girl justice? Why would they let the boy go free? Because they were boyfriend and girlfriend… If they don’t serve justice with a 15-year-old girl, what must it be like for an adult woman? Here, what is most important is money.

Another reason that rape is infrequently prosecuted is because it is severely underreported. During the group interview, the women highlighted some of the reasons that sexual violence is covered up in Lambayeque, which center around shame and family embarrassment.

*Why do you think that there is so much sexual abuse here? So much sexual abuse within the home like you were talking about, and also things like rape – there is a lot.*

Pilar- You mean here in [the center of] Lambayeque? If there is, people don't find out about it. More often people find out about what goes on around Lambayeque. Because that is where the problems are, in the *pueblos jóvenes, las barriadas.*

That is where it happens the most.

Olivia- You find out about the people from there because they file reports. Those who live in the center don't file reports, so how are you going to find out?

Pilar - You don't find out. It does happen, but you don’t find out.

Olivia - Because the family tries to keep everything quiet.

Guadalupe- They are afraid of what people might say.

Olivia - They are afraid of what people will say, but it does happen…

*And why is there more, let us say, embarrassment here in the center than there is in the pueblos jóvenes?*

Pilar - What could it be? Embarrassment, because they are families that are well known.

Guadalupe - Social status from before.

Pilar - Here the families are very well known, why is it?

Guadalupe - Because they go to church, this and that, they have an education.

Pilar - The families, for example the so-and-so family, the way it was before is if, for example, you had a drug addict, people would say, “So-and-so? A drug addict? It doesn't make sense. They don't go together.”

*I think, too, that because when people talk socially, if you say violence against women, they will say, oh no, that is a problem of the poor. You always hear that, know that as a problem of the pueblos jóvenes, that is the problem of the poor...*
Pilar - And that is not true. 
*But because the people form that idea socially, someone here in the center that is not from a pueblo joven will say, that is a thing of the pueblo joven, how can this be happening in my house? There it is normal, but not here. And, the other way around, when it happens, I think that they are not as embarrassed maybe because they think, well, I live in a pueblo joven where it always happens, no one is going to be surprised.*

Pilar - Or maybe they feel the need to say that they are victims of violence. Why am I going to hide what they are doing to me? Because people keep it quiet more than anything out of embarrassment.

*So, here, like you say since people have important names, the families are known, they cover things up even more.*

Pilar - They cover themselves up. They cover it up.

*And I think, I think that this contributes to the idea that it does not happen here, but it is not just a problem in los pueblos jóvenes. Because everything here is covered up.*

Pilar - Of course. They cover everything up.

**Linguistic VAW**

Language is a common way in which violence against women infiltrates everyday life. There are many common linguistic expressions that insinuate patriarchal views and others that outright legitimize and celebrate violence against women. Most men in Lambayeque (and Peru – this is also common throughout Latin America) refer to their wives not as “my wife, but as “*mi mujer*” (my woman). Women, on the other hand, do not refer to their husbands as “*mi hombre*” (my man). When I asked men (friends who I can tease and question their behavior without them getting angry or defensive) if they thought this difference was a sign of unequal gender relations, they seemed baffled by my question. Despite trying to explain my point a number of different ways, none of them really seemed to “get it.” When I asked women the same question, they instantly understood the point I was trying to make. All of their responses were similar in that they thought that men tried to “own women’s lives” (*quiere ser dueño de mi vida* – he wants
to be the owner of my life), while a woman could never “own” a man’s life. The women I talked with, however, did not seem interested in “owning a man’s life,” but they did want to “own” their own lives.

The most common and blatant quotidian examples of legitimizing VAW and victim blaming are two phrases that are heard regularly in casual conversation. The first phrase, “Amor Serrano (or Amor Andino): Más me pegues, más te quiero” (Andean Love: The more you hit me, the more I love/want you) is often said in reference to witnessed or referenced VAW, or when a man and a woman (friends, partners, etc.) are roughhousing, and draws a link between violence and sexual desire. It can be said teasingly or scathingly, depending on the situation. Sometimes the phrase is simply shortened to “Amor Serrano” or “Amor Andino,” suggesting that everyone knows that Andean love is defined through violence. The saying is sometimes shortened to, “Como amor serrano…” (Like Andean love…), or “Es el amor serrano…” (It’s Andean love…) when describing other types of violence that are being justified. The assumption is that los serranos, people from the mountains, are inherently violent in their relationships, and that violence is a prerequisite for true Andean love and sexual desire.

While levels of IPVAW in the Andes are very high in some areas, levels are very high in other areas of Peru as well, including Lima. The assumption that all Andean people are violent is reflective of racism and classism, as well as geographic discrimination (the Andes region is largely ignored by the government and is significantly more underdeveloped than the coastal region), and not of some natural,

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52 There is a similar phrase used in analogous ways in Brazil: Não me bate porque senão eu me apaixo. (Don’t hit me because otherwise I will fall in love). This is usually said by men (among friends) when a woman pretends that she is going to hit/slap the man.
inherent genetic predisposition to violence.\textsuperscript{53} Alcalde (2009:49) criticizes the naturalized use of this phrase, explaining that “The underlying idea is that physical, psychological, and sexual violence against women from the highlands by their intimate partner need not be addressed by state policies because these practices are based on indigenous customs and traditions. According to this logic, women expect and even enjoy men’s violence and are therefore complicit in their own suffering as members of a backward culture.” In her study of domestic violence in the Peruvian Andes, Harvey (1994) notes that while men and people outside of violent relationships will sometimes use this concept to explain violence, the women Harvey interviewed never used this phrase to describe the beatings that they received from their husbands. These phrases are used extremely casually throughout Peru, and in my experience I have never seen them critically evaluated or questioned.

This next phrase is most often heard when people are talking about a specific couple that is entangled in a violent relationship. It is used to criticize the woman for not leaving the violent relationship. When someone makes a comment along the lines of, “I just don’t understand why she doesn’t leave him,” one will often respond, judgingly, “\textit{Uy, ya le gustó el golpe ya}” (Uh-oh, now she likes being hit). The assumption is that the only reason a woman stays in a violent relationship is because she likes her partner to beat her. All the blame for her victimization is placed on the woman, and very rarely is the man openly criticized for his violent behavior. Dolores, for example, was told by her sister, “You have gotten used to being beaten. You have gotten used to being beaten and now

\textsuperscript{53} It would be interesting to know the effects of the Shining Path conflict on IPVAW in the Andes, the region of Peru that was most affected by overt violence, including the systematic raping of women.
you will stay with him.” The blame was placed on Dolores for not leaving her husband, rather than criticizing her husband for being violent. María experienced similar criticism.

I hear people say it’s the woman’s fault, “Oh yes, she wants to be hit”...

Yes. People talk without knowing the truth. It’s gossip… “Oh no, she’s at fault.”

Sometimes, if they like you, they’ll say, “Oh no, it’s the man [who’s at fault].”

But no one knows what life is like, what the situation is like. They don’t know the motives. You see?

People may express pity for the woman, especially if the woman is attractive, saying that it is a shame that he beats her, but it is very rare to hear outright criticism of the man for being violent.

VAW in Popular Culture: Television and Music

Recognizing often overlooked examples of social VAW is vital in understanding the naturalization process of VAW. Because of the internal and external influences and social pressures that directly affect the circumstances and the decisions a woman makes about her personal situation, it is important to address these multiple socio-cultural factors. Burton (2000:141) uses popular music as an example, explaining that songs are one influence that can help to justify VAW in the minds of listeners. She argues that, “… in figurative and literal terms, there are far too many beautiful torch songs about suffering for love, and not enough about realizing entitlements.” In the Peruvian context this sentiment is replicated not only through popular music but also through the popularity of

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54 Something that I found striking in Peru is how when a person (man or woman) experiences a tragedy of any kind (an accident, violence, death, etc.) there is sometimes a comment made about the person’s attractive appearance. Comments like, “She was killed in a car accident. It is so sad. And she was pretty! Her skin was very white, and she had beautiful brown hair,” or “She was very pretty- dark skinned, but pretty. She didn’t have the facial features of a Black woman- her nose was very delicate. She was tall and she had a nice body,” are not uncommon. This type of reaction highlights and reinforces the social value placed on physical attractiveness, and especially whiteness. When I respond to comments like these (as I usually do) with questions like, “Would it be less sad if she were Black and ugly?” people usually say no, but then reiterate why this person was so attractive.
telenovelas (soap operas) in which relationship violence and amorous suffering are common themes among all socio-economic classes, and across all racial/ethnic borders. Television and music are the two most accessible sources of popular culture to the general population, as almost all houses in urban areas have a radio and a television, and almost all houses in rural areas have a radio and some have a television.

Popular culture in Peru reinforces patriarchal power structures by presenting men as virile and powerful, and women as hyper sexualized and waiting to be dominated. Both telenovelas and comedy variety shows (the two most popular television genres) in Peru present women in this hyper sexualized and subordinate way. In telenovelas beautiful wealthy women are repeatedly wronged by handsome wealthy men, and violence (slapping, beating, stalking, murder, etc.) is often glamorized. Most telenovelas in Peru are not made in Peru, but rather come from Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, and the US. While conducting my fieldwork the most popular telenovela was Muñecas de la Mafia (Mafia Dolls). According to CaracolTV (2010), the Colombian television production company who produces Mafia Dolls, “Dreams, ambition, love, hate, posing, beauty, and the search for power are some of the inherent conditions in the lives of the protagonists of this story who are wrapped up in the extravagances, pleasures, and adversity of the world of drug trafficking.” The six women stars are the “dolls” of the most powerful, influential and severe drug trafficker of a certain Colombian cartel. The online synopsis of the show ends with: “Among the luxuries, pompousness, and excesses develops a moving, dramatic, and rogue story about these women who made bad choices and now will have to pay a very high price.” The show is the very definition of the fusion
of sex and violence, and highlights the fact that sexualized women must suffer the consequences of their actions. It was shown during primetime viewing in Peru, when the whole family, including young children, often watches television together. Peruvian comedy/variety shows extend this portrayal of women. Women are dressed in skimpy outfits (sometimes just in a bra and thong underwear) and nearly every sketch involves overt sexual, and sometimes violent, advances of dominant men. The shows are vulgar, yet, once again, they are viewed by the entire family as a regular aspect of nightly entertainment.

The most blatant treatment of violence against women in Peruvian popular music is the song *Cuando Tú Me Pegas* (When You Hit Me) by the band *Nosequién y los nosecuántos* (NSQNSC) (see Appendix A for lyrics and translation). The song, using the style of Technocumbia (also known as Chicha, reflecting its popularity among Indians and cholos who prepare and drink the traditional alcoholic beverage) mocks the popular Peruvian idiom, “Amor Serrano” or “Amor Andino.” This song, rather than serving as a criticism of the naturalized understanding of IPVAW, is understood by many to reflect the “reality” of intimate partner relationships in the Andes and in Peru, and ultimately serves to reinforce negative stereotypes and victim-blaming.

While NSQNSC is a pop band from Lima that mocks IPVAW in the Andes, there is a more contemporary music superstar from Lambayeque who tackles similar issues of VAW but from a very different perspective. The singer, Marisol, known as *la Faraona de la Cumbia* (the Female Pharaoh of Cumbia) sings about the suffering of women in bad relationships. Her songs are very critical of men and often include auto-biographical
information (for example, she is currently divorcing her second husband, who is also her manager, because he cheated on her). In Lambayeque, and throughout Peru, she has become a sort of folk hero and popular representative of all scorned women. At parties when her songs play, women sing loudly along with the lyrics, pointing fingers at their husbands, if only in jest. Two of her most popular songs “La Escobita” (The Little Broom) and “30 Segundos” (30 Seconds) (see Appendices B and C for lyrics and translation), are sung from the point of view of a woman who has been cheated on by her partner. In the songs she asserts her own power as a woman, publicly criticizing her husband for his behavior and warning other women of men who do the same things. Her clever use of play on words and her dark sense of humor resonate with her fans who often wish they could say similar things to their own husbands. Marisol, however, does not completely escape the throes of patriarchy. When she performs, she wears the typical costume of a female Cumbia dancer/singer: a shiny, skimpy vinyl outfit similar to a (one- or two-piece) bathing suit usually decorated with fringe and rhinestones, and thigh-high platform vinyl boots. Despite her severe criticism of men, she has a strong male fan base as well.

VAW in the “News”

In her outstanding characterization of Peruvian newspapers’ depictions of battered women, Peruvian anthropologist M. Cristina Alcalde (2009) highlights how Peruvian newspapers engage in systematic victim-blaming and frame men’s violent actions in terms of “jealous rage” or “blind passion.” News stories about IPVAW rarely address factors that contributed to the particular violent episode being reported, and little context

55 I put quotation marks around news because the “news” in Peru is better described as “infotainment”.

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is given, insinuating that the violence was “extraordinary, surprising, and isolated” (47) and that the “otherwise respectable men simply snapped” (52). With most victims already dead when the stories run, victimized women’s voices are silenced and women are often blamed for triggering the violence. The most common explanations given for men’s violence/ femicide are women’s (sometimes real, but more often imagined) infidelity and women’s attempts to leave their partner. Usually there is no explanation given for why women wanted to leave.

Alcalde (2009) also discusses perhaps the most high-profile case of IPVAW in contemporary Peruvian history. In 2007, actress Marisol Aguirre (not Marisol the singer) filed a domestic violence complaint with Peruvian police against her husband, the extremely popular (especially among young women) actor and singer Christian Meier, who is from an affluent Limeño family. Shortly thereafter, she filed for divorce after 12 years of marriage. Because of the media circus surrounding the “scandal,” Aguirre agreed to appear on the very popular gossip television show *Magaly TeVe*. On the show, Aguirre declared, “for the sake of their children,” that Meier had never punched her or hit her, but that “physical violence doesn’t necessarily mean being hit, but also breaking a door or [violently] grabbing something from someone; there are a thousand forms of physical violence” (cited in Alcalde 2009:56). The following day television host Magaly Medina, told viewers that in domestic conflicts there are always two guilty parties. Like Magaly, many interpreted Aguirre’s statements to mean that there had, in fact, not been any physical violence, and that the beloved Meier was being unfairly maligned. A few days

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56 I was living in Lima at the time and remember watching the drama unfold and feeling shocked and saddened by the supposedly “liberal” (Magaly and Bayly both promote themselves as socially progressive and politically liberal) Peruvian media’s response to Aguirre’s accusations.
later another popular Peruvian television talk show host and author Jaime Bayly, who is a friend of Meier’s, used his television show *El Francotirador* (The Sniper) to further discredit Aguirre. “Bayly told his viewers that only ‘real’ physical violence deserved to be reported; breaking a door was not real violence. He also claimed that verbal violence did not meet the criteria of real violence and that Aguirre should have considered the impact of her complaints on her husband before filing her complaint” (Alcalde 2009:56). Most of the Peruvian media followed suit and replicated Magaly and Bayly’s criticisms of Aguirre and defended Meier. Alcalde notes that despite being a high-profile case, the Peruvian media engaged in the same victim-blaming rhetoric that they do when poor, marginalized women are victimized; the only difference was in the amount of media coverage and the level of public interest. Interestingly, in response to Bayly’s comments, a dozen of Peru’s women’s organizations sent an open letter to Bayly explaining that Peruvian law includes psychological violence in its definition of domestic violence, and suggested that because of his position of influence he should publicly correct his statements. To Alcalde’s knowledge, and to mine, Bayly has never made any attempt to do so.

Alongside stories of extreme cases of domestic violence and femicide, Peruvians are bombarded by highly sexualized images in the “news” media. Women’s bodies and sexuality are used as a primary marketing tool in Peru. The models used, however, usually do not represent what the majority of Peruvian women look like. Marketing companies choose tall, (usually) white, thin models that conform to western standards of beauty. The models are often not even Peruvian, but more regularly Argentine, Brazilian,
Colombian, or Venezuelan. While it is not surprising that beer companies advertise their products using bikini-clad women, this type of image is also used to sell other things, including newspapers. In addition to the more “serious” newspapers, Peru has numerous popular newspapers that focus more on gossip and sports than on traditional news stories. These newspapers, known as periódicos chicha because of their popularity with the largely uneducated rural to urban migrants, feature semi-nude spreads daily on the cover and in the interior sections of the periodical (this was also observed by Alcalde 2009).

Even El Comercio, Peru’s most respected newspaper has a once-a-week Chica Comercio (Comercio Girl), a centerfold photo spread and biography in the Sunday edition (the best selling edition) of the paper. El Comercio has also been heavily criticized by Peruvian feminists for its high number of classified ads announcing prostitution and escort services. Anyone walking by a newspaper stand (one can find them on nearly every corner on busy streets) is bombarded by images of half-naked women and sexual innuendo. These sexual images often find their way into the home, where they are easily accessed by children and teenagers, when someone buys a newspaper and brings it home.

Sexualized images make it into the home in other ways as well. One of the most common ways is on calendars. Every December, Peruvian businesses give calendars out to their customers. Usually these calendars have pictures of cute children (often blond-haired and blue-eyed), puppies and kittens, pretty landscapes, or images related to the business itself. Some businesses, however, give out calendars with sexualized images of nude or semi-nude women. One December day, while I was conducting my fieldwork, my father-in-law came home with a bag of bread from a local bakery in Lambayeque.
They had given him a calendar, rolled up with a rubber band. He came into the living room, where we were all sitting around talking, and he said to my mother-in-law, “Here, so-and-so from the bakery sent you this. He says Merry Christmas.” She thanked him and unrolled the calendar to find a picture of a blonde woman standing on a swimming pool ladder wearing only a bikini bottom with a rhinestone belt and a midriff mesh top that exposed her breasts. Under the 14x16 inch picture is the name of the bakery and the following message: “The owner [it provides his full name], his wife, and children wish their distinguished clientele and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.” On one side of the message is a drawing of Santa Claus being pulled in his sleigh by reindeer, and there are holiday bells on the other side. Below the message is the address and phone number of the bakery. At the very bottom is the actual calendar section with a tear-off cover sheet featuring a cartoon Santa, a sleigh and reindeer, bells, a “winter wonderland” scene (unknown to the hot desert of Lambayeque) and a cartoon penguin holding a candy cane. My mother-in-law looked at the calendar and sarcastically asked: “They sent this to me?!?” When my father-in-law saw what it was he laughed nervously, embarrassed. My mother-in-law rolled it back up and handed it to me, saying, “Maybe you can write about this in your thesis.” I promptly hid the calendar in a dresser drawer, away from the prying eyes of my three-year-old godson who wanted to see Santa Claus.
CHAPTER 8: “HERE, JUSTICE IS UNJUST” – THE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This chapter will continue the discussion of public patriarchy, but with a focus on the institutional response (or lack of response) to IPVAW in Lambayeque. Although it would be possible to analyze many institutions on the local, state, and international levels that influence IPVAW in Lambayeque, this analysis will focus on five local institutions – education, religion, healthcare, the police, and the Centro de Emergencia Mujer (CEM – Women’s Emergency Center) – because they are the institutions with which the women I interviewed had the most contact and by which they were the most immediately impacted. As will become evident from the following discussion, these institutions are not particularly helpful for women experiencing IPVAW. Most of them are under-resourced and corrupt. Individuals who work at these institutions often subscribe to machista ideologies and engage in victim-blaming or lack sufficient interest in the women’s situations. Ultra-conservative ideologies from religious institutions (especially the Peruvian Catholic Church, which forcefully lobbies the Peruvian government) heavily influence the types of services and information made available to women by secular institutions.

Education

Although schools everywhere are supposed to be a safe space in which to learn, schools and universities in Lambayeque can be spaces that foster exploitation of girls and women by male teachers and professors. Molestation, rape, and bribery of female students by male teachers are not uncommon – especially in the universities. At the
public university in Lambayeque (the only university located in Lambayeque, although there are several private universities located in nearby Chiclayo), corruption is commonplace. Professors are known to “sell” grades, taking bribes from students who are not doing well or who do not want to complete coursework. Female students are especially susceptible to extortion, being told by professors that the only way to pass the class is by providing sexual “favors.”

Olivia was a victim of this attempted extortion. She was studying to be a teacher but had to stop attending school because she got married and had children. Several years later she tried to take advantage of an opportunity offered by the state to continue her studies. When she went to meet with the (male) director of the institute, he told her to return at 1:00 pm. She agreed, but as she was leaving another woman called to her in the street. She stopped and the woman told her not to come back at 1:00 because at that time there was no one in the office and that there were rumors about “bad things” (implied: molestation and/or rape) happening to women who were alone in the office with the director. Olivia was so upset that she did not return at 1:00 or any other time. She never finished her studies, something that she regrets and resents.

There does seem to be some movement towards increased awareness of violence against women and girls in the Peruvian public school system, but it is far from sufficient. When most of the women I interviewed, who are now in their 30s and 40s, were in school, there was no sex education. Now school children, in theory, receive a very basic sex education, although many teachers do not respect the required curriculum. The lack of education and the amount of misinformation provided by poorly trained
teachers, doctors, police officers, etc. helps to allow the cycle of violence against women to continue its self-propagation. In the group interview, Olivia (who used to teach at an all-girls school), Pilar (who has a son in school now), Marta (who has a grandson in preschool), Ximena (who has a son in preschool), and Guadalupe (who is an elementary school teacher) explained to me the state of sex education in the public schools in Lambayeque.

Olivia- What would be better is that in schools they talk to the students about family relationships.
Marta- I agree, they need to have talks.
Olivia- That type of class should be implemented, because it would prepare you from the very first year of high school.
*They should start it even earlier*
Olivia- Yes, even earlier.
Guadalupe- That is why they have “Parents’ School,” but now it doesn’t work like that. Now they use it so that a book editor will come and try to sell you books. And then later they say “You teach children like this; you talk to children like this.”
Pilar- It doesn't work anymore. For example, now, “Parents’ School” is only once a year.
Guadalupe- Why? Because they don't want to pay a psychologist. In theory, “Parents’ School” is taught by a psychologist. It's just like a guidance counselor.
Olivia- But the psychologist should be in addition to education. Every school should have a psychologist.
Pilar- Exactly, a psychologist that is paid just like the teachers. Someone who is a professional…
*You mean there is not a psychologist in every school here?*
Everyone- NO!
Olivia & Guadalupe- Only in private schools…
Pilar- At the 27 de Diciembre school, the parents hired a psychologist. We had a meeting and decided that we would hire a psychologist, APAFA\(^{57}\) was going to pay. Okay APAFA pays. But the psychologist needs materials. You have to have materials to work.
Guadalupe- And they need a place to work.
Pilar- Paper, a room, pens, markers, a student to help the psychologist with things, because that is what needs to be done. But no, APAFA says we're going to hire a psychologist, each family will pay one *sol*, but then they don't have materials for the psychologist to work. The first material would be the parents, but the parents

\(^{57}\) The Peruvian equivalent of the PTA or PTO.
don't show up, because they have to work. The dad does not want the woman to
go to the meeting. Stupid stuff like that, because he is afraid that she will come
home and boss him around. That is the idea they have…

The women went on to discuss what children learn about family relationships and
sexuality in schools. They explained that students are supposed to learn about these
things during the hour of tutoría, during which students also learn about morals, respect,
and civil rights and responsibilities. The women noted, however, that tutoría is rarely
taken seriously by teachers or students, and is most often used to make up work from
other subjects like math. Other times, as was the case for Pilar’s oldest son, the students
would convince the teacher to not teach tutoría, and let the students go out for recess
instead.

_Is there sexual education?_
Pilar- No, they don't have that.
Guadalupe- No.
Pilar- They might talk a little bit about it in tutoría. They explain some things.
Marta- That’s what “family relationships” used to teach.
*There's no sex education in elementary school or in high school?*
Pilar- No…
Guadalupe- The subject is touched on.
Pilar- But it is not a class.
Guadalupe- We talk about it when we talk about “my sexuality.” They learn, I am
a girl, he is a boy.
Pilar- It is very superficial.
Guadalupe- For example, I have a vagina, he has a penis. Why do I have a vagina
and he has a penis? Where do babies come from? How are babies born? So you
need to know how to explain that, all the way from the first year of elementary
school.
*But is there a time in elementary school or in high school where they have a real
sexual education?*
Guadalupe- They talk about it in “Self Esteem” and “Science and Environment.”
They go hand-in-hand in elementary school and they integrate it.
Pilar- But it is not very extensive.
*What do they do?*
Guadalupe- In preschool they only identify their sex. In elementary school they focus on things like, girls, at a certain age… it all starts with the mother's pregnancy.
Pilar- Because my son last year, because they were at the age of 10 or 11 years old, were they started getting pubic hair, this and that. He came home and he said, “Mom, the teacher said that we should have it already, I went to check myself and I don't have anything!” [everyone laughs] I told him, “Not yet.”
Ximena- They tell them things little by little, as they are developing.
Pilar- That type of thing is what they explain to them.
Guadalupe- The stages of the human being.
Okay, for example, your son studies at an all boys school, right?
Pilar- Yes, all boys.
So, do they teach the boys like your son, do they explain to them about women's sexuality? Do they teach them about menstruation? Do they explain that to them, too?
Pilar- Yes. All of that. That's why he asked me about everything. He asked me, “What did you feel mom?” And since I am very shy [sarcastically] I told him, “This is what happened.” But with the other one [her other son], because I explained everything to him clearly, he fucked himself over [his girlfriend got pregnant]. It would be better for me not to tell that one anything… Son of a bitch!
Olivia- [Teasing Pilar about her outburst] Don’t hold back. You have the opportunity to say what you want.
What? Do you think that your son… that his girlfriend got pregnant because you explained things to him?
Pilar- [Hesitant] No, because maybe his body needed it. That is what the [female] doctor told me. One day I talked with the doctor, and she said that there are boys, and not just because they masturbate, because there are people who don't masturbate, and instead of masturbating, because they say that in some people masturbating makes them go crazy, that's what the doctor said…
Guadalupe- It slows them down and undoes their [mental] development.
Pilar- Yes, that. So the doctor said, it is better for them to look for a girl, because they say all that masturbation starts to weaken the brain. And that's why they go crazy sometimes. People wonder, why is this one like that? It's because they masturbate. Because they don't masturbate adequately.
Guadalupe- They think they have to do it all the time. Every day.
Pilar- So I explained his situation to the doctor. She said, “Your son did what he did, and there it is.”
Olivia- But the thing is, it wasn't because they had sex, it was because they didn't use protection!
Pilar- Yes, that is something else.
Guadalupe- Even knowing that he should use protection.
Olivia- There are lots of people that have sex but don't get pregnant
Pilar- Yes, the doctor asked me, “ Didn't you explain those things?” Yes, I explain things to him, I told him about condoms. Tell me what I did not explain to him,
what I was lacking. We talked all about it. I told him, “It is like this. This and
that.” I told him, “Being with lots of girls, or going to those places [brothels] will
only bring you diseases. It is preferable to only have one partner.” Maybe that is
why, being with one, then with another, this one is easier than the other. But that’s
not how it is. So, I talked to the doctor about it. She said it was normal. But either
way it makes you want to beat the shit out of him. The conversation doesn't take
that feeling away.

Let me say this, because i feel the obligation to say it. The idea that masturbation
makes you crazy, or reverses your development, that is a huge lie from many
years ago.

Marta- It is a lie. They have come out and said the opposite.
Olivia- Exactly. There used to be that belief.
Pilar- Well that is what the doctor said.

That has a lot to do with religion. It has a lot to do with religion, it's a lie. They
don't have anything to do with each other. They don't have anything to do with
each other. They are two completely different things.

Olivia- Otherwise we would have a whole world full of crazy people.

Yes, the whole world would be crazy.

Pilar- But then why do they say that about this boy [gives his last name]?

Olivia- He didn't have enough to eat.
Pilar- But everyone says...
Olivia- No, he didn't have enough to eat.
Marta- He didn't have enough to eat.
Olivia- Don't you remember how he would walk around like this? [imitates him
hunching over]
Marta- He was very skinny.

Olivia- At that age, when they are developing, as the child is developing, and he
doesn't have food, he is not well-nourished.

You also have to realize that there are people, for many reasons, it could be
because of an injury, it could be a hormonal imbalance, a chemical imbalance
within the body, there are crazy people.

Olivia- Yes, that too.

But masturbation doesn't have anything to do with it... your son was with his
girlfriend because it is fun, it feels good.
Pilar- Of course, it might be that, too. The doctor also said that. Plus his age,
everything is new, everything is feeling.

And because they did not use protection.

Marta- [teasing her niece, Guadalupe] You use protection, right?
Guadalupe- [Teasing back] Yes, Aunt! That is why condoms exist, rubbers!

[I join in teasing Marta] You see, had you known that in the times of your son’s
father, how would things have been?

Marta- I would've never known that idiot! [everyone laughs] I am sorry I ever met
him, not because I had my son, but because he is garbage. [everyone laughs
again]
Olivia- Marisol! [teasing Marta by comparing her to the popular singer Marisol, discussed in chapter seven]

Healthcare

Like quality education, access to quality healthcare and accurate information about health is limited for impoverished individuals in Lambayeque. A 1999 report by the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP) and the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women’s Rights (CLADEM) on VAW in Peruvian public health facilities stated that,

The findings of the investigation reveal the Peruvian government’s lack of commitment to promoting and protecting women’s human rights. The Peruvian government has not taken steps to implement the international standards adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). (9)

They noted, too, that VAW in Peruvian public health facilities are veiled by “a complex web of silence, fear and complicity” (13). Public hospitals and clinics are overcrowded and provide low quality care. Patients are expected to buy their own medications, and provide basic medical equipment such as needles, syringes, gauze, etc. Abuse of women within the Peruvian healthcare system is prevalent. Types of VAW perpetrated by the Peruvian health system include economic corruption; physical, psychological, and sexual violence; exposure to grave risks to life, body, and health; discriminatory and humiliating treatment; violations of autonomy in decision-making about one’s health; and violations of informed consent (CLADEM and CRLP 1999).

Women are routinely charged for services that are supposed to be provided free of charge and are denied information about their own health. The right to informed consent
is often ignored. Women are sometimes molested or raped when going through routine gynecological check-ups – especially poorly educated young women who are simply told that sexual abuse is “how the exam is performed.” Because of the frequent nature of abuse within the Peruvian public healthcare system, “many women perceive them as part of normal procedure. Many feel that they must submit to these abuses because their low economic status deprives them of the opportunity to obtain humane treatment and quality services” (CLADEM and CRLP 1999:10). These abuses often go unnoticed or unaddressed by institutions, and they are rarely condemned, punished, or prevented. The CLADEM and CRLP (1999) report characterizes the abuses as generally “tolerated practices that remain sanctioned” (10). The same report notes that “The institutional response to the cases detailed in this section has been silence and support for the assailants. Health care and other government officials interfere with the cases brought against health care personnel and institutions by covering up and tolerating the violent acts” (65).

When giving birth, many women experience violent treatment as well. This was the case when Pilar gave birth to one of her sons.

_I heard that they had yelled at you [when you gave birth]_
Marta- The gynecologist. Do you remember? At the Seguro[^58] here.
Pilar- Here at the Seguro.
Marta- They didn't want to treat you.
Olivia- They asked you, “Does this hurt?”
Marta- He stuck his finger in you.
Pilar- No, they have to feel, but the doctor's finger was like this [indicates big size], and when you're giving birth it hurts and you are dry because you don't have anything coming out yet, your water hasn't broken yet, everything is dry. The nurse that was helping told me, “You are going to have a dry birth; that is why it

[^58]: The Social Security Hospital
hurts you so much.” The other one yelled at me, “Lie down!” He pushed me down and stuck in his fingers. At first one thinks, it must be like that.

Olivia- They surprise you!
Pilar- I yelled, “Ow! That hurts!” He said, “Of course it hurts!” That was the first time. When he came back to check me again I said “No, you're not going to stick your fingers in me!” He said, “You have to lie down for this.” I said, “No, I am not going to lie down! I'm going to stay like this!” “No, ma'am, in that case go back to your house.” They sent me home.

Marta- They are abusive.
Pilar- That is when he yelled at me, “That's why you want to give birth!?”

Olivia- They really say everything to you...
Olivia- And some of them are very rude.
Marta- They don't want you to scream.

And the doctor will say, “Oh, so that is why you opened your legs!”
[everyone agrees in unison]
The next time you open your legs, I hope you remember this pain!
Guadalupe- Yes, that is how they talk.
Pilar- The doctor herself will say it.
Marta- They talk to you very badly.
Pilar- The technicians will also say things. I had a very old woman, she said, “What? Now you are screaming?” I kept moaning. “Stop yelling, damn it! You are making the other women nervous.” I said, “What the hell do I care? As far as I'm concerned they can die.”

Olivia- My husband’s sister, in Las Mercedes, when she went to give birth to her son, it was the first time she gave birth. She said the nurses attacked her. And she responded to them in the worst possible way.

Guadalupe- And she has a first-class mouth [she swears a lot]!

Olivia- It hurts, it hurts! It is a lack of respect.

It is a type of violence

Olivia- Yes, it is a type of violence.
Pilar- But they too have given birth! They have also given birth.

Even if they haven't given birth, no one has any reason to treat you like that.

Olivia- There is no reason. Imagine! How are they going to say to you, “Why did you open your legs?” What the hell is that? One is a woman!
Pilar- Yes, yes, they say, “Look at how you scream.” That's how they talk.

Olivia- And it is true that doctors take advantage of you. Because they only need to look at you here [points to her vagina], but they make you undress completely. Why? It's like they say, women accept too much, they accept too much. The first time they slap you, the second time they kick you, and the third time they beat the shit out of you.

Marta- They strangle you, next time they kill you. My God.

I think there is a lot of lack of knowledge on women's part, too. For example, talking about doctors, in this report that I read, they talked about going to the gynecologist for the first time.
Olivia- They take advantage of the fact that they go alone.

Yes, they go alone, and the doctor ends up raping them, telling them that that is how the exam is. But that is not how the exam is.

Marta- They go too far. There was a case like that in Lima, wasn't there Olivia? It was on TV. The girl, she was a nurse but the doctor insisted. He had raped her.

Birth control is another controversial women’s health issue in Peru, where the Catholic Church (headed by Archbishop Cipriani, a member of the Opus Dei) regularly advocates for the prohibition of contraceptives, including condoms, the birth control pill, and the morning after pill. In the 1980s, the Catholic Church lobbied the Peruvian government “to limit distribution of modern contraceptive methods and, in particular, to exclude voluntary sterilization from state-provided services. As a result the [1985] Population Law expressly prohibits surgical sterilization and abortion as methods of family planning” (CLADEM and CRLP 1999:35). The Catholic Church’s official position continues to be that the use of contraceptives goes against the will of God and therefore should not be used. Contraceptives are legal in Peru, though, and they are readily available without prescription at any pharmacy, if one can afford to pay for them. Many women, however, are unable to afford them, or choose not to use them because they have been told that using them is a sin. Many men refuse to use condoms, arguing that they are uncomfortable and cause sex to be less pleasurable. Contraception, for the most part, is the responsibility of the woman in Peru.

59 Despite this legal prohibition, many women continued to be surgically sterilized, either by choice or without their consent. The sterilization portion of the law was later repealed. Prohibiting male and female sterilization was proposed to congress again in 2002.

60 In 2006 I got permanently kicked out of the Catholic Church’s pre-marriage chats in Lambayeque because I got into an argument with the priest about whether or not married couples were sinning if they used contraception, and for encouraging other couples in the group to take control of their sexual reproduction and family planning.
Abortion is illegal in Peru, although some types of therapeutic abortion are permitted. Clandestine abortion, however, is very common. In 2003 it was reported that Peru had one of Latin America’s highest rates of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal mortalities, and that there were approximately 350,000 clandestine abortions per year in Peru (Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Health Network). A 2009 news article estimates there to be around 400,000 clandestine abortions per year nationwide (Hildebrandt 2009). There are clandestine clinics that perform abortions, traditional medicines that women can take to induce a miscarriage and rudimentary techniques that are used to cause an abortion. Common clandestine abortion techniques in Peru include inserting branches/sticks, knitting needles, IV tubing, or wire into the woman’s vagina; making homemade vaginal “washes” or douches out of soapy water, hydrogen peroxide, bleach, tar, salt, lime juice, and/or Coca Cola; drinking homemade folk remedies made from avocado seeds or ruda (goat’s-rue); jumping up and down; hitting/ punching the woman’s pregnant belly; having violent sexual intercourse; and purposefully falling down (Hildebrandt 2009).

Because abortion is an illegal act, it is punishable under law. Under the 1997 General Law on Health, if a woman goes to a hospital with symptoms of a botched clandestine abortion, the doctor is required by law to break doctor-patient confidentiality and report the woman to the director of the health care center. The director is then required to report the case to the law enforcement authorities. Doctors are required by law to provide information to investigating police and prosecutors in cases of suspected
abortion (CLADEM and CRLP 1999). This law violates numerous human rights, including the right to life, the right to health, and the right to medical confidentiality.

There is currently a conservative political push in Peru to make all forms of abortion, including all types of therapeutic abortion, illegal, as was recently done in Nicaragua. As Grant (1993), and many feminists have noted, “Lack of access to abortion limits female self-determination” (187). Women who are raped and impregnated are forced by law to carry their rapists’ babies to full term, and in most cases raise the children (because of the poor quality of orphanage and adoption services in Peru) regardless of the economic condition of the mother.

Sterilization is a problematic form of birth control in that, in certain cases, it is imposed on women who do not want to be sterilized, and in other cases it is denied to women who do want to be sterilized. During the civil war with Shining Path, then President Alberto Fujimori’s government was infamous for, among other Human Rights abuses, (unofficially) promoting forced sterilization of poor and non-white women (Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Health Network). Olivia was sterilized against her will, although not as part of Fujimori’s campaign. She had three children in three years, each one almost exactly twelve months apart. Her third child was born by emergency Cesarean because the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck. When Olivia came out of surgery the male doctor informed her that he had taken the liberty to tie her tubes so that she would not have any more children. The doctor told her that she

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61 The 2002 proposal to prohibit sterilization was presented under the pretense of preventing future abuse of sterilization campaigns, but in reality reflected the ultra-conservative positions of right-wing Catholic organizations like Opus Dei and Soldiers of Life, as well as the US government’s positions that seek to limit women’s access to all forms of family planning methods (i.e. the “Global Gag Rule”).
had three children already and that if she kept having more children she would ruin her life – she would always be pregnant. Olivia feels that it was a gross violation of her body for the doctor to decide that for her. When she first told me the story, several years ago, she expressed her frustration about not having any legal rights or means to seek retribution from the doctor. She half joked that if the same thing had happened to her in the US that she could have sued the doctor and the hospital and that the hospital would have been named after her because she would be the new owner.

Other women are denied sterilization when they request it. Luz asked her doctor to tie her tubes, but he would not do it. Only after having been pregnant thirteen times, with nine living children, would the doctor agree.

Unfortunately, I was always full of children. I never even saw my menstruation. From the first time I got pregnant I never again was on my period. When I would go to the doctor I would already be 15 days or 30 days along, and the doctor would say that he couldn't do anything. I wanted to have my tubes tied when I had five children, but the doctor said no, that I wasn't old enough to have my tubes tied.

So the doctor tells you what you can or can't do with your body?
Yes. And so I got pregnant again, and I had nine children and four miscarriages. Thirteen pregnancies. In after I had my last child, I said, no. This is enough. I have nine children that are alive. It's time to have my tubes tied… I can't have children anymore because I had my tubes tied. Otherwise how many children would I have? Right now I would have little children, breast-feeding them, or maybe I would be pregnant. I would have 24 or 25 children. One per year.

Religion

Some women, rather than turning to government services for help, choose to seek help from their church because of the moral authority they believe the religion to hold.

The majority of Lambayecanos identify as Catholic, and there is a very active group of
churchgoers. In Lambayeque the Church holds 3 masses every evening and 3 or 4 masses on Sunday morning. The Catholic Church in Peru is headed by Opus Dei member Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima and Cardinal Priest. Opus Dei is a secretive and ultra-conservative organization of the Roman Catholic Church that is known for staunchly supporting the patriarchal status-quo and opposing ideas of Liberation Theology. Cipriani was closely linked to Alberto Fujimori’s extremely corrupt government, and continues to significantly influence politics and conservative social discourse in Peru.

During the time I was conducting my fieldwork, I was able to interview one of the priests at the main Catholic Church in Lambayeque, where the head priest is also a member of Opus Dei. The priest I interviewed told me that most of the services that the church provides for victims of IPVAW are counseling services given by other churchgoers in the form of discussion groups. If the couple requests it, they can also meet personally with the priest, who will then advise them. Perhaps the most problematic issue related to IPVAW and the Catholic Church is that divorce is not available to those who are married in the Catholic Church. While those married both in civil and religious ceremonies can get a civil divorce, the Catholic Church still considers them to be married. This is emotionally very challenging for many women. The only thing that the priest can recommend, if the violence does not stop with counseling, is the separation of bodies (i.e. the man and woman live in separate places, but remain religiously married forever). While researchers like Vieira Machado (1993) have highlighted the liberating
and empowering effects that liberal Catholic organization has had on some women, this is not the case for the women who attend Peru’s ultra-conservative churches.

Camila, a staunch Catholic, was facing the issue of separation in the Catholic Church at the time I interviewed her. She was struggling to decide her course of action in her marriage – unsure whether her religious understanding of marriage or her own personal happiness and safety were more important.

*Obviously you're very Catholic. Have you ever gone to ask for advice, or gone to talk with one of the priests?*

Yes, I have talked with the priest.  
*What did he recommend for you?*

He is a priest! He advised us to talk, to try to get along, to try to save our marriage, to try to live happily. Like he says, if there's something you don't like about him, tell him. This is what I don't like about you. Or if there's something he doesn't like about you, he should tell you. Always talking. With communication, not yelling. To get along. To go to mass together. For us to go as a family, with our daughter, so that we can orient her [in the Catholic religion]. That's what he told us. To try to get along…  
*Would you be willing to get back together with him?*

I don't know. Sometimes I try to tell him, when there is no more love, I can't do anything.  
*You are married. (sympathetically, knowing that the Catholic Church does not allow for divorce)*

Exactly, that's the problem. Like the priest says, once you are married you can't get divorced. If we had a civil marriage, it wouldn't be a problem. But in the Catholic Church, it's a union, we are one. I tell him, I'm going to try to do my part to love you again. But I don't know if I will achieve it, I just don't know. I will do everything I can, but if the answer is no, it's no. They can't make me love even though I'm married, you can't make someone love someone else when there is no love…  
I told him, “I don't plan on getting back together with you.” But he was smarter than me. He went to speak with the priest, and the priest talked to my mom and with my [god-]parents in Chiclayo for them to support [my husband], so that I would get back together with him. I didn't want to be with him anymore. Not anymore, as much as he wanted to I didn't want to. My parents [godparents] said, “Yes, daughter, think about it. Give him another chance. For the sake of the baby.” I said, “Mom, I've given him lots of opportunities. Not one, not two, not three, many opportunities. And he didn't know how to take advantage of any of
them. I'm tired of living like this, of living all the time and suffering. Not anymore.”
They took me to talk to the priest. The priest began to talk to me, telling me that we were married, that we were no longer two people, that the two of us were now one being. We should communicate, talk, try to fix our marriage. Okay, but it's not going to be easy. We will start from the bottom, like friends. We began like that. My mom didn't want it anymore either. Later she said, “Okay, for the sake of the baby.” Days went by, and I said okay, and I gave him an opportunity. But it wasn't the same, because I didn't want to be with him anymore. I didn't want to live with him. Time went by, and I thought, no. And then last May or June I got pregnant. I was three months pregnant. When I was three months pregnant I miscarried. The baby came. I was in the hospital. From the time that I left the hospital, when I came home, I didn't want him to even touch me. Nothing, I didn't want anything. You know what all husbands want. I couldn't take it. “No, I'm tired.” I didn't want it.
As time went by, I thought, I don't love him anymore. I'm out of love. I don't love him, because I don't feel anything. I don't have those feelings; I don't have a desire to be with him. Even now, I don't have those feelings. He cries, he says, “Everything I did to you weighs so heavily on me, because look at how I'm paying for it now. I love you, I would give my life for you, and you don't love me anymore.” I told him, “That's how things go. I don't lie to you, I'm sincere. It's just over. You finished me. You killed, little by little, the love that I felt for you. And if I'm here, it is for my daughter, because I know she's little and because I know that she would suffer.” When we were separated she was the one that suffered. She got sick. She realizes when her parents are together and when they are separated. And that's how it is even today.

While the majority of Peruvians identify as Catholic (although many are nominally, but not practicing, Catholics), there is a growing trend towards Protestantism, and more specifically towards Pentacostal religions (generally referred to in Peru as “evangelical” churches). Lambayeque follows this same pattern. Some women, though, think that changing religions will help remedy their situations of violence. The evangelical churches in Lambayeque, which prohibit drinking alcohol and using drugs, and strongly condemn adultery and domestic violence, have been quite effective in recruiting new members. Hallum (2003:171) has noted that “Pentacostal religion provides positive social and economic benefits for many poor women in Latin America,”
including the absence of excessive alcohol consumption and careless sex (which leads to fewer sexually transmitted infections), and the reduction of domestic violence. Hallum also highlights the community of women that is informally created through participation in the church that can lead to the sharing of resources, financial and emotional support, and the creation of social networks that can help with child care.\textsuperscript{62}

Luz was the only woman I interviewed who had belonged to an evangelical church; all of the other women were Catholic. Pilar, however, told the story of a neighbor who changed religions with the hope that her son would change his bad behavior.

That's why some people have even changed religion, thinking that the husband will change. That their son will change. For example the woman who lives behind us… Now, she changed religions. She used to go to church. She changed religions [was Catholic, became evangelical] only because she thought it would make her son change. But he is the same. He keeps using drugs. He keeps beating [his girlfriend] very badly. He keeps causing scandals, fighting with his father… And maybe the religion has helped her, I don't know. But yes, she continues in her new religion.

In some cases, I was told, the violence did stop when the women changed religions, but only if the man agreed to adhere to the Evangelical religion as well. In Luz’s case, her participation in the Evangelical Church only led to more violence, because her husband would beat her for being out of the house. She eventually stopped attending because she did not want to suffer her husband’s violence, even though she felt that this religion brought her peace.

\textsuperscript{62} While Hallum (2003) also points out that evangelicals are often more able to save money because they give up expensive vices such as drinking, it is important to note that evangelical churches in Peru (and throughout Latin America) are often extremely corrupt and insist upon considerable “tithes and offerings” from churchgoers, which often lead to lavish lifestyles for the clergy.
The Police

Many women are afraid to go to the police to ask for help. They know that the police, infamous in Peru for their high levels of corruption, will probably ask them for a bribe. As poor women they are unable to afford to pay a bribe, and as honest women they are angered that they are being bribed. Dolores’s distrust of the police began when her son was detained for petty theft. While waiting in the police station, Dolores observed the police talking with a man who had been arrested for the extortion of 5000 soles. As he talked to the police, he convinced them to let him go free and wipe his record clean.

Dolores, who had no money to pay the 150 soles bribe that the police asked of her to set her son free, was furious.

That's why when the police officer said to me, “This is where we serve justice.” I said, “No, here, the only one who's truly fair is God. Because there was a man here for extortion and he left easily, right in front of you. Didn't he leave? You didn't say anything to him… Here justice is unjust,” that's what I told him. He who has money [gets to go free]… and the poor just have to assume the consequences. There is no justice here in Peru… [The police] say they act that way because they are not paid very much. In other words, everything is related to poverty here. Because there is no work the young boys begin to steal. They don't pay the police well and they begin accepting bribes. So how can they fix these problems if everything is poverty? There is no work. They don't pay well. Things are expensive.

Most women have also heard stories from friends and family members about how the police are often dismissive of women’s claims of violence in their intimate partner relationships. Many women, like Luz, are discouraged from going to the police for help because they have refused to help in previous attempts.

I couldn’t file a complaint against him. I couldn’t go here to the police, because I had already tried twice. And both times that I went to the police station they told me, “Ma’am, you need to have more, more for us to be able to send you to the
doctor. You just barely have some bruises or a little bump here, that’s not enough. You have to be more beaten up.”

You mean that they said that you would have to be more beaten up?

Yes, what I had wasn’t enough. And they didn’t want to do anything for me.

Wounds the first time. The second time I was really hit hard. The third time, I didn’t go.

Camila, because of the stories she has heard from other women, has never gone to the police for help. She told me that she thought going to the police for help is basically a waste of time.

Do you think the Peruvian state offers the necessary help for a woman?

[Without any hesitation] No. No. They just think about politics, those things. They barely think about women.

Would you feel comfortable going to the police for help? Going to file a complaint? Going for help? Would you feel comfortable? Would you feel like they were really going to help you?

You could go, but it would be difficult for them to actually help you. The majority of the time they don't pay any attention to us. They’re men. They don't care about us because some women go and file a complaint and then bam, they're back with him. That's what the police think. And that happens sometimes. They file a complaint and then they're back together. That's why most of the time they don't pay any attention to us.

When women are able to get the police involved, they are often unhelpful, slow, unskilled, uninterested, and/or corrupt. Lucía and her family went through great difficulties trying to deal with the police, the district attorney, and the courts when Lucía’s sister was murdered by her husband, a lawyer, who knew all the tricks of the trade and used them to his advantage.

I began looking for my sister, talking to her friends. I even went to the police to file a report. But they wouldn't allow me to, they said 24 hours had to go by and that I had just found out that day.

So, even though no one had seen her for many days...

Because I had just found out that day, 24 hours had to go by. I told them that that was not possible, because a family member knows her sister. You know how she is… The police here don't care very much. They just say, “Tomorrow everything will be fine.” Or, “She will show up.” That's the first thing they tell you, “She'll
show up. Maybe they had a fight and she went to a friend’s house; she probably just wants to scare her husband.” They don't show the interest that they should. Even if they see you desperate, you are there with your whole family, they act like nothing is happening. So, I kept looking for my sister. At seven that night, it was a little after seven, close to eight, I went there, to [my sister’s husband’s] garage… [I told him], “I am going to file report.” “File a report against me then! Let the police come, they won't find anything. They won't find anything,” He said, “Go ahead and sue me. The police can't do anything to me. The police aren’t going to do anything to me.” “Okay,” I said, “we will see. We will see.” My mom came and filed a report. By the time they began investigating, he had more than enough time. He had more than enough time. When the DA finally began the investigation it was February of the following year. 

So, from October [when your sister disappeared]...
The 15th…. Until February when they began investigating, doing interviews, when they began investigating. 

*Imagine what one could do in so much time!*
They were supposed to begin in January but then they went on vacation. There was another DA who was left in charge, but he didn't want to do anything because he said he didn't know much about the case. So we waited for the head DA to get back in March. That's when the investigations resumed. They absolved him of everything for lack of evidence.

*How much time has gone by now?*
This was in 2004. It's been six years, almost 6 years already. 

*And haven't they found out anything about what happened to your sister?*
Nothing! We believed in the justice system. Nothing like this had ever happened to us before. We see so many things on TV where they catch the person right away, we were too trusting. Others say, “I would have had him killed, I would have done this or that, I would have had him kidnapped and beaten.” But our family is not like that. We're not violent like that. 

*Having him killed doesn't make your sister appear either.*
Our family is very conservative. We don't like scandal. How can I explain it to you, it's completely different.

*And what happened with the appeals process in Lima?*
After the investigation, because of the testimony of the watchman… in his last statement he changes his story completely. He said that my sister’s husband had threatened him if he talked. He was asking for protection. He threatened him not to say anything, that if he talked he was in danger. He told the watchman to say that he only worked from the 30th of October, after everything had already happened, and that he didn't know anything.

In reality, he told the watchman to take a week off for vacation. He told him, “Do not to come to work because I am going on vacation with my wife.” The watchman forgot and he went to work. When he pushed the door open he saw him with some tubs of bloody water. With bloody water, and bags. The watchman said that he was splattered with blood. That's the statement he made. My sister’s
husband said to him, “Where are you doing here?” And he threw him out. The watchman asked him, “Why does it smell like that? It smells like blood.” He said that it looked like blood from a person. But he threw him out. So the DA’s office was able to get him declared guilty. He was declared guilty of killing his wife and the DA asked for him to be condemned for 20 years. The problem is the sentence that the DA asks for has to be ratified by the judges’ tribunal. They wouldn't ratify it…

So our only option is to take it to the Supreme Court in Lima, so that they investigate and review the case. Maybe they can explain everything that the DA did not do here, and that the court did not do here. Because the watchman has been subpoenaed several times but he never appeared in court… They said, it’s not necessary for him to testify. How is it not necessary? The lawyer protested the things were not like they said.

The thing is, when it was all over, we left fighting, insulting each other, hitting the table, all of that. And now that we are through February when they are on vacation the case has to go to Lima. They have to notify the DA that they want this annulled because they are not in agreement and they want the sentence annulled. We want to open the case again and give a new sentencing that is stricter in terms of the investigation. So that's what we're waiting for…

But the lawyer tells me that it's going to take a long time. They have to get the file here, they will be sending it to Lima around the end of July [2010], and that they might give a decision in December. That's how long it will take for them to review the case, in December. My mom got sick; she doesn't want anything to do with the case anymore. She doesn't want to be in Lambayeque, even though she is from Lambayeque. She doesn't even want to come to visit. What are we going to do now?

My mom always says, there is divine justice. But that's not right. We die and we go on not knowing. Look, my grandmother already died without knowing what happened. …

*They didn't respect anything.*

They didn't respect anything. They didn't respect the norms of discipline that they put on my sister’s husband. Nothing, nothing. Joaquín has run into him several times in the street and has hit him. He never filed a report against Joaquín because he knows he's not allowed to be in the street [he was on house arrest]. The police know; they let him get away with these things. The police say, “Maybe his wife ran off with someone else.” All because men are so *machista*. They think, poor man, because he has always maintained a low profile.

*And did Joaquín really punch him after the trial?*

Yes. When he walked out. To see his cynicism, to see him begin to cry when they gave his sentence. I yelled at the head judge, “I hope that none of your daughters ever go through the same thing!”

*What did he say to you?*

“Shut up!” Then another woman said, “It's obvious that you don't have a daughter!” He responded, “Shut up you ignorant woman!” That type of person,
they say that they practice justice, they don't even know what it is like to be so many years like this. They're not even a little bit sensitive. I've lost my sensitivity too. Now it makes me angry. I see the women who cry, “My husband hit me, my husband cheated on me.” So what? Go get another man. Look for someone else. Or even better, be alone. It's better to be alone.

According to Peruvian law, since there is no body (they have yet to find Lucía’s sister), there is no crime. Her husband cannot be punished despite the fact that there is significant evidence that he murdered her.

Apart from being ineffective in their work, police officers often have a reputation for being brutal with their own wives. As Merry (2009:20) noted, “Those who routinely use violence in their lives, as police or soldiers, tend to use violence interpersonally as well.” During the group interview, Olivia and the other women told of Olivia’s neighbors experience with her violent police officer husband.

Olivia- Those cases of police officers are the worst! ... [Almost whispering, she asked Pilar] Do you remember Mrs. Anita? When we lived in the old house. Her husband was a police officer and he would massacre her. He would massacre his woman. We had no idea. They had three children. One was a little baby. One day my brother came over and we heard [imitates crying and moaning] from the bathroom. He said, “It is coming from next door.” We got closer; I was sneaking up quietly so the man would not get mad at me. We got to the little corral, there was an adobe wall. My brother climbed up and he saw that he had her tied up in a chair with a gun at her head.

Pilar- But he acted that way because of his mom. His mom was always meddling.

Olivia- She would talk a lot of bad things about the woman.

Pilar- Why? Because she had a child that was not his.

Olivia- She had a child with another man, and that is seen as bad. It's practically bad for you to have a child with someone else, and then you get married to someone else and it goes well for you. That is the problem... Her husband left; he said to her that she better not yell or anything, because he would come back and kill her. When the man left my brother climbed up and jumped over the wall of the corral. I was suffering [meaning she was very nervous]. She whimpered, “Sir, help me. Help me, sir.” My brother untied her. She was covered in blood; she was black [with bruises]. He had massacred her. After that, the woman did not want to go file a report because her husband was a police officer. She was already in problems because she had gone to file a report. And as revenge he hit her even
more. She had gone to file a report with his bosses. He didn't like it. And instead of correcting his behavior... My brother untied her and everything. She called her mother-in-law, and the mother-in-law got involved. But they did not file a report. She did not file a report. And in the end, he began using drugs.

Pilar- He was already a drug addict.
Olivia- He was already a drug addict. He also already had problems at work. He had problems at the police station here. So he was removed from the police because of the reports that she had filed. And once she got better, she went and talked again with his boss. She showed him what he had done to her. We were the witnesses. She asked me. “Yes,” I told her. “Anything you want. I will tell the truth, I will not lie.” So they separated. He lost his job and he dedicated his life to smoking [*pasta básica*] himself to death. He would spend his days passed out in the street. Maybe he was still receiving a pension. But he wasn't working.

Pilar- No, his brother began to support him.
Olivia- Okay, so his brother helped him. But he became a drug addict to the max. The home fell apart. She stayed there to live. He left. Then she left.

But not all police officers who have problems with domestic violence are removed from the force. Alcalde (2009) cites a special investigative report that showed that an average of three domestic violence reports are filed by wives against police officer husbands *each day* in Lima. One police officer, shortly after he was named “Policeman of the Year” in 2001 (despite numerous domestic violence reports filed against him by his wife), shot and killed his wife. The reason for the femicide that was given in the news article was “jealous rage,” thus placing the blame of the woman’s death on her (supposed) actions. Alcalde notes another femicide by a violent police officer husband in 2007. The police officer killed his wife after she told him to stop meddling in her life (they were separated). Citing his humiliation from her assertion of control over her own life, he shot and killed her, saying later that he had done “what any other man would have done” (53).

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63 A chemical byproduct of cocaine production. It is very cheap and gives a high when smoked. It is the drug of choice among the poor in Peru, as it is so cheap to buy. One hit of *pasta básica* cost around 50 centimos (about 18 cents US) during the time of my fieldwork.
The general ineffectiveness of the police, coupled with the knowledge that many police officers are extremely violent with their own wives and children, leads women to be untrusting of the police when they need help. The creation of *Comisarías de Mujeres* (Women’s Police Stations), which are staffed entirely by women police officers and are designed to specifically help women in cases of domestic violence, seems to be fairly successful. The first *Comisaría de Mujeres* was established in Lima in 1988. These special *Comisarías* are modeled after a similar initiative in Brazil. Kirk (1992) noted that in the first three years of operation, the single *Comisaría de Mujeres* in Lima received 10,444 complaints, one for every 600 Lima residents at the time. In Lima reports of DV have been increasing, but as Gonzales and Llosa (1999) point out, the rise in reported cases “…could mean either an actual increase in abuse, or simply that more women are bringing formal complaints now that women’s police stations have been created…” (38). Mesquita da Rocha (1999) identified a similar increase in reporting in Brazil after special police units were created for women, attributing the increase in reports to an improved public awareness and the greater confidence women have in the special police units.

Although I do not have statistics on their overall effectiveness (reporting, follow-through, and prosecution success), they have a good reputation in Lambayeque and many women (and men) think that they are a valuable service. The problem for women in Lambayeque is, however, that Lambayeque does not have a women’s police station. The nearest is in Chiclayo, a 20 minute bus ride from Lambayeque, a trip that, despite its relative proximity, would demand time and money. But, as residents of Lambayeque, the

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64 Alcalde (2009) points out that there have been some reports of discrimination and victim-blaming at these stations, and that sometimes women are discouraged from filing reports, although she says that several women she interviewed had positive experiences at the *Comisarías*. 
women I interviewed had to go to the regular police station in Lambayeque to file a report. They are unable to file paperwork in Chiclayo. Even if women from Lambayeque were able to go to the women’s police station in Chiclayo, several of the women I interviewed explained to me that they are not very familiar with Chiclayo and would not know how to get to the women’s police station.

In order to create a balanced portrayal of the police in general, though, it is important to recognize that there are some police officers who would like to help women seek justice. The Peruvian police force, however, is up against many challenges. Firstly, they are vastly underfunded. Police officers make just slightly above minimum wage, and many work as security guards at banks, businesses, etc. on their days off to earn extra income. Because police officers are paid so little, they are especially susceptible to corruption. When Peru launched an anti-bribery campaign for the police in 2002, billboards were posted all over Lima and the rest of the country that said “A la Policía se le Respeta” (Police are to be Respected). Peruvians wittily added on, “Nothing less than a twenty,” meaning that 20 soles was the minimum bribe – offering anything less would be “disrespectful.”

There is not any wonder as to why police officers are always in search of more money – they have to pay for their own uniforms and buy their own bullets. There is a common joke in Peru that of course the police never shoot any bad guys! The cost of the bullets gets deducted from their pay check! Most police stations have just a few old computers without internet access. If a police officer needs to use the internet to send an email or enter a police database they must go to an internet café. When an individual goes
to file a report he or she must take his or her own paper for the police printer, and then take the original, go somewhere else to pay to have a copy made, and then take the original back to the police station to be filed.

Many Peruvian laws do not favor either the police or the citizens that the police are supposed to protect. Because of high levels of government corruption, laws are designed to benefit the criminals and make it nearly impossible for someone without significant economic resources or political influence to get justice. The police are given very little power to do their jobs. Because of the already overcrowded jails and prisons, many offenses are simply not punished. In the case of domestic abuse, if a man is arrested for beating his wife or children, he is usually held for only a few hours, or perhaps overnight, until he (supposedly) “calms down.” Such a short holding period does not give women time to find somewhere to go, pack their things, and leave. Often the result is that the man comes home and beats his wife even more severely. Many of the police officers that I have talked to express frustration at the lack of support that they receive from the Peruvian government, and express a desire to have the power and support to be able to do more to help the citizens of Peru.

Women’s Emergency Centers

The government response to violence against women is limited. There is too little focus on the problem of VAW, and there are too few resources allocated to address the issue. The resources that are provided are poorly utilized. Women in Lima have more access to government services than women in any other area of Peru. The only institution, government or otherwise, dealing directly with violence against women in Lambayeque
is the Centro de Emergencia Mujer (CEM – Women’s Emergency Center), located in an old, run down colonial adobe house on a side street a few blocks from the Plaza de Armas. The CEM works with the local police department that is located around the corner. While both the CEM staff and the police officers are trained to help victims of violence, they are understaffed, under resourced, and often poorly trained.

Even so, in 2009 the three CEMs in the department of Lambayeque (one is in the town of Lambayeque) registered a total of 340 cases of violence. Statistics show that 67% were reports of psychological violence, 32% were reports of physical violence, and 1% of cases were reports of sexual violence. These statistics, I think, reflect women’s fear of, embarrassment of, and/or resistance to reporting physical and especially sexual violence. The age group that had the highest reporting level was 26-35 (100 cases), followed by 36-45 (89 cases), and then 18-25 (66 cases) (MIMDES 2010).

I had the opportunity to visit the CEM in Lambayeque several times. During the visits I spoke with the staff and observed how they worked with clients. While the individuals who worked at the CEM Lambayeque were all professional women (with the exception of the police officer assigned to work security at the CEM, who was a man), my interactions with and observations of them while they worked indicated that some of the staff and their clients would benefit from increased sensitivity and a more compassionate understanding of the multi-faceted nature of interpersonal violence.

From January to August 2010, the three CEMs in the department of Lambayeque had a combined allocated budget of 369,979 soles (around $137,029 US). This averages out (assuming the three CEMs are funded equally, which is not likely due to size differences between the two smaller towns – Lambayeque and Ferreñafe – and the larger city of Chiclayo) to around only $5709 US per CEM per month. It is unclear if this figure includes employee salaries, I suspect that it does (the CEM in Lambayeque has five full-time employees, and a few part-time employees) (MIMDES 2010).
against women in Lambayeque. As a government institution, the CEM is severely underfunded. Because of the centralization of government resources in Lima and other large cities, the CEM in Lambayeque is under resourced.

One woman who worked at the CEM when I was visiting said that one of her goals is to create a safe house for women without familial or friend support networks nearby. At the time my fieldwork was conducted, there was no safe house or shelter for victims of domestic violence in Lambayeque. Her idea is for it to be a place to teach women to not depend on men. She recognizes, however, that this will be a challenge and that it will require a lot of support from the local government – something that is not guaranteed, or even likely. She criticized the federal government for not investing enough resources in violence prevention and working with aggressors. She said that the budget designated to MIMDES and VAW in general is not sufficient. We talked about how the CEM has many needs, including: a better infrastructure, a newer computer with internet access, better bathrooms, a playroom for kids (with an employee specifically designated to watch and care for them while their mothers are occupied), toys (the current toys are all private donations and there is a problem of kids taking the toys when they leave), diapers, and bottled water to offer to clients.

Perhaps the most important thing lacking at the CEM Lambayeque, though, is support from other government institutions. One of the women at the CEM told me that one of the problems they face, especially in the center of Lambayeque, is that because there are people with respected family names and people in power (such as military officers), the police are afraid to deliver the report notification. One case about which I
learned involved the wife of a military officer who went to the CEM and wanted to file a report against her husband. None of the police officers in Lambayeque wanted to go and leave the notification for the husband (so that the case could proceed) because they were afraid of the officer’s power. In the end a police officer went at four o’clock in the morning and slipped the notification under the door, despite the fact that the notification has to be personally delivered and signed.66

Unfortunately, at the CEM, promises of help are often unrealistic, in part because of the economic limitations of the office and in part because the system itself is dysfunctional. As was Dolores’s case, her inability to purchase original copies of each of her children’s birth certificates precluded her from receiving help from the CEM. The CEM does not have funding to help impoverished women who are unable to pay fees at other government institutions for official paperwork.

María’s story of trying to get help at the CEM, on the other hand, shows some of the dysfunctional aspects of the CEM process. María was beaten by her husband because she had gone out to buy toys for Christmas gifts for her son’s class. As the parent’s association treasurer for her son’s class, it was her responsibility to provide records of the money collected and how it was spent. Ashamed of her bruised and beaten body and face, María skipped the parents association meeting. A group of angry mothers, along with the teacher, went to María’s house to accuse her of stealing the collected money. Once the teacher and the other mothers saw how beat up she was, they took her to file a report against her husband at the CEM. She has yet to see any results.

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66 These notifications are often delivered to the abusive man while the woman is still living with him, and often while she is also at home. A significant, and legitimate, fear that many women have is that once the police officer leaves, the violent husband, angry about the filed report, will seek revenge.
They must have thought that I ran away with the money. So a group of them went to my house. I said, “Son, tell them I’m not here.” I didn’t want them to see my face. I was so embarrassed… She already had bad thoughts. “Yeah, you’re hiding; you want to keep the money!” I said, “Son, open the door.” He opened the door. She came in, and she saw me. “This is the reason I didn’t go to the meeting, Teacher, not because I wanted to keep the money. The reason is that I’m all beat up, because we got home late, and I couldn’t go to the meeting.” She said, “What?! He’s going to hit you because of that?! You haven’t done anything wrong!” Oh, then everyone came in. Oh, they grabbed me and they told me, “No, this can’t be. You have to file a complaint against him; otherwise he’ll just keep hitting you.” I was so scared. I was scared of him. I was scared that he might do something to me. Oh, how I was shaking. I didn’t even know what to do. They took me to the MIMDES office. They said to me, “You HAVE to tell them!” “No, teacher, I don’t want to file a complaint against him.” “He’s mistreated you for so long, for so long, and you never did anything, it’s time for you to file a complaint.” So, that’s how I changed my mind. I filed a complaint. I didn’t know how; I was so scared. The papers were sent there to his mom’s. That made his mom even angrier at me. Even now, today, his mom doesn’t speak to me.

What was it like filing a complaint?
I was scared, scared. I was so scared. I hadn’t ever done that.

SCARED OF WHAT?
More of his mom. I was more scared of his mom than of him. I was scared of her. I was more scared of his mom than of him. I was SCARED of her. If you saw my mother-in-law, just by looking at her, you’d know she’s evil. I was scared because she has a mouth on her!

Scared of her doing what to you?
I don’t know. Fear of her doing something. I just didn’t want to make her hate me even more. You know? I was afraid of her getting sick because of me, that it would be my fault that something happens to her. My friends would say to me, “Don’t be stupid. Think about yourself and your kids. You don’t have any reason to think about her. Does she think about you? If she thought about you she would say, ‘You know what son, you have to be responsible. Not just for her, but for your kids.’”

And all the moms from school went along with you to MIMDES?
The moms, yes, they went with me there.

How was it when you got there? What did you do?
They asked me what the motive was. I told them everything, like I’ve told you, like that I told them.

Did you talk to a man or a woman?
A woman. I think that women understand women better. And so I told her that he had hit me, but that I had never had the valor to file a complaint, until my friends

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67 MIMDES is the Ministerio de la Mujer y Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Women and Social Development). CEMs are run by MIMDES.
gave me valor. “So, you didn’t value yourself,” they said to me. “You’re selfish, you didn’t think about your kids.”

They told you that you were selfish?

Yes. “You’re selfish; you just think about yourself, you don’t think about your kids.” When I filed for child support they told me the same thing. “You’re selfish,” they said to me.

How did you feel when they told you that you are selfish?

It was because they said I only thought about myself. That my love for this man was so strong that I would accept anything, and that I didn’t think about my kids. How did that make you feel?

I felt bad. Because they were right. I really was just thinking about myself. I didn’t think about the future of my children. I didn’t think about what they would eat. I should have been only thinking about my kids. You see? I only thought about myself. I would think, if he’s not with me I’m going to kill myself. And what about my kids? With nothing? That’s what they’re referring to. That I was selfish, because I only thought about myself, and not about my kids. They said to me, “If you really love your kids, then you have to file a complaint against him. Why? So that he can give you money for them.” They made me understand. They told me that until I understood…

There’s a lawyer who did my paperwork. But she didn’t put the name of my husband. She put the name of another man. And what did that make me think? Maybe my husband went to bribe the lawyer. Maybe he went and said, “You know what, I’ll pay you so much so that the paperwork never gets to me. Put another name.” I have a friend who has a strong character, and she went and said to the lawyer, “Ma’am, why did you put another name? Or did you get paid off?” That’s what she said to her… “No, it’s that there are so many papers that I deal with that I forget, I can’t remember.” It was at the Family Lawyer. I think that’s what it’s called. I don’t know anything about all this paperwork. It wasn’t a private lawyer. So the woman said to me, “Let’s see, give me the name and go to the court and ask what number the file is.” I went and asked, and they told me that they had already notified my husband. I went back to the lawyer… and she said, oh good, they notified him. But how are they going to notify him if the papers had someone else’s name? So, he’s there happy. The papers didn’t arrive.

They never arrived?

As María told me her story, I felt angry that they had criticized her and called her selfish, rather than focusing on how brave she was to file a report against her husband. I often faced an internal debate about how to deal with such feelings. My gut instinct was to tell María that the women who called her selfish are jerks, and to tell her how brave she was to file a report against her husband. But I worried that if I criticized the few institutions that exist to help women who are victims of IPVAW too harshly, that I would inadvertently convince the women not to seek help in the future, and contribute to the silencing of IPVAW. At the same time, I worried that not criticizing institutions would suggest to the women that I considered the institutional abuse to be acceptable. Because of this fear, I regularly told María, and many of the other women I interviewed, how brave and strong I think they are. I tried to limit my criticism of institutional responses to IPVAW to empathizing with and agreeing with the women when they made criticisms.

The Family Law office works with MIMDES
No. They never arrived for him. They arrived but with a different name. But from then on he started giving me some money, money to pay off our debt at the store. Then, my brother in law got mad because there was a notification that showed up from Chiclayo, saying that there’s an arrest warrant out for him, for my husband. I went to talk to the lawyer. I asked her why there is an arrest warrant from Chiclayo, if I did all my paperwork in Lambayeque. The lawyer said to me, “No, if you filed your paperwork here, then everything has to come from here. You don’t live in Chiclayo.” So, he must have a kid in the street. Maybe the other woman is asking him for child support. And I have never been able to go find out. But what would I get out of finding out? Or should I go find out so that I would know? Because he really limits the money he gives me. You see? I just can’t go because of my daughter. This little girl doesn’t let me do anything! I’m also scared of finding out that he is paying child support for another kid. It would hurt me down to my soul. You see? That’s why sometimes I think I should just let it go.

*But is it better to know and not always be wondering?*

That’s what my friend says. Do you want to live in doubt or do you want to know? You should just find out, otherwise that will always bother you, you should just find out. One of these days I’ll go. It’s just that I don’t know where to go, where could it be? My brother in law tells me that I should withdraw the complaint. They think that I went to Chiclayo to file a complaint. They don’t think that maybe it’s another woman…

*So he knows that you have filed a complaint in Lambayeque?*

Yes, he knows. He started getting notifications. …

*How much time passed from when you filed the complaint until he got the notification?*

2 or 3 months.

*So he could have killed you 30 times while you were waiting on paperwork?*

Of course! All because the woman had put down another name. I was stupid, I didn’t even realize that there was a different name at the top of the paper. Further down it had his name, but at the top there was a different name. Imagine!

*So what happened?*

Nothing. …

*So you filed a complaint and nothing happened?*

They told me that a notification would arrive for him. But since the notifications arrived to his mom’s house…

*But, after the notification arrived at his house, what happened? What result was there? ... I mean, what happens next?*

I don’t know. What could be written on that paper? I haven’t read it. Sometimes his mom says that I’ve had them send a ton of notifications for him. But I never received any papers asking me to go to carry out the proceedings. What was happening was that my mother-in-law was collecting and hiding all the papers in a drawer in her house. They never told me about any paper… I tell them [at the

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70 Meaning: with another woman who is not his wife.
lawyer’s office] that I never got the notification, that no one ever told me anything. That’s part of the reason why everything took so long.

During the time that I was conducting fieldwork, María asked me if I would accompany her to the CEM to check on the status of her paperwork. She hoped that because I now knew the women working at the CEM, and because I am a *gringa* (she believed they would work more efficiently with a *gringa* watching), that they would be more apt to help her. The day that we went to the CEM I first took María in to talk with the social worker, hoping that they would not make her go through triage again. María and I explained her case to the social worker who then got us in directly to see the lawyer. The lawyer was not the same one who had previously “helped” María. Although María asked me to stay with her while she spoke with the lawyer, the lawyer refused, asking me to wait outside. While María consulted with the lawyer I played with María’s daughter in the waiting area. When they finished, María and I went to a *bodega* for a snack while she explained to me what the lawyer had told her. María was going to have to start the process of soliciting child support all over again because of the errors in the previous paperwork and because of how much time had passed. She was first going to have to collect official copies of different documents from several different government agencies (including official copies of the birth certificates for her three children), a process that demands both time and money – neither of which María has in excess. She would not be able to begin soliciting documents, though, for another six weeks because several government offices were closed for summer vacation. As we talked, she was unsure if it was worthwhile to begin the problematic and slow-moving process again.
When I visited the CEM by myself on other occasions, I witnessed some staff members engaging in acts of victim blaming (both directly to clients and among themselves when talking about clients), making comments like, “It’s her fault for not leaving him!” Some staff members also reinforced patriarchal values, often creating contradictory statements regarding violence against women. In María’s case, for example, although they were encouraging her to file a report against her abusive husband, which they denounced, they were also accusing her of being selfish. But, no one at the CEM criticized her husband’s behavior as selfish. Because María is a woman, it was seen as her responsibility to worry about their children. Rather than trying to help María deal with her mixed emotions that varied from love for her husband to thoughts of suicide in response to his abuse, the CEM staff criticized her. Despite the large body of research on IPVAW showing that women are at most danger when trying to leave their abusive partners, the CEM staff belittled her and focused on her “selfishness,” rather than highlighting her bravery for choosing to file a report. The CEM staff and the government offices that work along with the CEM then put María, as they do most women who seek support, in potentially extreme danger by delivering notices to her husband (albeit with the incorrect name) notifying him of her legal action while they were still living in the same house and without making any attempt to protect her from him (restraining order, protection order, etc.).

Even more common than the reinforcement of patriarchal views, though, were actions that reinforced racial and class stereotypes about VAW in Peru. One of the women that worked at the CEM stated plainly that the majority of the women who come
to the CEM are from the pueblos jóvenes. When I asked why she thought that most of the women were from these poorer neighborhoods, her response was because there the people no tienen conciencia (they have no awareness), in other words, they aren’t aware that VAW is not normal or acceptable. She then began explaining that in the pueblos jóvenes the women do not end the cycle of violence, as if the responsibility were in the hands of only the women. She provided four reasons that she sees for women not ending the cycle of violence: 1) machismo (both on the men’s and on the women’s part), 2) economic dependence of women on men, 3) emotional and affective dependence of women on men, and 4) alcohol and drug dependence. She continued to say that women in the pueblos jóvenes have grown up being taught that violence is simply “the way it is,” and that women there haven’t gone to college and are therefore “ignorant” about many things. She deliberately pointed out that she and I both have university degrees, creating an educational hierarchy that valued those who have a university education over those who do not. She was clearly othering the women who come to the CEM for support, who she repeatedly referred to as “ignorant.” It seemed that she wished to distinguish herself from “them,” while demonstrating that she was more like me, also making the assumption that I was not like “them.” She did not appear to recognize the fact that most of the CEM’s clients come from the pueblos jóvenes as a result of bravery, the ability to overcome shame and embarrassment, or the fact that wealthy women are more able to pursue other types of help and support.

I asked her what she meant when she said that the women in the pueblos jóvenes are machistas and she responded, “because unfortunately, they have been raised like
that.” When I asked for examples of their *machista* behavior, she said that the women give preference to “the man of the house,” instead of to the children, at mealtime.

According to her, women give the children just a little bit of food and give them parts of the chicken like the feet or the neck, while the man gets a leg or a thigh and “a mountain of rice.” No mention was made of what the woman/mother eats. Her second example was that when a little girl falls down it is considered acceptable for her to cry, but when a little boy falls down he’s told to stop crying like a little girl, because boys and men do not cry. She summarized her position by saying that women contribute to the creation of gender stereotypes. I agree with her that women participate in the socialization and creation of gender roles and stereotypes in Lambayeque, and boys are valued over girls, and men over women; but I do not agree that this is a social problem that is limited only to the marginalized and impoverished residents of the *pueblos jóvenes*. It is worrisome that the only government agency designed to help women escape violence in Lambayeque promotes such a simplistic and class-based understanding of violence against women. Despite the validity of the four points she outlined above, throughout the time that we interacted, she provided a somewhat simplistic and etic understanding of VAW in Lambayeque.

The most in-depth experience I had with the CEM Lambayeque, in terms of seeing the staff interact with the community, was during a visit to a *pueblo joven* of Pacora, a smaller town about 30 minutes by bus from Lambayeque. Prior to the visit, one of the CEM staff members explained to me that the goal of the visit was to “collect” various cases of IPVAW in the *pueblo joven*, because Pacora does not have a CEM of its
own. The CEM in Lambayeque and Chiclayo worked together to organize the visit based on anecdotal information that suggested there were many cases of IPVAW in that area. The idea was that because there is no CEM in Pacora, the women in the pueblo joven would be unable to easily and cheaply visit a CEM because of travel time and expenses. Additionally, many women are unaware that the CEMs exist, even when there is one in their town. I was told that I was welcome to accompany the staff for the visit, as it was a public event. I met two of the staff members from the CEM in Lambayeque and we rode together in the bus to Pacora. We were an hour late in leaving (I was the only one of the three of us that was ready on time). When we arrived to Pacora around 9:30 (an hour late) the other women from the CEM Lambayeque and the CEM Chiclayo were also trickling in. They finally got started around 10:00.

First, the staff met in the home of a woman who had volunteered her house to serve as “headquarters” for the day’s campaign. If a woman did not want to talk in her own home about her experiences of violence, she and the CEM staff member could talk in this woman’s home. After a half hour of casual conversation, the fifteen or so women broke down into pairs and were given interview schedules and surveys to give the women. I accompanied a pair of women, one of whom was a social worker. As the CEM staffers left “headquarters” they were anything but inconspicuous as they walked in a group down the middle of the dirt street wearing red and white shirts and vests emblazoned with the CEM and MIMDES logos. The houses along the streets were mostly made of adobe with dirt floors and corrugated metal roofs and doors. As we approached a small dirt plaza, one of the women began to use a megaphone, supposedly
to call women out into the street to share their story. She said, “Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Today the CEM Lambayeque and the CEM Chiclayo are visiting Pacora on a campaign to collect cases of domestic violence. If you are an abused woman, please come and talk with us. Don’t be shy. We will be going door to door to ask you about your relationships with your husbands.” I was flabbergasted! I could not believe what I was witnessing. And just like dominoes, the corrugated metal doors of the houses, which normally stand open during the day because of the heat, began to close one after another. The CEM staffers seemed oblivious. I was embarrassed.

The pairs of workers then split up and scattered in different directions. I literally stood in the plaza unable to move, dumbfounded, until the pair I was accompanying called me to follow them. I followed them down the street, writing as quickly as I could in my notebook. Most of the doors on that street were closed, but one of the houses had a window (with no glass) carved out of the adobe. The social worker marched right up to the window and stuck her head in, calling for the woman of the house. The woman, we could see, was behind her house in the corral washing clothes in plastic tubs. The woman’s daughter, who was probably about 12 years old, told us that her mother was busy. The social worker told the girl to go tell her mother that it was important that she receive us. While the girl went to relay the message to her mother, the social worker called me up to the window (I had been standing back, embarrassed about their behavior). I reluctantly approached. The social worker said to me, “Look at how they live! Just like little animals in the dirt. They don’t even have running water in their houses! Look at how the little kids are all dirty from playing on the dirt floor.” She made no attempt to
lower her voice when saying this to me. I was sure that the mother could hear her speak, so I replied loudly, “Not everyone in this world is born into money. Not everyone has the opportunity to do all the things they would like to do in life. Most people in this world just have to get by the best they can with what they have. There is no shame in that.” I was stunned at how rude and culturally inappropriate the CEM staffers were. Needless to say, the woman never did receive us in her home, and the social worker left a copy of the survey with the daughter.

We continued down the street to one of the few houses where the door still stood open. The two CEM workers walked right in the house without knocking or saying anything. Once they were inside they said good morning to the women sitting inside the home, explaining brusquely why they were there. There were two adult women sitting on a wooden bench along the wall, and two children sitting in plastic chairs. The women from the CEM told the children to stand up, and they promptly sat down in the chairs. I, horrified, remained outside in the street. When the older woman that lived in the house saw me, I greeted her politely, embarrassed. She responded and asked me to come in and offered me a seat next to her on the bench. I sat quietly while the women from the CEM launched into their speech about domestic violence, asking if any of the women in the home were experiencing violence in their relationships. The older woman, the one who had invited me in, told them that her son sometimes yelled at her daughter-in-law, and she sent her daughter into the kitchen to bring her daughter-in-law out. As soon as the daughter-in-law came out they began the survey. There were no pleasantries; there was
no attempt at building rapport. They simply began asking her questions about her relationship with her husband and she replied, quietly.

While they interviewed her I sat talking with the older woman. We talked about how hot it had been, and whether or not the *El Niño* rains were going to continue. Two of her granddaughters (ages 4 and 7) had crawled up into my lap by then and they began asking me questions about the US. While I played with the girls and talked with the older woman, I did my best to listen in on the survey on violence. Once the CEM women had written down all the information that they deemed necessary, they told the woman that both she and her husband needed to see a psychologist. They then stood up, thanking the woman for participating in their survey.

I decided to hang back, waiting for the two women from the CEM to leave, at which point I explained that I was not part of the CEM. I told them that I was doing research on IPVAW in Lambayeque and that I was there to evaluate the work that the women from the CEM do. I asked them if they would mind if I stayed a few more minutes to ask them some more questions. They agreed. I asked them what they thought about the CEM’s efforts. They all agreed that it was valuable for the CEM to come to Pacora, as most women in Pacora would never have the opportunity to go to the CEM in Lambayeque. They all also said, though, that the way in which the CEM women worked was not appropriate. They mentioned how after the announcement was made over the megaphone, the streets were deserted and most doors had been closed. They also thought that the CEM workers should dress more discreetly and not come in such large groups.
Basically, they felt that the CEM should try to work in a less conspicuous way that would allow for some element of discretion.

After talking with the women for around 30 minutes I excused myself, explaining that I wanted to talk with other women in the neighborhood as well. The two little girls accompanied me as I went to the houses where I saw CEM workers leaving. Having the girls with me was very valuable. First, the older girl was able to tell me which houses were “okay” to go to, and which houses to avoid because of abusive men who were home at the time. When I considered approaching a group of men sitting in front of a house to ask them what they thought about the CEM campaign, I asked her if they were “good men” or “bad men.” She advised me not to talk to them, explaining that those men were all drunks and were very violent towards their wives and other women who try to break up the violence. Concerned for my own safety, the safety of the girls, and the safety of the men’s wives, I decided not to speak with them. Second, having the girls with me when I knocked on doors, seemed to give me some degree of trustworthiness. The little girls told the other women in the neighborhood that they were with me because I had just been talking with their mom and grandmother. I asked different women the same questions about the CEM’s work style, and all the women I spoke with agreed that it was good the CEM came, but that they needed to revise their way of working to make it more discreet and more culturally sensitive.

I then realized that the women from the CEMs were gathering back at headquarters. It was 11:30. The girls and I went to see what the plan for the rest of the day was, and I was surprised to hear that they were done. They thanked the woman for
the use of her home, and we started walking towards the highway. I asked one of the
women who had coordinated the campaign why we were leaving so early. She replied
matter-of-factly, “It’s almost lunchtime and no one has invited us to eat lunch in their
homes, so we’re all going home to cook.” I, surprised by her answer, stuttered, “But there
are restaurants in the center of town.” She either did not hear me or she chose not to
respond. I did not understand how or why they expected these women to invite all of us
to eat lunch in their homes when the motivation for the campaign was the fact that these
women did not have the money to go on their own to the CEM in Lambayeque. The CEM
staff said their goodbyes to each other, saying that they would see each other the next day
at work. Despite the fact that they would be back in Lambayeque or Chiclayo by 1:00 at
the latest, none of them were going to go back to the office that day. At that point I was
furious at how the CEM staff was operating, so I got on a bus back to Lambayeque.
When I later inquired what was going to happen with all the cases of domestic violence
that they collected in Pacora, I was told that the women would be notified of when they
should go to the CEM in Lambayeque to file an official report. Again, this undermines
the idea that the women in Pacora do not have the time or money to travel to
Lambayeque to file a report.

I do not want to argue that the CEM is a worthless institution. On the contrary, it
is a much needed and very valuable institution, if working efficiently and effectively.
Unfortunately though, that was not the case when I was conducting my research. As
Guadalupe (and many other women that I interviewed) explained (about government
services for victims of violence in general, not about the CEM specifically), they are not efficient or effective, and they often lead to gossip.

*Of the few services that exist, are they effective?*

Guadalupe- To begin, the one who interviews you there, you have to tell her everything. And the person who takes all the notes, the one who knows why he hit you and everything about your problem, she goes and tells someone else, who goes and tells someone else, who goes and tells someone else, and in the end everyone knows about your problems. *So, there is no privacy.*

Guadalupe- There is no privacy, at least in the cases I have dealt with, no. It ends up being gossip.

Unfortunately, though, there are not any alternative institutions for women in Lambayeque that are victims of violence. There are no NGOs in Lambayeque that offer services to women in violent relationships. The NGOs that do exist in Peru are centralized in Lima and a few other large cities. There are a few small NGOs in Chiclayo that do work with victims of IPVAW, but none of the women whom I interviewed in Lambayeque were even aware that they existed. It is clear that the existing NGOs offer limited services and are simply unable to help all of the women who request assistance. The government must make helping women who are victims of IPVAW a priority.
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

Because of the large amount of ethnographic data collected and the breadth of issues addressed, there are many possible areas of discussion and conclusions. I have chosen to focus my conclusions on four points: 1) VAW is naturalized in Lambayeque, 2) naturalized violence begets naturalized violence, 3) effective resistance to IPVAW is nearly impossible for most women in Lambayeque because of how interwoven VAW is into their everyday lives, and 4) the naturalized violence that many Lambayecana women experience constitutes intimate terror.

Violence Against Women is Naturalized in Lambayeque

Violence against women (VAW) and intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) are intricately woven into everyday life for many women in Lambayeque. Although it is common in some studies of IPVAW to focus on extreme examples to shock the reader and draw attention to the issues of gender violence and domestic violence, what is striking about the findings of this research, particularly as demonstrated through women’s narratives, is that violence is far too common and “everyday.” As Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:21) explain, the “everydayness and its familiarity render it invisible.” As has been demonstrated in chapters four, five, seven, and eight, in both private and public settings, the Peruvian and Lambayecano cultural valuing of machismo has contributed to the development and maintenance of strong private and public patriarchal structures that dictate gender relations. These machista gender relations are enacted in the private sphere and reinforced by the public sphere.
Understandings of men as dominant and aggressive, and of women as submissive and passive, lead to idealized conceptualizations of dichotomized gender roles that prescribe how men and women should act. As was discussed in chapter four, while growing up, children learn to respect and replicate the gendered hierarchy of power through experiencing gendered violence and through witnessing gendered violence. These gendered power hierarchies are reinforced through violence during adulthood. Husbands use emotional, physical and sexual violence to regulate their wives’ behavior, which is ideally defined by these gendered norms. When these gender roles are violated there are both internal conflict over one’s own sense of identity, and external conflict with those who are unhappy with the deviance from gendered norms of behavior.

Because men are expected to act violently, and women are expected to tolerate men’s violence and to be abused, when men act violently towards their intimate partners the situation is not understood as extraordinary; rather, it is often understood and commonly phrased as “así es la cosa” (that’s how things are), or “así es el matrimonio” (that’s how marriage is). In addition, another common conceptualization that “así son los hombres” (that’s how men are) not only excuses men’s violent behavior, it legitimizes it, and, in turn, undermines women’s ability to effectively resist violence. Because IPVAW is not seen as a gross violation of gender norms or socio-cultural expectations of behavior between intimate partners, VAW is not regularly questioned or critically addressed. As was detailed in chapters four and five, family members’ response to IPVAW is often to accept this violence as a normal part of marriage, thus reinforcing naturalized notions of IPVAW.
Lambayecano and Peruvian society glorify all types of violence, not just violence against women. As chapters two and seven highlighted, throughout Peru there is a high level of generalized violence that is not discouraged, and is, instead, often celebrated. As Baron and Strauss (1989) (as cited in Jasinski 2001) argue, the use of violence as a legitimate means to getting what is desired leads to a spill-over effect of violence into all aspects of life. Campbell (1992) takes this position a step farther, arguing that VAW is, in many societies, the most widely accepted and tolerated form of violence. Because in patriarchal societies men are valued over women, and IPVAW usually occurs in the private space of the home, VAW is seen as a “lesser” offense than violence by men against men, which usually occurs in the public sphere. But, as chapter seven showed, VAW occurs regularly in the public sphere in naturalized ways that draw little criticism. This public VAW includes everyday acts of physical violence against women, linguistic violence against women, and the casual treatment of violence against women in popular culture and the “news” media.

The interpersonal nature of IPVAW is complicated by the multi-faceted nature of structural violence and the lack of institutional response to structural types of violence within Lambayecano and larger Peruvian society, which was described in chapter eight. The structural inequalities that Lambayecano men and women face reveal themselves in forms of everyday violence such as discrimination, exclusion, and poverty. Because structural violence arranges the socio-political system in ways that restrict individual agency, individuals are limited to a marginalized life that is often fraught with misery (Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997; Klienman 2000; Das and Kleinman 2000 and 2001;
Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Farmer 2004; Das 2007; Merry 2009). Within the framework of structural violence, Lambayecana women are particularly vulnerable to IPVAW, as their low social status and limited access to resources prevent them from easily responding to and escaping from IPVAW.

Conditions of machismo and patriarchal socio-cultural structures, the glorification of generalized violence, and the multi-dimensional and all-encompassing nature of structural violence collude to create a naturalized understanding of VAW and IPVAW. Because of its social pervasiveness and its intricate and inextricable relationship with many other seemingly unrelated elements of society and culture, IPVAW can be seen as an inevitable part of life. For many people in Lambayeque, IPVAW is perceived to be a natural part of everyday life – something that just is. IPVAW is naturalized in particular ways for non-white and lower-class women, as shaped by structural inequalities and societal notions of violence that inhibit their ability to resist violence in their everyday lives. For white and middle- and upper-class women, IPVAW is naturalized differently in part because they do not face the same forms of structural violence. It is interesting that some of the informants provided narratives indicating that it is more shameful among white and middle- and upper-class women, thus leading to a greater attempt to hide IPVAW or seek help through privately-paid resources.

Naturalized Violence Begets Naturalized Violence

A central argument in this thesis is that when violence is naturalized the reproduction of violence is facilitated because the violence is not problematized or questioned by individuals within the socio-cultural setting in which the violence occurs.
As was noted in the literature review, many anthropologists have observed that violence is often socio-culturally reproduced (Sanday 1990; Moore 1994a, 1994b; Robben and Nordstrom 1995; Bourgois 1995, 2004b; Stewart 2002; Bourdieu 2004; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). This process of reproduction is evident when considering Lambayecana women’s experiences of VAW beginning in childhood and continuing through adulthood. As has been shown through the narratives presented in chapter four, many women in Lambayeque witness and experience naturalized VAW and IPVAW while growing up. Many men in Lambayeque witness naturalized VAW and IPVAW while growing up. The regular witnessing and direct experience of VAW and IPVAW, throughout childhood and adult life, both in and out of the home, can contribute to the desensitization to violence and the normalization of violence. Witnessing or experiencing violence that is not considered extraordinary by important adult figures (parents, other kin, teachers, doctors, police officers, government officials, media influences, etc.), or perhaps even worse, experiencing violence by these influential adults (in the case of girls who are sexually abused by their father or step-father, for example) that is not then problematized by other influential adults, teaches children that violence is normal.

Many young women in Lambayeque, who experienced violence as girls and/or as young women, get involved in intimate partner relationships as a way of escaping violence in the home. The men they choose (or the men that choose them, through rape) often act violently, taking advantage of these young women’s already fragile family situation, and replicate what they have observed in society. Because the young women have lived witnessing and/or experiencing VAW and IPVAW throughout their lives,
intimate partner violence is sometimes not understood to be a new or extraordinary experience, as was demonstrated in the testimonies of the interviewed women in chapter five. For women who have seen their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, neighbors, and friends being beaten, raped, and verbally assaulted, violence is understood to be a part of “how marriage is.”

This conceptualization of marriage is reinforced in Lambayeque by family dynamics that create distrust by women of their families, and families that refuse or are unable to help women who are being abused in their intimate partner relationship. These weakened family ties, described in chapters four and five, allow patterns of IPVAW to continue. Women who have been abused by their fathers/ step-fathers and women who have witnessed their fathers/ step-fathers abuse their mothers are distrustful of asking their fathers for help, assuming that abusive men will not discourage other men from being abusive. Mothers, who have naturalized understandings of IPVAW and who often hide and silence their own experiences as victims of violence, often discourage daughters from seeking help, reminding them that IPVAW is a part of marriage.

Faced with a lack of familial support, few women turn to institutions. As was detailed in chapter eight, the small number of institutions in Lambayeque designed to help victims of IPVAW are insufficient, inefficient, and often participate in the same types of victim-blaming that characterize wider society. The inability and unwillingness of institutions to help victims of IPVAW reinforces ideas that VAW need not be problematized. Manifestations of public patriarchy reinforce notions of private patriarchy, and both public and private actors contribute to the reproduction of violence.
Institutions in Lambayeque leave women with few options to break free of the cycle of IPVAW. Under these conditions, IPVAW continues throughout the lives of women and is reproduced by society.

The Naturalization of VAW Makes Women’s Resistance to IPVAW Extremely Difficult

As has been shown throughout this thesis, in Lambayeque, women’s ability to effectively and efficiently resist IPVAW is extremely limited because of how interwoven and pervasive VAW is in their everyday lives. Chapters four and five highlighted the idealized notions of gender and acceptable behaviors for dichotomized genders which dictate what types of resistance to violence are understood to be socio-culturally “acceptable.” When women try to leave the private patriarchy of their homes (discussed in chapters four and five), be it their home with their parents or with their husbands, they are faced with equally insidious public patriarchy and complicated and gendered economic and political challenges (discussed in chapters six, seven, and eight). As shown in chapter seven, women face the same generalized violence of robberies, muggings, and gang violence that all residents of Lambayeque face, but they face the violence in a nuanced and gendered way that targets women. Chapter eight showed that for girls and women growing up in Lambayeque, schools and universities are not always safe places, as female students are regularly confronted with situations in which there is the possibility of molestation or rape by teachers and in which they are sometimes expected to bribe their teachers with sex in exchange for passing grades. Hospitals and clinics are also sometimes sites of VAW, as doctors (sometimes women, but usually men) make life-altering health decisions for women who are not given a voice in their own medical
care. The lack of availability, large cost, and problematic distribution of contraceptives, combined with the illegality of abortion take away many reproductive choices for women in Lambayeque, especially if they are poor.

Chapter eight also argued that the institutional response to IPVAW is insufficient. There are too few resources and there is too little focus on lessening the frequency of IPVAW. Even the government agencies such as the police and the CEMs are inadequate services that often engage in the same type of victim-blaming as the general public. Even when individual staff members are truly dedicated to helping victims of IPVAW, they receive little support from other government agencies and they are severely underfunded. Most of the help for victims is centralized in Lima and a few other large cities, limiting the access that women in Lambayeque have to their services. Lambayeque has no NGOs that service victims of IPVAW to fill the gap left by the government agencies. Religious groups can be of some help, but their assistance is often dependent upon the victim’s acceptance of some of the same unequal gender norms that help to perpetuate violence, and is only provided when the couple agrees to abide by the expectations of conduct set forth by the religion.

In Peru it is often said that women in violent relationships are there because they want to be there. This is, however, not what my research showed. In Lambayeque a woman’s ability to resist IPVAW depends largely on her access to socio-economic resources. As Grant (1993:157-8) noted, “choices made in private may appear as outcomes of freely given consent but are actually the products of coercion.” Women in Lambayeque regularly resist violence in their relationships but are limited by a number of
factors. Firstly, many women, especially abused women, are taught from a young age to not violate idealized gender roles, which teach and expect women to be submissive, passive, and nurturing. Sometimes this understanding of what it means “to be a woman” leads women to try to protect their abusers. For those who choose to break the silence surrounding IPVAW and seek institutional support, many simply do not know where to seek help, and others are unable to access the services because of time or money constraints. Other women are discouraged from pursuing institutional support, either by their own experiences or by listening to the experiences of other women who have sought help and been treated badly. Many times they simply give up seeking official assistance, and try to get by with the little support they may have from friends, family, or their own children.

Because of the difficult access to resources and institutional support, women who are victims of IPVAW in Lambayeque are usually unable to escape violence until their intimate partners leave them – usually for another woman – often impoverished and solely responsible for their children. But, as I hope was made clear throughout this thesis, the Lambayecana women I interviewed, and many more women that I did not have the chance to interview, are survivors. While many of these women try to avoid more extreme forms of resistance (such as reciprocal violence) whenever possible, because these conflict with what are seen as “appropriate” behaviors for women and challenge women’s own sense of self, they resist and survive in many more subtle ways. They are strong women who fight to survive the many types and levels of violence they experience in their day-to-day lives. They do the best they can with the resources available to them,
and try to *salir adelante*, to “get ahead,” with the hope of creating a better life for themselves and their children.

The Violence that Many Women Experience in Lambayeque is Intimate Terror

The strategic, intentional, coercive, and often extreme character of IPVAW in Lambayeque constitutes intimate terror. Violence is intricately woven through the everyday lives of women and the lives of their intimate partners, and is rarely problematized by Lambayecano society. For the many Lambayecana women, IPVAW is not constituted by clearly-defined and isolated events. For some women, separating the “good times” from the “bad” in intimate partner relationships may be nearly impossible. The threat of violence and the potential for violence are always present. As a result, victimized women live in constant fear of psychological, physical, and/or sexual violation. Women are terrorized by their intimate partners, which results in what can be called a complete loss of context. This loss of context, Das (2007:9) describes as the “sense of being betrayed by the everyday.” She points out that this betrayal results in undermining women’s trust of everyday life and societal institutions. Many women in Lambayeque described this situation, saying that they felt like they were “going crazy.” Intimate terror can cause women to lose their sense of self. For some women, the intimate terror they experience can lead to extreme responses such as their own expressions of violence, suicide, murder-suicide, and/or murder. These responses are, however, not understood by the women to be “typical,” “normal,” or “desirable” behaviors. It is possible to conceptualize this phenomenon as the result of desperation and loss of context that IPVAW has caused in their lives.
IPVAW is a particularly terroristic type of interpersonal violence in that the terror of gender violence comes from both inside and outside the home. Violence, rather than coming exclusively from strangers (a type of violence that is generally more easily comprehensible), comes from women’s husbands, who are ideally expected to be loving and supportive. For women in Lambayeque, the experience of a complete loss of context can be understood as a complicated process that includes the dissonance they experience when they fulfill idealized gender roles and yet experience terror by their intimate partners.

Because of the pervasiveness of IPVAW and more generalized VAW in Lambayeque, all women live with an underlying fear and constant awareness of potential violence (from their partner, from another individual – known or unknown, or from institutions), regardless of whether they have or have not been abused by an intimate partner. This terroristic effect on all women, which Johnson (1995) more broadly terms “patriarchal terror,” also contributes to the naturalization of VAW because the continual experience of wariness and fear becomes a normal response to everyday life, a normal state of being for women in Lambayeque, and incidences of violence are seen as expected rather than exceptional. This condition is formulated by Mary Daly (1990:17) when she plainly states, “when everything is bizarre, nothing seems bizarre.”

Significance of this Study for Research on VAW in Peru

Of particular significance to future work is the lack of socio-cultural analysis in most current studies on VAW in Peru (notable exceptions include Harvey 1994; and Alcalde 2007a, 2007b, and 2009). Because most contemporary research on VAW and
IPVAW in Peru is concerned with statistical analysis of factors that may contribute to the prevalence of (IP)VAW, there is little in-depth ethnographic description and analysis of the cultural significance of (IP)VAW and how (IP)VAW articulates with other spheres of socio-cultural life. This lack of socio-cultural analysis not only creates a shallow understanding of VAW, but also fails to recognize the wide range of expressions of VAW, which include physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, linguistic violence, economic violence, political violence, and media violence. This thesis goes beyond the above limitations by focusing on how women in violent relationships experience and conceptualize IPVAW and how they understand IPVAW in relation to other aspects of their lives. This emic approach used in this research provides a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of IPVAW as a whole, and demonstrates the links with other aspects of society and culture. In addition, the qualitative approach adopted in this study greatly benefited from a research strategy concerned with building rapport with women through personal contacts, long-term interaction, and in-depth interviewing, rather than relying on self-reporting or surveys that limit interviewer-interviewer interaction.

Possibilities for Future Research

This exploration of IPVAW in Lambayeque has led me to identify a number of areas in which the social sciences would benefit from further research. Firstly, what is notably absent from this thesis is a collection of men’s testimonies about IPVAW. Understanding the phenomenon of IPVAW from men’s perspectives would further elucidate the multi-faceted nature of IPVAW and could shed light on potential locations
for social change. Also valuable to this research project would be an understanding of how women’s poor self-concepts contribute to the naturalization of IPVAW.

Another compelling aspect of this research that has not been adequately explored is women’s roles in subjugating other women through violence perpetrated by the women themselves, and through encouraging men to be violent towards women. It would be valuable to understand the process in which the victim becomes the perpetrator of violence, resulting in self-destruction and destructive impulses towards others. In Lambayque this pattern is often manifested through competition in mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships, competition in mother/daughter relationships, and through parent (or step-parent)/child relationships.

Violence against children is another area that needs to be researched. Violence against children manifests itself in a variety of ways, depending on the genders of the victim and perpetrator and their social/kin relationship. Further research on biological parent/child relationships and step-parent/child relationships could help to demystify child violence, and could ultimately contribute to the denaturalization of IPVAW through efforts to foster stronger and healthier family ties for young women and men.

Intimate partner violence by women against men is yet another phenomenon that has not been sufficiently explored by the social sciences. What is particularly intriguing about intimate partner violence by women against men is the violation of dichotomized and idealized gender roles, in which women are supposed to be passive and men aggressive.
Finally, intimate partner violence in lesbian and gay partnerships, which research in the US has shown to occur at similar rates as intimate partner violence in heterosexual relationships, needs to be included research. In Peru and throughout Latin America, homosexuality (of all forms, including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender) is treated in a particular way that is heavily influenced by ideas of *machismo* and localized understandings of masculinity and femininity. It would be interesting and valuable to understand how these culturally influenced notions of gender translate into homosexual intimate partner relationships.
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CaracolTV


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Das, Veena


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APPENDIX A: CUANDO TÚ ME PEGAS – NOSEQUIEN Y LOS NOSEQUUANTOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuando tú me pegas</td>
<td>When you hit me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me pongo contenta</td>
<td>I get content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porque yo siento</td>
<td>Because I feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que te intereso</td>
<td>That I interest you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La última vez</td>
<td>The last time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que me pegaste</td>
<td>That you hit me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dejaste marcas</td>
<td>You left marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentro de mí</td>
<td>Inside of me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No me interesa</td>
<td>It doesn’t interest me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si eres ratero</td>
<td>If you’re a thief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si eres borracho</td>
<td>If you’re a drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O pastelero</td>
<td>Or you’re a “pasta básica”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo que me importa</td>
<td>What matters to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es que de noche</td>
<td>Is that at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te pongas bestia</td>
<td>You become a beast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y me des golpes</td>
<td>And you hit me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un puñete para arriba</td>
<td>A punch up high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un puñete para abajo</td>
<td>A punch down low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un puñete en la barriga</td>
<td>A punch in the belly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un puñete en el costado</td>
<td>A punch in the side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahora las mujeres</td>
<td>Now all of us women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamos a disfrutar</td>
<td>We’re going to enjoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De esta rica tecno cumbia</td>
<td>This great technocumbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailando sin cesar</td>
<td>Dancing without end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esa patada</td>
<td>That kick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que has inventado</td>
<td>That you’ve invented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuando me atacas</td>
<td>When you attack me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A traición</td>
<td>In betrayal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me pone loca</td>
<td>Makes me crazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y me trastoca</td>
<td>And transforms me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causando heridas</td>
<td>Causing wounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E inflamación</td>
<td>And inflammation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La última noche</td>
<td>The last night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fue inolvidable</td>
<td>Was unbelievable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me diste un tacle</td>
<td>You tackled me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En el riñón</td>
<td>In the kidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Házmelo a diario</td>
<td>Do it to me daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra el ovario</td>
<td>Against the ovary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cambies nunca</td>
<td>Don’t ever change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eres mi amor</td>
<td>You are my love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71 Pasta Básica is a byproduct in the production of cocaine. It is highly addictive and extremely cheap on the streets of Peru.
APPENDIX B: LA ESCOBITA– MARISOL Y LA ORQUESTA MÁGIA DEL NORTE

Para que se mueran de envidia
Aquí estoy otra vez, ¡Marisol!

Ya me han dicho por ahí
Que me estabas engañando
Mientras que yo estaba lejos
Tú te ibas vacilando
“Con quien menos te imaginás
Anda, velo a tu marido
Con toditas ha barrido
Y le dicen la escobita”

Ay ¿qué le voy a hacer
A este hombre que se cree un galán del mundo?
Si estaba con mi vecina
Con mi hermana, con mi prima
Con mi amiga, mi sobrina
Y hasta creo que con la Beto (bis)

Y para todas las muchachas, tengan cuidado con
Las escobitas. ¡Hay a montones por ahí!

Cuando me fui al Mercado
Todo el mundo me miraba
Aquí está ya la cornuda
Así todos murmuraban
De inmediato una vecina
Me puso al tanto de todo
“Con toditas ha barrido
Tu marido, la escobita”

Ay ¿qué le voy a hacer
A este hombre que se cree un galán del mundo?
Si estaba con la pollera
Con la tía panadera
Con la chata verdulera
Con la gorda tamalera (bis)

Ay pero que yo te vea nomás te saco la con…
Ya tu sabes que sigue
Marisol y la Magia del Norte.
Lambayeque, Perú.

So that you can die of jealousy,
Here I am again, Marisol!

They have told me around town
That you were cheating on me
While I was far away
You were having your fun
“With the last person you would guess
Go, see your husband
He has swept them all off their feet
And they call him the little broom”

Oh, what am I going to do to
This man that thinks he’s the world’s most desired?
He was with my neighbor,
With my sister, with my cousin,
With my friend, my niece,
And I think he was even with Beto (x2)

And for all the girls, be careful with
Little Brooms. There are tons of them out there!

When I went to the market
Everyone looked at me
Here is the one that is being cheated on
That’s what everyone was murmuring
Right away a neighbor
Filled me in about everything
“He has swept them all off their feet
Your husband, the little broom”

Oh, what am I going to do to
This man that thinks he’s the world’s most desired?
He was with the woman who sells chicken
With the lady who sells bread
With the short lady who sells vegetables
With the fat lady who sells tamales (x2)

Oh, if I even see you I will beat the…
You know what comes next
Marisol and the Magia del Norte.
Lambayeque, Perú.

72 “La” is put in front of a man’s name if he is gay. It is a way of indicating that he is not “really” a man.
73 Many people outside of Lambayeque think that “Beto” refers to the gay Peruvian journalist Beto Ortiz. Actually, Beto is a well known gay man in Lambayeque who is a good friend of Marisol. Not only is the reference a “shout-out” to her friend, it is meant to imply that her husband was unscrupulous in his cheating and serves to emasculate him by questioning his masculinity/sexuality.
### APPENDIX C: 30 SEGUNDOS—MARISOL Y LA ORQUESTA MÁGIA DEL NORTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Que estúpida que fui al creer solo en tus palabras</td>
<td>How stupid I was to believe in your words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizás debí estar loca porque siempre perdoné</td>
<td>Maybe I was crazy because I always forgave you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todas tus mentiras</td>
<td>All of your lies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo que a mí me da más rabia</td>
<td>What most enrages me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es saber que me engañabas</td>
<td>Is to know that you cheated on me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pesar de que te di mi amor,</td>
<td>Even though I gave you my love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tú no mas querías eso</td>
<td>You didn’t want it anymore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por eso te digo ahora hasta aquí tú no mas llegaste</td>
<td>That’s why I’m telling you now that this is it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No quiero saber más de ti</td>
<td>I don’t want to have anything to do with you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranca no mas cholito</td>
<td>Take off, Cholito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vete de mi lado te doy yo 30 segundos</td>
<td>Get away from me, you have 30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para que saques tus chivas, arranca no mas cholito</td>
<td>To get your things, Take off, Cholito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si no te saco la con…ciencia sucia (bis)</td>
<td>Otherwise I’ll beat your… dirty conscience (x2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahora vengo yo</td>
<td>Here I come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marisol y la Magia del Norte</td>
<td>Marisol and La Magia del Norte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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74 Play on words that implies: Si no te saco la concha de tu madre (I’ll beat the shit out of you)