



How Chronic Violence Affects
Human Development, Social Relations,
and the Practice of Citizenship:
A Systemic Framework for Action

Tani Marilena Adams



Latin American Program



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Executive Summary

What happens to us when it becomes “normal” everyday life to live with high levels of violence? How does it affect our development as individuals, how we raise our children and relate to others in society, our attitudes and actions as citizens, and the ways we are governed? This paper describes that living in such conditions affects our lives in myriad and systemic ways. Children fail to flourish; parents are often unable to nurture their children adequately and can turn against them; social relations between individuals and groups become more restricted, polarized, and conflictive; and our role as citizens or participants in the larger community suffers—as do the social support for democracy and the prospects for democratic governance.

The Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework developed in this publication systematizes how chronic violence affects human, social, and civic development. It offers a new lens to help policymakers, social activists, scholars, and affected populations to recognize, understand, and approach a global challenge that is hidden in plain sight and that continues to worsen. Despite billions of dollars invested by international, national, and private institutions and organizations during recent decades in violence prevention and enhancing security, diverse forms of violence continue to grow. They contribute to growing levels of human suffering as well as to economic, social, and political instability and state fragility in many parts of the world.

This Executive Summary briefly describes who is affected by this phenomenon. It details the five propositions that make up the Framework, explains how this new “lens” differs from prevailing approaches to the violence challenge, and why it matters. And it summarizes key implications for public policy, research, and social action.

Who is affected by chronic violence?

Although chronic violence builds on historical legacies of social and political violence, oppression, exclusion, and armed conflict, it is also molded by contemporary dynamics such as rapidly evolving forms of governance, information technologies, climate change, the intensified dynamics of globalization, and other processes described below.

The *World Development Report 2011* details this new phenomenon, estimating that:

One in four people on the planet, more than 1.5 billion, live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence [in situations that] do not fit neatly either into “war” or “peace” or into “criminal violence” or “political violence.” (World Bank 2011a, 2)

Globally, the number of people living in chronic violence continues to grow. While just those living today in marginal urban settlements account for 15 percent of the current global population, this figure alone may account for 25 percent of the global population by 2030.

Chronic violence is most prevalent in countries or regions with long-term state fragility and/or relative state absence, and among people lacking the power to change these conditions in the short or medium term. This paper describes how this phenomenon plays out in Latin America, but similar dynamics also appear to exist elsewhere—in Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of the Middle East and Asia, as well in most marginal urban settlements in low, medium, as well as in upper income countries. Socially excluded groups—aboriginal groups, ethnic minorities, international migrants, refugees, internally displaced and stateless and marginalized peoples—as well as women and children throughout the world are particularly vulnerable.

While gender-based violence against women is often exacerbated in these conditions (and remains significantly underreported), violence against children remains the most invisible and pervasive form of violence worldwide. While urban violence receives most of the attention, rural people in today’s globalized and fluid economic and social circumstances are also vulnerable. They are more often neglected by states than their urban counterparts and increasingly lack protections afforded by the traditional social structures that historically were associated with rural life.

The Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework

The Framework builds on three basic ideas: Urie Bronfenbrenner’s theory of human development as an ecological system, the World Health Organization’s systemic notion of violence, and J. V. Pearce’s definition of chronic violence.

Human development is rooted in but transcends human security. It takes place in a multi-tiered system that extends from the micro-level relationship between parents and children to macro-level institutions and cultures and unfolds over time. Bronfenbrenner’s formulation shows that personal, social, and political aspects of an individual’s development are inseparable and integral to each other; and that individual development occurs interactively with local, national, and global structures, actors, beliefs, and cultures. For people to thrive as individuals, social beings, and citizens, they need conditions that allow them to flourish physically and psy-

chologically, and to develop increasingly inclusive and expansive relationships and actions as both social and civic participants.

While most of us tend to understand violence as either a cause or a consequence in a linear process of cause and effect, the World Health Organization's definition (also based on Bronfenbrenner's model) focuses on its multi-level and systemic nature. **Violence** is

the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. (WHO 2002, 5)

Violence need not be carried out to be effective—sometimes it requires no physical force at all. While we tend to think of violence as directed toward others, self-harm is among the most overlooked of all forms of violence. Forty-nine percent of violent deaths worldwide are, in fact, suicides. Finally, the violence caused by mal-development and deprivation can reduce people to mere survival; insecurity causes families to break up; exploitation robs people of their potential; humiliation, exclusion, and contempt reach a point at which people living in extreme poverty are not recognized as human beings. (International Movement for the Fourth World 2013)

“**Chronic violence**,” a concept developed by J. V. Pearce, is

violence that occurs in contexts in which violence is measured across three dimensions of intensity, space and time: where rates of violent death are at least twice the average for the country income category established by the World Bank; where these levels are sustained for five years or more and where acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded at high levels across several socialization spaces, such as the household, the neighborhood and the school, contributing to further reproduction of violence over time. (Pearce 2007)

The Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework developed here posits that chronic violence is reproduced by diverse processes occurring throughout the ecological system—from the micro to the macro levels:

1. *Chronic violence is generated by diverse macro-level and structural processes.* These include extreme poverty and growing perceptions of social inequality; historical legacies of conflict and violence; forced migration and displacement; the persistent weaknesses of many “new” democracies and security-oriented political reforms that have fallen short or failed; organized crime and illicit trade; the socially destructive impacts of prevailing urbanization policies; certain forms of economic development, as well as climate change and environmental destruction.

2. *Chronic violence threatens the capacity of individuals to develop in healthy ways physically, mentally, and socially.* At the micro-system level, vulnerability to chronic violence weakens the capacity of mothers and fathers to develop and sustain secure bonds with their infant children, undermining both early childhood development and the ability of parents to nurture their children adequately. In such conditions, gender and family relations become polarized, domestic violence intensifies, and family structures weaken. Associated traumatization—both individual and collective—can pose a primary challenge to lifelong physical and mental health and behavior of vulnerable people and groups and can increase risk of more violence in the future.
3. *Exposure to chronic violence undermines people's capacity to build and maintain constructive social relations—affecting development primarily at the micro-system, meso-system, and exo-system levels.* In these contexts, people tend to isolate themselves in their homes, resort to “social silence,” and seek protection in smaller “in-groups” that can tend to view those outside as dangerous “others.” Scapegoating and xenophobic attitudes increase, justifying both acts of direct justice and the projection of blame for violence onto others. The reactive and instinctual black-white, short-term decision making that permits people to survive immediate danger can become a chronic pattern of thinking and acting, preempting the possibility of more nuanced, long-term strategic thinking.

With few alternatives to transcend these conditions, vulnerable groups perceive themselves as “social zeroes” or as “invisible.” For example, young men who grow up with no prospects for steady work that permits them to formally transition into adulthood and to sustain their own families can suffer what one anthropologist termed “social death.” This experience, associated with a mix of shame, humiliation, and rage, can provoke a perverse search for respect that becomes directed violently both toward intimates and strangers. Studies attest that older men may also experience similar feelings of rage, linked to sensations of erasure and impotence, while young women and adolescent girls may seek self-validation through having children.

4. *Chronic violence endangers the ability of vulnerable groups to assume civic responsibilities and weakens the social support for democracy, affecting development primarily in the meso-, exo-, and macro-systems.* The search for safety behind walls, barriers, security gates, and guards increasingly separates and alienates upper-, middle-, and lower-income people from each other. Citizen security commissions, formed to protect neighborhoods and rural communities, can end up resorting to de facto direct justice when they find themselves abandoned by state law enforcement and judicial agencies. Illicit actors—for example, drug traffickers—assume para-state power, thus filling the vacuum left by weak or absent states.

As public support for violence and illicit activity grows, so can popular opposition to due process and human rights. In addition, the public can increasingly perceive the state as

the “enemy” in reaction to the predatory policies of weak states. Also discernible but less studied is that citizens embattled by violence often perceive themselves as passive “victims” who need “rights.” In scenarios of chronic violence, however, rights are often nonexistent.

5. *The chronic violence–human development nexus is a self-reproducing, complex system, and it constitutes a long-term “normality” that affects the entire ecological system of human development.* Chronic violence is reproduced through synergistic interactions between social processes and the individual, social, and civic behaviors, practices, and attitudes described above, from the micro to the macro levels of the system of human development. In these circumstances, traumatic reenactment and replication can extend its effects inter-generationally.

The multifaceted and unpredictable ways that chronic violence interacts with human development represent a complex system. By this we mean that all the elements in the system exist in relationship to each other; the relationship between cause and effect is not linear, and can often only be discerned in retrospect; change in any part of the system inevitably affects other parts, including the element initiating the change; certain relationships are recurrent and form recognizable patterns; and, because the system’s behavior emerges via the interdependent activities of its parts, solutions cannot be imposed, but arise from the circumstances.

Finally, because chronic violence is driven by and manifests itself in such a broad range of biological, social, and political trends, it tends to become naturalized—that is, perceived as “normal.” Licit and illicit values, behaviors, practices, and institutions overlap and become confused, creating a “grey zone” in which the distinction between moral and immoral, right and wrong, legal and illegal becomes blurred.

In conditions of chronic violence, human development is affected both by chronic traumatization as well as by the confusion and coexistence of licit and illicit institutions, cultures, practices, and beliefs, from the micro to the macro levels.

How does this Framework change our approach to the challenge of violence?

The new lens offered by this Framework shifts our approach in critical ways, enabling us to understand how violence works in a more evidence-based and strategic fashion.

Our understanding of the nature of the challenge shifts. Rather than perceiving violence as a series of discrete problems (i.e., domestic, youth, gang, school, criminal, political violence, each with its own solution), we understand it as a systemic phenomenon with multiple causes

and effects. It is reproduced and moves back and forth through the system of human development from the micro to the macro levels, provoking interactive and “contagious” effects that can severely impede human health and development and produce more violence.

It shifts our focus from thematically and institutionally isolated or “siloe” approaches prevailing today to more holistic methods that are intersectorial, interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and relational in nature.

It moves attention from the essentially negative and narrow goal of eliminating or reducing violence to the more fundamental goal of enabling vulnerable people and groups to thrive as individuals, social beings, and citizens. Violence reduction and elimination become strategic intermediate targets to pursue in function of the larger imperative of “human development.” Critically, this enables us to evaluate violence prevention measures in light of broader social, economic, and political objectives that they inevitably affect.

Our conceptual approach moves from a primarily top-down perspective (the state-centered focus on security, criminality, and deviance) to also encompass a bottom-up perspective rooted both in how violence is lived by those who experience it most directly (both as victims and perpetrators) and in the multiple drivers that reproduce it. This perspective enables us to see that “diverse” types of violence perceived as separate problems and addressed on separate tracks by different institutions can often be convergent and inseparable in the bodies and minds of vulnerable people and groups. The relationships between the diverse drivers of violence and how they are experienced by human beings are critical to forging strategies to address these drivers.

Because chronic violence functions as a “complex” problem for which there is no immediately evident link between cause and effect, it requires methodologies that reflect its systemic nature and that privilege prototyping, learning by trial and error and retrospectively, careful monitoring and analysis, and ongoing and rapid readjustment and retesting of strategies.

Finally, the framework moves us away from the assumption that chronic violence is a “problem” that can be “solved” or “eliminated.” It is, more precisely, a long-term “dilemma,” given the complexity and tenacity of the drivers that continue to reproduce it. As such, priority should be given to strengthening human and social resilience; identifying specific dynamics and the nature of the system that reproduces it from place to place, in order to intervene where and when strategic opportunities exist; and focusing on management and mitigation.

Implications for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars

The complex and, to date, largely unmapped ways in which chronic violence affects human development call for a sustained effort of policymakers, practitioners, scholars, activists, and

community leaders to collectively enrich our understanding of this challenge and how we might best address it. Toward this end, a loose network of organizations and individuals are beginning to apply this Framework to the challenges faced in the Northern Triangle of Central America. Initial questions for these and other explorations include the following:

How to stimulate locally rooted—and economically sustainable—efforts that enable vulnerable groups to “thrive” in chronic violence. Enabling families, micro-level groups, and communities to enhance their capacity to “thrive” in conditions of chronic violence is fundamental. “Appreciative inquiry” and “assets-based” methodologies that build from existing strengths of vulnerable groups (rather than from needs or deficits) and that contemplate the ways that “sense-making” occurs are critical. What is the role for collective processes of critical thinking, learning, and reflection in enabling vulnerable groups to recognize and transcend the challenges posed by chronic violence? What mechanisms can help vulnerable actors to forge strategies to transcend these patterns?

Resilience and chronic violence. This analysis complements and overlaps with the growing literature and intervention efforts focusing on “resilience”—especially as applied to building intragroup and intergroup cohesion and positive adaptation in fragile systems. How can this synergy be deepened?

Given the primacy of strengthening conditions for primary development, what are the best existing strategies to use in these kinds of circumstances? What are the major obstacles that require further experimentation and innovation?

Gender-based and family violence. How can more recent efforts focusing on male identities and violence, as well as on the changing power dynamics between men, women, and youth, best integrate with the longstanding efforts to reduce violence against women, on the one hand, and against children, on the other? How is it possible to generate more productive and collective attention to the violence by both men and women against children in ways that better contemplate the complex set of variables that drive these dynamics?

Public health and medical institutions. How can the links between chronic violence and people’s lifelong physical and mental health and behavior be better understood and addressed by vulnerable populations and the professionals who work with them?

Traumatization during childhood and throughout the ecological system of human development is a major contributor to the reproduction of violence among vulnerable populations, but remains largely unrecognized and addressed. How can we further deepen our understanding and capacity to address the dynamics of collective and chronic trauma—as opposed to individual trauma—and the effectiveness of existing approaches for these challenges?

A new perspective on "corruption"? The blurring of moral, legal, and ethical categories (Primo Levi's notion of the "grey zone") as well as conditions of chronic state weakness or dysfunction are fundamental dynamics of chronic violence. How might a more experientially derived and systemic understanding of corruption through this lens help to generate better understanding of and more effective policy responses to this phenomenon?

Educational institutions. How does chronic violence affect learning and teaching, educational institutions, staff and students? How can formal and informal educational institutions help students, families, and micro-networks to build resilience and constructive human relations in contexts of chronic violence?

Transitional justice efforts. How can transitional justice efforts better take into account the—by now—relatively predictable situations of chronic violence that emerge in many post-conflict or "transitional" societies? How to more accurately situate our understanding of war-time violence in the broader continuum of violence (pre-war and post-war) that tends to exist in many contexts?

Economic development efforts and livelihood generation are critical to enable vulnerable groups to transcend long-term marginalization, but can also exacerbate family and community conflicts by further disrupting existing power and authority structures. How can these initiatives better contemplate their complex social implications and, in a more holistic fashion, advance the ability of vulnerable families and communities to "thrive"?

The mass media and emerging information technologies are well known to exert profound influences on how vulnerable populations experience and understand violence. What can be learned from existing research and efforts to address this complex of challenges? How might it be possible to enable affected populations and policymakers at all levels to understand and address these questions?

Integrating approaches to conflict, violence, security, and development. What might we learn by integrating and unifying the disparate and often conflicting frameworks used to address formal and informal armed conflict, violence prevention and reduction, chronic violence, human security, citizen security, and human development?

What does it mean to understand and work with a systems approach on "complex systems"? How to forge methodologies to investigate, map, and interpret the systemic dynamics that generate and reproduce chronic violence that are comprehensible and manageable for affected populations, social change agents and policymakers? How to integrate into this effort a more nuanced and active understanding of the ways that the diverse actors involved "make sense" of violence, its causes, and its implications?

While this report explores these and related issues, it inevitably raises more questions than answers. Our purpose is to lay down a foundation to help us to better explore the complex and growing challenge of chronic violence to human development. The hope is that by making it possible to examine this challenge through a systems lens, the Framework will strengthen our capacity to address the challenge in more integrated, strategic, and effective ways.

Introduction

What happens to people when it becomes “normal” everyday life to live with high levels of violence? How does this affect our development as human beings, how we raise our children and relate to others, our attitudes and actions as citizens, and the prospects for democracy? I began to wonder about this while living in Guatemala, about ten years after the peace accords were signed. It became increasingly clear that, while the country was no longer at war, it was certainly not “at peace.” Robberies, kidnappings, drug trafficking, homicides, and extortions were skyrocketing, and virtually everyone I knew had been affected in one way or another. By 2006–7, more people were dying violent deaths annually than during most of the war years.

In the world of nongovernmental organizations, government agencies, and the international community where I worked, some tied this situation to the growing problem of drug trafficking, others to gangs, and still others suggested that perhaps it was due to the social disintegration provoked by the war. In the daily lives of people who live with violence day by day, however, such categories are often indistinguishable. In fact, how we understand this “new violence” depends on where we sit. These disparate perspectives do, however, provide a hint of the challenge of grasping the full dimensions of a systemic and global phenomenon that remains hidden in plain sight.

One former staff member of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted the dissonance regarding how policymakers and practitioners understood violence and how violence was experienced by those living it on a daily basis:

The people from the rural areas . . . didn't understand why we were only interested in the violence from 1980 to 2000, only that practiced by the Armed Forces, the Police and other armed groups. . . . For us, violence was an affront to our dignity, a shock, a violation of our fundamental rights. For them the violence is “normalized,” something they feel each time they breathe. (Ruíz 2013)

This introduction describes the global scope of the phenomenon called “chronic violence.” It then reviews the purpose and scope of this paper and how this analytical framework relates to other approaches to conflict, violence, human security, and citizen security.

What is the global scope of chronic violence?

The World Bank's *World Development Report 2011* suggests that the “new” violence in Guatemala is characteristic of a significant global phenomenon:

One in four people on the planet, more than 1.5 billion, live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence [in situations that] do not fit neatly either into “war” or “peace” or into “criminal violence” or “political violence.” Many countries and subnational areas now face cycles of repeated violence, weak governance and instability. (World Bank 2011a, 2–5)

The Bank notes that these repeated cycles of conflict and violence exact a wide variety of human, social, and economic costs that can last for many generations. Not one low-income fragile or conflict-affected country, for example, has yet achieved any of the Millennium Development Goals. People living in these countries as well as in violence-affected regions of richer and more stable countries are “more than twice as likely to be undernourished, . . . more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school; twice as likely to see their children die before the age of five, and more than twice as likely to lack clean water.” In addition, as the Bank points out, poverty levels are likely to be substantially higher than elsewhere as well. (World Bank 2011a, 5)

Chronic violence prevails especially in fragile and conflict-ridden states. This publication describes how the phenomenon plays out in Latin America. However, similar dynamics also appear to prevail elsewhere—for example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of the Middle East and Asia, as well in most marginal urban and rural areas in low, medium, as well as in upper income countries. Finally, historically excluded groups are particularly vulnerable wherever they are. These include aboriginal peoples around the world, Afro-descendant peoples throughout the Americas, internal and international migrants and refugees, and internally displaced and stateless peoples on every continent.

While some dynamics that contribute to violence have longstanding historical roots (for example, unequal gender relations and social inequality), a range of newer dynamics have emerged to forge this new phenomenon. These include globalization, democratization processes, climate change, and the global drug trade. Moreover, the portion of the global population living in these conditions will likely continue to increase. The residents of marginal urban settlements alone—among the most vulnerable to chronic violence today—represent 15 percent of the current global population. The number of internally displaced people worldwide due to conflict and violence has increased each year since 2003. In 2015 alone, 27.8 million people were displaced due to conflict, violence, and disasters in 127 countries—the highest numbers ever. (IDMC 2016) Although urban violence receives the lion's share of attention, the line between urban and rural is often ephemeral in today's globalized and fluid economic and social reality. Many

rural people also live with growing levels of violence, and increasingly, without the protections afforded by traditional social structures and relationships historically associated with rural life.

The purpose and scope of this paper

The Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework laid out in the following pages is an effort to provide a systemic view of a problem that many policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and activists continue to view and approach as a disparate set of separate problems. It is an attempt to construct a more holistic lens to help us to better recognize and address the complex but consistent ways that violence can affect human development and reproduce itself. Toward that end, the paper identifies major factors and processes that contribute to generating or reproducing violence from the micro to the macro levels of the ecological system of human development—from the capacity of children to flourish to the quality of social and civic behavior, beliefs, practices, and institutions.

None of the specific dynamics noted in the following pages are new. They are all drawn from existing work by scholars, journalists, and/or researchers in international agencies. Our objective is to present them in a way that that can help us begin to better identify and understand—in particular places and with particular groups of people—the specific dynamics that interact with each other to generate and reproduce violence and to undermine the possibility of people to thrive as individuals, social beings, and citizens.

This analysis builds on an earlier paper—“Chronic Violence and its Reproduction: Perverse Trends in Social Relations, Citizenship, and Democracy in Latin America”—that explored how long-term violence affects people’s lives, social relations, and practice of citizenship. (Adams 2012a) Published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the International Institute of Learning for Social Reconciliation (IIARS), the paper synthesized findings about this question both from field and mass survey research on Latin America, as well as from theoretical contributions from diverse disciplines. Here, with kind permission from both the Woodrow Wilson Center and the IIARS, we use that research and new materials, still primarily focused on Latin America, to pursue the following questions:

- How does chronic violence affect the ecological system of human development—from micro-level family relations and social relations to the practice of citizenship?
- How does approaching the challenge of violence in terms of its impact on human development differ from other analytical approaches to violence and conflict?
- How does the “chronic violence and human development” (CVHD) lens shift prevailing understandings of, and approaches to, the violence challenge? What are the implications for public policy, research, and social action?

The report is organized as follows:

- Section I defines key terms and lays out the CVHD Framework through five propositions. These summarize relevant literature about significant dynamics that contribute to reproducing violence in each subsystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system of human development.
- Section II describes the shifts in approach that the CVHD Framework entails and poses some questions that may merit further exploration.
- An extensive bibliography appears at the end to aid readers to further pursue issues of particular interest and endnotes provide further detail on certain issues addressed in the text.

As noted above, the specific ways that violence is reproduced and affects human development will inevitably vary from place to place. The dynamics described here note some consistent patterns and provide some initial ideas to explore in place-based investigations. To discern how to best approach the issue in a specific scenario, the first task is to investigate the nature of the particular system. What specific factors generate and reproduce violence? What specific macro-level factors and behavioral tendencies (described in the Framework or not) may be relevant? How do these factors and processes interact with each other to forge behaviors, attitudes, collective action, and social structures? How do they impact human development more generally? What assets do vulnerable groups, the state, and other key actors possess that can equip them to address the challenge?

Finally, I include a note about the limits of this effort. Many of the processes and dynamics described here—global warming, democratization, the maternal–infant bond, trauma, gangs—are themselves subjects of substantial, and in several cases, massive research. Hence, this study can only review some key ideas, when possible providing references to enable readers to delve further on their own.

How does the Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework relate to other approaches to conflict, violence, human security, and citizen security?

Violence today is understood and addressed in a bewildering variety of ways; and few of these communicate, much less strategically link, with each other. As the boundaries between traditional and nontraditional armed conflict, community-level and family violence, and diverse forms of structural violence become increasingly blurry, a central challenge is to create ways of understanding these phenomena that permit an understanding of the links between them. This section briefly examines some of the predominant ways that violence, conflict, human security, and development are addressed by international policymakers, aid and civil society organizations, and how these relate—or do not—to one another.

Organizations concerned with interstate or intrastate conflict or violence generally approach violence as an issue that should be resolved through “peacebuilding.” The Global Peace Index (GPI), for example, defines peace as “the absence of violence and the absence of the fear of violence,” which is commonly understood as “negative peace.” The Index measures progress in peacebuilding through three sets of indicators grouped around: (1) domestic and international conflict; (2) militarization; and (3) societal safety and security.

Within this last category, the GPI tracks some dynamics that are at some distance from traditional notions of armed violence. These include such phenomena as perceived criminality, displaced people, political instability, political terror, terrorist activity, homicides, violent crime, violent demonstrations, jailed populations, and security officers and police. Using a complex calculus involving the three indicators mentioned above, the 2014 Report concluded that global peace had continued to decline for the seventh straight year. In other words, violence and the fear of violence continue to grow. (Institute for Economics and Peace 2014)

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program uses the term “violence” interchangeably with armed conflict and armed violence. However, the Uppsala database expanded from its historical focus on traditional armed conflict (between governments or states) and “one-sided violence” (between a government, state or formally organized armed group against civilians) to analyze a new category of violence in the early 1990s called “nonstate armed conflict.” This new analytical category focused on the violence between groups that are not governments, thereby reflecting the increasing importance of a new form of violence that confounds the traditional boundaries between state and society, soldiers and civilians. While traditional armed conflicts went down 40 percent following the end of the Cold War, and the number of armed conflicts around the world has remained relatively stable over the past decade, nonstate armed conflict is increasing (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2014; Human Security Report Project 2013, 12)¹

A second major use of the term “violence” has come to prominence in the past decade in relation to the growing problem of criminal and community-based violence and insecurity in various parts of the world. Homicide rates are the major indicator used to track this form of violence. Improving citizen security, violence prevention, and violence reduction have become the standard approaches to intervene in these more localized and informal patterns of violence. While the efforts focused on armed violence/peacemaking discussed previously usually assume an ideological component that is central to resolution, most prevailing approaches to the more informal nature of community-based violence assume the causes to be criminality, a lack of economic opportunity, and/or mal-development. Yet the “nontraditional armed actors” who increasingly confound the logic of traditional peacebuilding efforts are often the same people who are leading the growth in criminal and community-based violence in marginal communities in countries around the world; and some enjoy significant political

support. Political ideology, criminality, perverse patterns of development, and economic opportunity are all too often inextricably merged. (Briscoe 2013)²

Moreover, most “nontraditional armed actors” coexist with many other forms of violence, many of which are understood as different kinds of problems with distinct intervention logics and strategies. These include gender-based violence and many forms of violence against children—at the hands of their parents, local security forces, and employers; in local schools and communities; in national and foreign detention centers, jails, and prisons; and on migratory routes. All too many have probably experienced the unquantifiable violence of coming to adulthood in societies that offer them no livelihood or future.

While these links have been recognized by mainstream development organizations since at least the 1990s (and by some scholars for even longer), they have been little recognized by those working on traditional armed conflict or in the newer field of security enhancement and violence prevention. The Human Development Report 1994 of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) offered an early pronouncement about the concept of human security that transcended narrowly defined military concerns.³ It noted that human security means safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression, and protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in patterns of daily life, whether provoked by human action or forces of nature.

Human development, meanwhile, was regarded as a “broader concept—defined . . . as a process of widening people’s choices” (UNDP 1994, 23). When people perceive threats to their sense of security, the report noted that reduced tolerance and increased conflict and violence can result. To reduce global insecurity, the UNDP argued, it was imperative to confront the underlying realities of poverty, inequality, violence, and development. Finally, the report linked failed human development to violence: “Failed or limited human development leads to a backlog of human deprivation. . . . This backlog in access to power and economic opportunities can lead to violence.” (UNDP 1994, 3–5, 23–24)

In 2005, the UN formalized its recognition of human security as the “right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair . . . [and] that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential” (United Nations 2014). A few years before, the World Health Organization (WHO) had advanced its groundbreaking definition of violence in its *2002 World Report on Violence and Health*. As noted earlier, this concept was pegged to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems concept of human development. However, in the intervening years, the WHO appears to have advanced little in this line of effort.

The *World Development Report 2011* made virtually no reference to the notions of human security or human development, but—like the GPI and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program—focused

mainly on criminal and political violence. Nonetheless, the report recognized the limitations of these categories for understanding the complex and hybrid realities of contemporary violence. It drew the following conclusions that confirm the critical link between violence and development:

- not one country that had experienced “major violence” had met the Millennium Development Goals;
- violence occurs in ongoing and repeated cycles in which criminal, political, ideological, and other forms of violence are linked to one another; and
- violence exacts costs that “hold back development, affecting young males, women and children disproportionately” for generations. (World Bank 2011, 2–6)

Despite the broad scope of these statements, however, the report’s recommendations for action retreated to the narrower scope of topics addressed by contemporary peacebuilding and violence prevention initiatives; i.e., institution building, citizen security, justice, and jobs.

In September of 2015, United Nations delegates finally reached agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals, constituting an ambitious and far-reaching global agenda for human development and security. While it is beyond the scope of this paper—completed around the same time—to analyze the specific links between the framework developed here and the action plan articulated by the Sustainable Development Goals, they articulate a vision that resonates broadly with the systemic approach articulated here.

The framework advanced in this paper seeks to refocus attention on the long-recognized links between diverse forms of violence and the imperatives of human security and development. The goal and hope is to aid concerned actors from diverse disciplines, organizations, geographical areas, and affected communities to find common ground in understanding and approaching this fundamental challenge.

Potential relevance to other parts of the world beyond Latin America

This Framework is based on an analysis of violence drivers and violence in Latin America. Although it is beyond the scope of this report to assess or test its relevance to other parts of the world, there is good reason to think that the concepts may be broadly applicable. The basic issues underpinning the Framework—violence, human development, and chronic violence—are not bound to any particular region. The three-dimensional “chronic violence” described by Pearce manifests itself in many countries, regions, and cities worldwide where people live in “concentrated disadvantage.” The overlapping notion of violence in the World Bank’s 2011

report also casts a wide net. It focuses on “fragile” and conflict-affected states, countries with high levels of criminal violence, post-conflict countries that now live with multiple forms of “peacetime” violence, and regions with hybrid forms of violence that combine local political and ideological conflicts, criminal enterprises, and internationalized disputes.

For example, the systematic exclusion and sense of abandonment experienced by many second- and third-generation Muslim youth in the *banlieues* of Paris and deindustrialized cities of France are an eloquent expression of the same kind of “social death” that exists among their peers in Rio de Janeiro, San Salvador or Guinea Bissau, discussed below. How the hopelessness and a sense of abandonment felt by Muslim youth were contributing to their radicalization was documented by Kepel in London and Paris in the early 1990s:

[In Great Britain,] where unemployment had eaten away at the traditional paths to integration through work and wage income, Islamic communalism expressed new objectives [for young Muslim immigrants]: instead of promoting consensus and social peace as in the 1950s and 1960s, it became the vehicle for the expression of frustration and anger, which it channeled into a heightened sense of difference and separate identity. (Kepel 1997, 236)

Vigh’s description of local people’s perceptions of Guinea Bissau—a city “frozen . . . in a futureless state of decline and hardship, of crisis, conflict and war”—could just as well describe how marginalized populations experience life in San Pedro Sula, Honduras or Villa Nueva, Guatemala or Rio de Janeiro, Brazil today (Vigh 2006, 104). The generalized “new” violence that has become normal everyday life in various post-war Latin American countries also has significant similarities with that experienced in other post-war countries such as South Africa, Somalia, and Rwanda. Perhaps no single group could be more aptly described as living in extreme conditions of “chronic violence” as the millions of refugees who have been fleeing the Middle East and Northern Africa for Europe and elsewhere over the past few years.

In higher income countries, the Framework could potentially be helpful for mapping violence drivers among populations trapped in chronic marginalization, and where conditions sometimes echo those lived in much poorer countries. In the United States, for example, homicide rates in East Saint Louis and Chester, Pennsylvania, are about 100 and 88 per 100,000, respectively. These are about 20 times higher than the national average and similar to the levels registered in the most violent countries in the world. The infant mortality rates in the poorest wards of Washington, DC, are ten times higher than in the richest districts—and on par with those of El Salvador. (Save the Children 2015) A total of 25 percent of Native American youth between 18 and 24 experience some kind of violent crime (Greenfeld 1999)—a figure

not so different from that experienced by their counterparts in marginal communities in Brazil or Central America. One in four black males born since the 1970s in the United States has gone to prison by his mid-30s, and 32 percent of young African American men are jobless. (Coates 2015, 66) These statistics depict populations that, despite the vast differences in state size and power, suffer levels of violence and marginality similar to counterparts in Central America or Bissau.

PART ONE.

How Chronic Violence Affects Human Development: A Conceptual Framework

The Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework details major structural forces and human behaviors and practices which interact to drive and reproduce chronic violence. Proposition 1 describes macro-level and structural factors. Propositions 2, 3, and 4 summarize trends in individual, family, social, and civic behavior, beliefs, and practices, at the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-system levels. Proposition 5 summarizes the systemic quality of this phenomenon and reviews how it affects each of the subsystems of human development. We begin by defining some basic terms used for this analysis.

I. Defining Terms: Human Development, Violence, Chronic Violence, Trauma, and Fear

Three major ideas underpin this framework: the ecological definition of human development advanced by U. Bronfenbrenner; the equally systemic concept of “violence” formulated by the World Health Organization; and the notion of “chronic violence” developed by J. V. Pearce. Working definitions of other key concepts—fear, social fear, and trauma—follow.

Human development

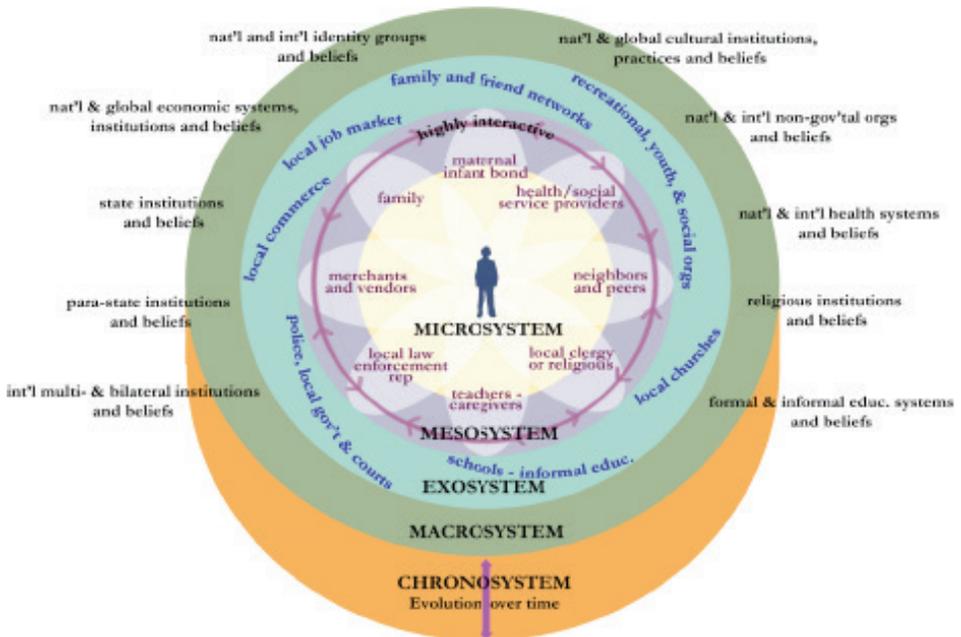
As proposed by Bronfenbrenner in his Ecological Framework of Human Development, human development is a self-contained ecological system with four progressive tiers that interact continuously with each other over time. In this system, personal, social, and political aspects of a person’s development are inseparable and integral to one other. The ecological framework, furthermore, shows how people develop in constant interaction with local, national, and global actors, structures, institutions, beliefs, and cultures, all of which mutually influence and depend on one other. (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 41) Bronfenbrenner’s multi-tiered system includes the following elements, illustrated in Figure 1 below:

- The **microsystem** contains the developing person, what s/he brings into the world, and the interpersonal relations s/he experiences. The primary maternal–infant bond or parental–infant bond is the initial and most critical relationship for lifelong development;
- The **mesosystem** consists of the interrelationships between the primary relations of the developing person, which support his or her development;

- The **exosystem** is the larger web of interactions that directly affect the developing person but may or may not involve them. For a child, this might include interactions between parents, peers, and teachers and the family doctor. The extent to which such actors communicate with each other and have mutual interests is an indicator of the child's ability to thrive;
- The **macrosystem** is the larger pattern of relations and structures that interact with the lower systems. An example is the multiple faces of health care, from the informal practices within a family to national and international institutions. It includes actors, institutions, and the ideas and beliefs about the subject that inform, reproduce, and drive them; and
- The **chronosystem** depicts the fact that the four systems described above evolve and change over time. (Bronfenbrenner 1994, 1979)

By examining violence in terms of its impact on human development, we are able to visualize the complex interplay of individual, relational, social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental factors.

Figure 1. Ideal Ecological System of Human Development



This ecological model transcends the more mechanistic concept of a “hierarchy of human needs” advanced by Abraham Maslow. (1954)⁴ Bronfenbrenner instead argues that safety and security are as fundamental as basic physiological needs to enable an individual to “thrive.” He posits that the sense of safety and security required are both psychological and physiological needs and that the two are inseparable.

This study uses the more comprehensive notion of human development rather than human security, because the Framework is concerned with a broader arc of human potential and action than is contemplated by the notion of human security. Human development refers to the capacity of people to generate increasingly creative and constructive mechanisms for living together and governing themselves, which in turn generates more healing and more “thriving.” Human security—understood as the protection of an individual’s access to the minimum necessary for physical survival (food, shelter, and water) and for psychosocial human needs (identity, recognition, security, participation, and autonomy)—is a fundamental underlying condition for human development. (Pan American Health Organization 2012, 18–19)

Bronfenbrenner’s concept of “thriving” points toward some critical elements that provide individuals and groups with the resilience to manage constructively the chronically adverse circumstances they face. To “**thrive**,” people, groups, and communities need conditions that allow them:

- To flourish as individuals physically and psychologically, which entails strengthening the capacity of families and primary social networks to provide critical support for children, young people, and each other;
- To develop and grow as both social and civic participants, by building increasingly expansive, inclusive, and constructive networks in potentially long-term conditions of chronic violence; and
- To develop a more conscious and critical understanding of their conditions and needs through an enhanced capacity for reflective action, which enables individuals to better discern the correct action or actions, even in circumstances that may continue to be challenging. This relates to the critical role of “sense-making,” discussed elsewhere.⁵

This concept provides a clear and measurable set of criteria and roots human development in the requirements for human security, while also establishing guideposts for the constructive social and civic action that communities and societies require to thrive.⁶ Similar to Freire or Amartya Sen, Bronfenbrenner proposes that development is essentially about having an increasingly greater voice and more complex engagement in one’s own development and destiny and in the larger social context. Finally, given that development occurs in a system, one must keep in mind that change is a complex and nonlinear process. Change initiated at any point in the system will inevitably affect, and be affected by, changes occurring elsewhere in the system.

The term “thrive” overlaps closely with, and surely could be enriched by, theoretical formulations about resilience, particularly those focusing on the capacity to generate socially desirable patterns of collective adaptation (in contrast to the range of destructive patterns of social behavior discussed further in Proposition 3). Carpenter’s notion of “resilience” in relationship to fragile systems, for example, focuses in part on patterns of adaptive capacity that can be measured through their relative diversity and redundancy and through the existence of feedback loops that enhance adaptive capacity (Carpenter No date, 6–13. See also Davis 2012 and Interpeace 2016) “Thriving” could also perhaps be associated with the process of humanization. Its antithesis—dehumanization—is reflected in the social dynamics provoked by chronic violence.

Violence

No single universally agreed-upon definition of violence exists, as is evident by the diverse literature on the subject and relatively poor levels of dialogue across disciplinary boundaries about it. (Dobash et al. 2003 and Keane 1997 in Hume 2007a) The World Health Organization’s 2002 ground-breaking report, however, offers a broad and systemic definition of violence to identify how violence affects the entire system of human development, from the individual and social relations to the community and larger society. Using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, the WHO defined violence as

the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. (WHO 2002, 5)

A critical implication of this definition is that addressing one form of violence can contribute to reducing other forms of violence:

The links between violence and the interaction between individual factors and the broader social, cultural, and economic contexts suggest that addressing risk factors across the various levels of the ecological model may contribute to decreases in more than one type of violence. . . . A comprehensive response to violence is one that not only protects and supports victims of violence, but also promotes nonviolence, reduces the perpetration of violence, and changes the circumstances and conditions that give rise to violence in the first place. (WHO 2002, 15–16)

The link between violence and power is critical. Pearce notes (and this report confirms) that in contexts of chronic violence, the legitimate monopoly of violence and distribution of resources is highly contested and the use of violence to dominate others becomes common practice. It is important to note that this use of violence can both be legitimate and illegitimate, legal and illegal, transcending the classic assumption that the state monopolizes the use of legitimate force or violence. (Weber 1919, 4) As will be discussed, one characteristic of chronic violence—the dynamics of the “grey zone”—is that legal and illegal, legitimate and

illegitimate, visible and invisible forms of violence become more co-mingled, confused, and naturalized throughout the entire system of human development.

Pearce notes that “non-dominant” power (the opposite of that just discussed) can be a fundamental strategy for reducing violence. “To reduce the transmission of violence, however, new understandings of power in social as well as political relationships need to be understood. Power as capacity for action, for example, or as a potentiality which everyone can realize in [him or herself], is the opposite of violence.” (Pearce, personal communication, February 3, 2016)⁷

Gaventa elaborates further on the link between violence and power. He points out that both have visible forms as well as hidden and ultimately internalized forms. In a situation of invisible power or naturalized violence, Gaventa notes that simply changing the visible and institutional forms of power/violence will not lead to greater participation. If those who are affected do not have agency or confidence to assert their interests, the effect will be simply to reinforce the status quo. Similarly, for people to move from being victims of violence to becoming agents of their own futures, the process must start with challenging the invisible internalization of norms of violence. He suggests that this reality points to the need for pedagogical strategies to enable affected groups to make hidden and invisible forms of violence visible. (Gaventa 2013)⁸

Related to Gaventa’s formulations are the notions of structural and symbolic forms of violence. Structural violence refers to the naturalized forms of oppression and social suffering caused by macro-level dynamics such as chronic poverty, hunger, social exclusion, and humiliation. (Galtung 1969; Farmer 1999, 2000) Symbolic violence refers to the ways that victims internalize and naturalize the violence that they have suffered as if it were the intrinsic order of things, and/or something they suffer because they deserve it. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2001)

The violence that people turn against themselves and those closest to them—especially women and children—is simultaneously among the most significant and the most invisible forms of violence. The WHO and other sources, for example, have reported that suicides are responsible for about half of all violence-related deaths. (WHO 2002, 10; Newsweek 2013)⁹ Other global studies calculate that almost twice as many people die from suicide each year than from homicides. (UNODC 2011; WHO 2012)

Violence against women and children, however, remains by far both the most widespread and the most underreported forms of violence. Globally, 60 percent of children receive some kind of physical punishment; 80 percent receive violent discipline; and one-half of all girls believe husbands are justified in hitting their wives. (UNICEF 2016) About 35 percent of women worldwide “have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.” (WHO 2016)

Finally, Hume notes that one of the complicating factors in understanding violence is its emotional and subjective quality—a quality that has significant methodological implications.

Not everyone is affected by violence in the same way and individual perceptions are shaped by factors such as gender, class, and age. This raises questions about whether it is possible or even desirable to separate ontology and epistemology in our endeavor to understand this “slippery” concept. An understanding that violence is neither fixed nor static, therefore, should be central to the investigative process and requires researchers to think this through methodologically. (Hume 2007a, 149)

Chronic violence

This term was defined by Pearce in 2007 to draw attention to a kind of violence which—like chronic malnutrition and chronic poverty—is different from its acute form. This definition uses both qualitative and quantitative indicators to contemplate both lethal and non-lethal forms of violence and tracks these manifestations in three dimensions: in the spaces in which they occur, over time, and in their relative intensity. Chronic violence occurs where:

- rates of violent death are at least twice the average for high and low income countries respectively;¹⁰
- these levels are sustained for five years or more; and
- frequent acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded across several socialization spaces, including the household, the neighborhood, the school, inter-community, and the nation-state public space (which brings in disproportionate, sanctioned and non-sanctioned acts of violence attributed to state security forces).

Protracted civil wars would come into this definition, as well as other post-war contexts where violence has remained embedded in social interactions and state-citizen relations. (Pearce 2007, 7)

In addition, this definition is intended to encompass a range of contexts which have never experienced civil war as such (usually defined in terms of a certain number of deaths—1,000 per year). Indeed, it draws attention to the high number of non-war deaths which, as the Global Burden of Armed Violence reports of 2008, 2011, and 2015 have all pointed out, far outnumber, globally, war-related deaths. (Pearce, personal communication, February 3, 2016)

As discussed later in the final section, these qualitative and quantitative indicators of chronic violence could be used to develop a much more nuanced global violence index than homicide levels can provide. (Pearce 2007, 7) To relate violence with human development, an integrated violence index could be correlated with relevant indicators for the Human Development Index, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other indices that track social inequality, gender disparity, and poverty.

Pearce's integrated notion of violence finds echo in Slutkin's view of violence as a "contagious disease." Coming from the public health field, he argues that all forms of violence follow the same biological processes typical of classic diseases: "exposure to the infection, the clustering of the phenomenon among certain populations in certain spaces, the non-linear spread to other populations characteristic of the spread of epidemics, and transmission from one individual/population to another." (Slutkin 2013, 96-101) He suggests that violence is transmitted from one realm to another because the experience of one kind of violence increases the likelihood of committing and/or becoming a victim of other forms. He cites a broad literature documenting a "chain of transmission" (often mediated by traumatization) between different forms of violence that occur in diverse social realms. These range from violence against oneself, child abuse and children's exposure to parental violence, violence between intimate partners, in the community and that transmitted via media games to the violence associated with wars and political conflict. (Slutkin, op. cit: 104)¹¹

Fear

Fear is both a consequence and a critical driver of violence, although its significance is often overlooked by scholars and policymakers. (Clouser 2014) In this paper, it is understood as an activated aversive response to threat that provokes both intense negative feelings and strong bodily manifestations. It denotes dread of impending disaster and an intense urge to defend oneself, and is an emotion with a deep evolutionary origin that has been central to the evolution of mammals and other more primitive species. Extreme danger elicits intense fright and provokes the coping response of escape or avoidance. It can have long lasting consequences in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder, discussed below. Fear turns to anxiety when coping attempts fail and the situation is uncontrollable. (Lewis et al. 2008, 710–11)¹² How we experience fear (like trauma, discussed below) is determined both by how the human brain works as well as how we make sense of our environment in society. In other words, fear is

- a primal biologically driven response to risk that provokes the escape/avoidance response;
- a subjective experience derived from feelings, not facts or evidence; and
- "a socially constructed and culturally shared" experience accompanied by the need to "find a way to explain, according to the rationality of the situation, the fears experienced." (Reguillo, quoted by Rotker 2002, 192ff)

The concept of **social fear** refers to the social process through which this individually experienced feeling takes form, and to the ways that fear drives us to identify a cause or name for it, either in ourselves, in something outside ourselves, or both. (Reguillo, quoted by Rotker 2002, 192ff)

Trauma

Trauma is both a major consequence of violence and one of its most tragic and pernicious causes, constituting one of the major contributors to violence reproduction throughout the

system of human development.¹³ It is at once a psychobiological and socially influenced response that results from an experience of overwhelming fear accompanied by the sense of impotence to protect oneself from harm. In certain cases, it can alter the physiological and psychological development of victims over the life course.¹⁴ We examine below the particular types of trauma associated with chronic violence.

Trauma can block the capacity of an individual or group to “make meaning” of distressing events and is associated with a wide range of responses, both short and long term. These include an acute sense of disruption; high levels of anxiety and propensity for anger and violence and/or self-isolation; reduced cognitive and emotional capacities; breakdown of self-esteem and trust in others; feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness; and a weakened capacity to provide appropriate parenting for children and to relate to others. A foreshortened view of time and an inability to imagine the future are commonly reported. In traumatized children, primary symptoms can be quite different than among adults. These may include separation anxiety; phobias; attention deficits and hyperactivity; difficulties in modulating aggression and impulses; dissociation and somatization; and problems in managing relationships with caregivers, peers, and eventually, life partners. (Van der Kolk 2005, 390, 395)

The experience of trauma is harbored at a pre-cognitive level of the brain, to which the cognitive brain has no conscious access. This overwhelming fear and impotence can cause traumatic re-enactment—the re-experience of trauma. This can stimulate the compulsive replication of traumatic experiences in ways that victims themselves cannot directly understand, control or explain in their full dimensions. However, while the experience and capacity to process traumatic experiences are rooted in a physiological mechanism, their expression is invariably influenced by social factors.

In conditions of chronic violence, we can anticipate that people and groups may suffer traumatization from diverse forms of chronic, recurrent, and single-event violence throughout the ecological system of development. These could include, for example, violent relations between parents and children, in the community, and schools; self-directed violence; repression and marginalization by state and/or para-state actors; inter-generational legacies of war; economic deprivation, poverty, inequality, and exclusion; displacement and migration; and natural disasters.

To begin to assess the potential scope of traumatization among populations living in such conditions, it is necessary both to expand on the relatively narrow construct of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) as well as to focus on the collective and continuous nature of traumatic experiences. The symptomology associated with PTSD, for example, ignores certain critical post-traumatic symptoms common among victims of chronic or recurrent traumas. As Van der Kolk and colleagues have noted in their extensive analysis of this issue:

Studies of physically and sexually abused children, as well as of women who are exposed to prolonged interpersonal violence [and survivors of concentration camps] consistently report a range of psychological sequelae that are not captured in the PTSD diagnostic criteria. . . .

The diagnosis of PTSD focuses on the memory imprint of particular experiences . . . and implies treatment that focuses on the impact of specific past events and the processing of specific traumatic memories. In contrast, in traumatized patients with histories of early abuse and [disorders of extreme stress], the treatment of other problems, such as loss of emotion regulation, dissociation and interpersonal problems, may be the first priorities because they cause more functional impairment than the PTSD symptoms. . . (Van der Kolk et al. 2005)¹⁵

Analyses of collective traumatization associated with armed conflicts and chronic state repression also shed light on some of the consequences that could be anticipated among populations living in conditions of chronic violence. For example, David Becker's notion of "extreme traumatization" (based on observations of Chileans around the 1973 coup) focuses on intense forms of trauma that extend over time, and which are simultaneously social and individual:

Extreme traumatization is an individual and collective process that refers to and depends on a given social context; a process that is marked by its intensity, extremely long duration and the interdependency between the social and the psychological dimensions. It exceeds the capacity of the individual and of social structures to respond adequately to this process. It [results in] the destruction of the individual, of his sense of belonging to society and of his social activities . . . is not limited in time, and develops sequentially. (Becker 2004; see also Becker 1992 and Becker and Castillo 1990)

A recent global conference on post-conflict trauma advances a complementary description of collective trauma and intergenerational transmission, and further describes the social transformations that can ensue:

[Collective trauma can occur in] any society, ethnic or religious group, social category or class that has been exposed to extreme circumstances of traumatisation. . . . including social, political, cultural, gender, ethnic or religious persecution. [It] damages the social tissue of a community, ruptures social bonds, undermines communality, destroys previous sources of support, and can even traumatise those members of a community, society or group who were absent when the traumatisation took place. (Suárez-Orozco & Robben 2000, 24) Vetzberger (1997) speaks of 'political trauma,' a form of collective trauma that results from human behaviour that is politically motivated and has political consequences, resulting in an acute sense of vulnerability and fragility of survivors and observers or bystanders.

Collective trauma affects the relationship between communities or groups; identifying enemies, scapegoating or experiencing other groups as dangerous are common phenomena. Collective trauma often gives rise to a collective traumatic memory (historical trauma) in which intergenerational processes can play a role. In war-affected areas it is important to link individual trauma to collective trauma by giving greater attention to the synergies between mental health and psychosocial work with processes of social change and family and/or communal recovery. These approaches generally share the view that armed conflict not only impacts the mind of an individual, but also the family and the community. . . . (ISJR 2015, 5–6)

Our analysis suggests living in circumstances of chronic violence may be associated with similar patterns of collective traumatization.

. . . . [Intergenerational transmission of historical violence and trauma is] the subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adults to children in cyclic processes as ‘collective emotional and psychological injury . . . over the lifespan and across generations’ . . . and becomes embedded in the cultural memory of a people and is passed on by the same mechanisms by which culture is generally transmitted, and therefore becomes ‘normalised’ within that culture. . . . (ISJR 2015, 5–6)

The authors of the ISJR Report quote Milroy, who suggests the transgenerational effects of trauma

. . . . occur via a variety of mechanisms including through the attachment relationship with caregivers; through parenting and family functioning; the association with parental physical and mental illness; and disconnection and alienation from extended family, culture and society. These effects are exacerbated by exposure to continuing high levels of stress and trauma. . . . Even where children are protected from the traumatic stories of their ancestors, the effects of past traumas still impact on children in the form of ill health, family dysfunction, community violence, psychological morbidity and early mortality.¹⁶ (ISJR 2015, 5–6. Also see observations by Pederson et al. 2008 in endnote.)¹⁷

Finally, it is worth noting that some scholars and practitioners concerned with collective and socially embedded forms of traumatization question the degree to which this phenomenon is medicalized or “pathologized” when in fact the response represents the “normal” responses of “normal” people to extraordinary circumstances. (ISJR 2015) Their concern reflects the fact that traumatization assumes its diverse forms through physiological, psychological, cultural, and societal dynamics and processes.

II. Macro-Level and Structural Drivers of Violence

PROPOSITION 1:

Chronic violence is reproduced by diverse macro-level and structural factors.

This section describes macro-level and structural factors that contribute to driving chronic violence, in interaction with the micro-level factors described subsequently. While these macro-level factors are for the most part located in Bronfenbrenner's macro-system, their influence extends to all the other subsystems.

Poverty vs. social inequality, the “new poverty,” and “relative deprivation”

Poverty vs. inequality. Today, about 11 percent of the world's population lives in extreme poverty, with most of these people in Sub-Saharan Africa, India, China, and Latin America. (World Bank 2013) In Latin America, while 27 percent of the population lives in poverty, 11.5 percent live in extreme poverty. (ECLAC 2013) The link between poverty and violence, however, is often viewed too simplistically, i.e., with the suggestion that poverty itself generates violent behavior. Wilkinson and Pickett's (2009) massive global study of social inequality addresses this misconception directly:

The view that social problems are caused directly by poor material conditions such as bad housing, poor diets, lack of educational opportunities, and so on implies that richer developed societies would do better than the others. But this is a long way from the truth: some of the richest societies do worst.

Their study shows that almost all problems that disproportionately affect poor people are more common in more unequal societies—from higher indices of ill health, violence, homicides, social distrust, mental illness, and infant mortality to higher rates of obesity, teenage births, imprisonment rates, and lower rates of social mobility. (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 19) The problem, they conclude, is not whether people are rich or poor, “but the scale of material differences between people within each society being too big. What matters is where we stand in relation to others in our own society.” (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 25)

Complementarily, Sahlins notes that the human experience of poverty—even more so in this rapidly globalizing age—is intrinsically about the social experience of inequality:

Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all, it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status . . . [invented by] civilization . . . as an invidious distinction between classes and more importantly as a tributary relation. (Sahlins 1972, 37)

Worldwide, a robust link exists between social inequality and the incidence of crime. (WHO 2003; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003, 22; Pearce 2007, 294) Latin America has among the highest indices of social inequality in the world. A 2008 report found that higher levels of violence prevail where there are higher levels of social inequality, for example, in Brazil, northern Central America, Mexico, and Colombia, than in countries with lower levels of inequality such as Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Chile. (Briceño León 2008)

“New poverty.” While social inequality in Latin America is longstanding—the top 10 percent of the population earns three times more than the poorest 40 percent (UNDP/OAS 2010, 90–98)—how people experience social inequality has changed dramatically over the past forty years. One major contributor to this change in perceptions is the demographic transformation dubbed the “new poverty.” (Ward 2004) Latin Americans today are

- more highly educated: 92 percent were literate in 2010, up from 73.7 percent in 1970 (UNESCO/UIS No date);
- increasingly urban: 79 percent lived in cities in 2010, up from 41 percent in 1950 (UN-DESA 2009, 9; World Bank 2010); and at the same time
- less likely than ever to have a stable job, thus remaining severely restricted in terms of economic mobility. Forty-six percent of Latin Americans are relegated to earning a living in the informal sector, a number that almost doubles in poorer countries. (UNDP/OAS 2010, 90–98)¹⁸

The “new poverty” has contributed to the experience of *relative deprivation* that today informs the life expectations of a predominantly young population. A total of 29 percent of Latin Americans are under 15 years of age, compared with 17 percent in more developed countries. (PRB 2010) Living in ever more urban and globalized realities in which they are in constant contact with “the other half,” young people grow up acutely aware of what they do not have. This is the experience of relative deprivation: the perceived gap between aspirations and livelihood options. A recent World Bank publication, in fact, reports that 20 percent of Latin American youth are “*ninis*”—who neither work nor go to school. About 60 percent of all *ninis* are women, and there is a high correlation between the *nini* problem and crime and violence, “heightening risks for the youth and for society as a whole.” (World Bank 2016, 1–5)

This phenomenon represents a significant shift from the 1960s, when development-oriented, progressive, and revolutionary ideologies flourished in a largely rural continent in which most people understood their lives primarily within local and, at most, national realities. The “new poverty” and the intensified awareness of social inequality together set the stage for the experiences of “social death” and being a “social zero,” detailed in Proposition 3.

Ethnic, racial, and gender inequality. The challenges described above intensify for historically marginalized groups. In Latin America, for example, one-third of Latin American women work without pay in domestic work and family care. Most of these women cannot support themselves financially (30 percent of urban women and 44 percent of rural women have no income of their own), while those who are employed earn about 68 percent of their male counterparts. While poverty in general is declining, poverty gaps between men and women have actually grown. Women-led households are more likely to be poor or extremely poor. Women head 43 percent of indigent households and 38 percent of poor ones. Twice as many young women than young men are outside the labor market (28 percent versus 12 percent); 70 percent of young women neither studying nor working because they are doing unpaid domestic work, as opposed to 1 in every 10 young men who neither study nor work. (ILO 2013, 14–28)

In addition to representing a disproportionate number of workers in lower-paid jobs, women also both do more unpaid work than men. This translates into too little time for rest. Time poverty refers to the increased burden of both paid and unpaid labor on women, and the relative reduction in time they have for leisure, in comparison with men. A study of women in Montevideo, for example, found that “an important amount of time spent by women is unpaid: in this case, only 33 percent of women’s working time is salaried against 68.5 percent of men’s working time. This situation not only reinforces time poverty, but also income poverty.” (Alcaino et al. No date, 4) Time poverty has an important impact the capacity of women to provide sufficient support to their children, as will be discussed further on, and in many communities, is also strongly affected by changes in urban transport policies. When both time and income poverty are combined, relative poverty indicators increase further, for example, from 40 to 50 percent of families in Mexico and from 6 to 11 percent in Greater Buenos Aires. (ILO 2013)

Poverty also affects socially excluded groups disproportionately. Afro-descendants, according to the UNDP, represent between 20 and 30 percent of the Latin American population, with significant populations in Brazil, Colombia, and the Caribbean and much smaller groups in virtually every other country of the region. A total of 90 percent live below the poverty line. (Cevallos 2005; Davis 2006) Indigenous people make up about 10 to 12 percent of the regional population, accounting for much higher percentages of the populations of Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Mexico, and 40 percent of the region’s rural population. They are less educated, have less access to health care and other basic services, and are more vulnerable to economic and environmental crises

than other Latin Americans, with the exception of Afro-descendants. In Bolivia and Guatemala, indigenous people constitute half of the population, but three-quarters of the poor. In Mexico, extreme poverty is almost five times higher among indigenous people than among other citizens. About forty percent of all poor households in Peru are indigenous. (Gill 2006)

Historical legacies of violence, conflict, and exclusion

Understanding the historical continuity of social marginalization, gender violence, formal armed conflict, and other forms of violence is critical to building a more complex understanding of the dynamics that contribute to the reproduction of chronic violence. Exploring how people “on the ground” understand the violence that they live, beyond the normative categories of “war-time” and “peace,” is critical. Much academic literature, along with international policies to address violence, approach the violence and aftermath of armed conflict, for example, without sufficiently understanding war-time violence in the larger context of historical patterns of violence and social conflict. These both precede war and may also persist and even intensify after formal wars end.

Pursuing questions about historical contexts makes it possible to begin to trace the traumatic associations that people make between current forms of violence and diverse experience of violence in the past. In Guatemala, for example, some people associated the armed conflict of the 1970s and 1980s as a re-creation of the violence lived in the counterrevolutionary period of the 1950s. Older people went back further, associating these periods with the quasi-slavery they had suffered as indebted laborers on agricultural estates in the 1920s and 1930s. And in the decade following the war, the traumas of past violence shaped the militaristic and violent ways that older citizens mobilized to protect themselves from disenchanting and disobedient youth and outsiders. (Adams 2010; García et al. No date) In El Salvador, Alvarenga has shown how historical patterns of violence installed by the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries established divisive and violent patterns of community interaction that prevail to this day. (Alvarenga 2006; Adams 2016a, 2016b)

Boesten’s recent study of gender-based violence in Peru similarly shows how “the same non-war-related structures that fed into the high prevalence of sexual violence during conflict were also at work in peacetime.” Through case studies from life and literature, she shows how sexual violence is part of a continuum of violence that her informants associated with hacendados in the prewar period, with soldiers during the war, and with their own family and community members throughout and up to the present. (Boesten 2014, 148–49)

Overlapping with these complex historical legacies is an increasing recognition of the consistent ways that the violence previously associated with “formal” and informal armed conflict interacts and becomes confused with the reproduction of violence in postwar or nonwar contexts. In the reality of “nonconventional armed actors”—ranging from members of youth gangs to members of paramilitary or criminal organizations—it is evident how the fields of formal armed conflict,

organized crime, and informal community-based violence have become hopelessly confused and inseparable. As Briscoe has noted,

The hybrid character of both armed violence and conflict stands at the heart of current global security concerns. But the specific challenges posed by armed violence in non-conflict settings have yet to receive a coherent response from peace and development professionals. (Briscoe 2013, 1)

While those concerned with protecting states and citizens from the violence exercised by such actors often view them simply as “criminals” or military enemies, a longitudinal view of the environments from which many such actors emerge tells a more complex story. From the marginal urban settlements of Rio de Janeiro to those of Guatemala City, San Salvador or Bogotá, many nonstate armed actors are socialized in conditions of chronic marginality and exclusion, with no viable options for the future. The perverse and enraging experience of “social death,” discussed elsewhere, and multiple experiences of violence and social exclusion—at home, on the street, in schools, in peer groups, and in relationship with state actors—contribute to making violence appear to be a normal, banal, and “reasonable” instrument.

The enduring weaknesses of many new democracies

In Latin America and elsewhere, many “new democracies” face persistent problems of legitimacy and capacity. Some of these directly relate to their capacity to control violence, the ways that they attempt to do so, and how they are perceived by vulnerable citizens (see below). The relationship between these dynamics and the reproduction of chronic violence has, however, been generally underestimated by policymakers and practitioners.

The incapacity to control illicit activities and provide basic citizen security and rights are among the predictable consequences of failed democratization strategies, particularly those that prioritize institution building over construction of citizenship, market-driven approaches, a reduced state role in the provision of social services, and the shifting of risks from governments and corporations to individuals. Pásara’s panoramic analysis of three decades of judicial reform efforts in Latin America, for example, provides historical, cultural, and contextual analysis to account for why, despite billions of dollars in investment, judicial systems remain a major weak link in the construction of democracy in the region. (Pásara 2012)

In a 2013 article, Thomas Carothers suggested that it was time to set aside the “transition paradigm” that has dominated international thinking on political reform in “democratizing” countries, arguing that instead:

We should start by assuming that what is often thought of as an uneasy, precarious middle ground between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship is actually the most com-

mon political condition today of countries in the developing world and the post-communist world. It is not an exceptional category to be defined only in terms of its not being one thing or the other; it is a state of normality for many societies, for better or worse. The seemingly continual surprise and disappointment that Western political analysts express over the very frequent falling short of democracy in transitional countries should be replaced with realistic expectations about the likely patterns of political life in these countries.

Aid practitioners and policymakers looking at politics in a country that has recently moved away from authoritarianism should not start by asking, “How is its democratic transition going?” They should instead formulate a more open-ended question: “What is happening politically?” (Carothers 2003, 17–18) In a complementary vein, the World Bank’s World Development Report 2011 found that

countries and subnational areas with the weakest institutional legitimacy and governance are the most vulnerable to violence and instability and the least able to respond to internal and external stresses. (World Bank 2011a, 7)

Below we first summarize analyses from various scholars that identify different facets of the links between violence and state structure and development.

Disjunctive democracy was the term coined by Caldeira and Holston to characterize the consequences of democratization efforts that prioritized political institution building over strengthening the civil sphere and social services. They concluded that “when the civil component of democratization is undermined and discredited . . . social groups . . . support privatization of justice and security, and illegal or extralegal measures of control.” (Caldeira and Holston 1999, 693–726)

Violent pluralism. Arias and Goldstein explored the “violently plural” nature of Latin America’s new democracies, demonstrating how violence continues to be used by democratic states, elites, and subaltern groups alike to pursue specific interests: “Violent pluralism allows us to analyze the role that violence plays in preserving or challenging a particular form of lived democracy.” (Arias and Goldstein 2010, 4–5)

State security-oriented efforts provoke more violence. Pearce and McGee critique the assumption that security in and of itself strengthens democracy—an idea that continues to be promoted by both national and international policymakers:

State security oriented responses to violence can also undermine key democratic principles, vitiate political representation and erode the meanings and practices of democratic citizenship so that classic understandings of state formation—with their legitimate monopolization of violence—fall apart. (Pearce and McGee 2011, 7)

Guerrero's research on Mexico provides detailed data to support this critique. He shows how years of governmental and international efforts to combat drug traffickers inadvertently stimulated the decentralization and multiplication of major and minor drug trafficking organizations and provoked increased criminal violence and citizen insecurity. From 2007 to 2010, cartels and local criminal organizations increased tenfold, becoming increasingly difficult to combat and the number of communities with twelve or more executions per year quadrupled. (Guerrero 2011)

Illegal pluralism. Sieder notes that the capacity of Latin American states to create unified legal orders has been undermined both by decentralization policies and efforts to promote indigenous or traditional law promoted by national and international policymakers, as well as by the imposition of para-state governance by criminal organizations.

“Illegal pluralism”—the overlapping of different legal and regulatory orders, where the legal and illegal become increasingly difficult to discern—is the result, and may be part and parcel of the neoliberal restructuring of the state. (Sieder 2008, 85)

Incarceration policies and practices. Countries in the Americas, including the United States, harbor relatively higher number of prisoners per capita than elsewhere in the world. Mass incarceration is among the most powerful symbols of the violent relationship between states and their most marginalized and vulnerable citizens. In Latin America, hardline criminal justice policies have been implemented with particular ferocity, with broad public support for incarcerating young people from marginalized sectors. Incarceration in the brutal and inhuman conditions that tend to prevail in the prisons of many countries of the region leads many to seek protection and order through association with gangs, other illicit organizations, and/or radicalized political organizations.

While the United States has the largest proportion of incarcerated people in the world (698 per 100,000), prison populations in some Latin America have grown dramatically since about 2000: in Guatemala by 300 percent; in El Salvador by 400 percent; and in Brazil by 250 percent. Guatemala today has an incarceration rate of 121 per 100,000 citizens—and El Salvador has 492, Colombia has 244, Honduras has 196, Panama has 392, and Brazil has 301. Several countries in the Caribbean have even higher rates.

The Central American countries generally have higher rates of overcrowding than the more powerful and wealthier countries to the north and south. Overcrowding is one important indicator of the relative brutality of living conditions. Guatemala, for example, has an over-occupancy rate of 270 percent, while El Salvador has a rate of 352 percent and Honduras 196 percent. About half of all inmates in Guatemala and Honduras are pretrial detainees, as are about a third in Brazil and Colombia. Many remain in prison without access to trial for many years as a result of the relative dysfunctionality of the judicial system. (Institute of Criminal Policy Research 2015a, 2015b)

Migration, internal displacement, and refugees

Intolerable levels of violence from internal armed conflict, criminal and communal violence, and human rights violations are among the major factors that push people into internal displacement (within their own countries), to become refugees (i.e., fleeing across international borders), and in some cases to migrate within their own countries or internationally. While contemporary migration, both international and internal, was traditionally seen as economically motivated, violence has increasingly contributed to people's decisions to seek work and life elsewhere, as Wood and Jusidman have documented for Latin America. (Wood et al. 2010; Jusidman 2010)

The term “migrant” in fact, often masks complex realities that could better describe these people as “displaced people” or “refugees.” In the past decade, for example, violence in the home and on the streets has sparked a growing upsurge in the number of unaccompanied minors fleeing Central America and Mexico for the United States. While the U.S. government continues to label them as migrants, two recent studies conclude that a high number of children are primarily fleeing violence inside their homes and/or communities. Additionally, large numbers of families—primarily, single mothers and their children—are also migrating, in many cases also due to community-level violence. (UNHCR 2014, 6; UNHCR–Mexico 2014, 14) Moreover, about 58 percent of the children arriving at the U.S. border from Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America in 2013 had “suffered or faced harms that indicated a potential or actual need for international protection” as refugees. (UNHCR 2014, 6)

Worldwide, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre notes that the number of people internally displaced has grown from 17 million in 1997 to 33.3 million people in 2013. Between 2012 and 2015, the number of internally displaced people worldwide doubled—from 19 to 38 million people. While Syria now has the largest internally displaced population in the world, until recently Colombia was second behind Sudan, with between 4.4 and 5.9 million. On a smaller and less visible scale, internal displacement is also occurring elsewhere in the region, from Mexico and Central America to Ecuador and Panama. In Mexico,

160,000 people have been displaced by drug cartel violence since 2007, and others continue to live in protracted displacement in Chiapas since the late 1990s. . . . Possibly the largest but least-acknowledged cause of new displacement was generalized drug-cartel violence . . . in the form of fighting between cartels and government forces, extortions, kidnappings, assassinations and threats against civilians. (IDMC 2014)

In Central America, many people still labeled as migrants (both internal and international) are in fact the victims of forced displacement. The International Displacement Monitoring Centre reported over 500,000 forcibly displaced people in the Northern Triangle countries of Central America in 2015.

Parts of Central America and Mexico are suffering a humanitarian crisis which stems directly from expanding criminal violence. . . . The levels of displacement are staggering. In El Salvador some five per cent of the population were displaced by criminal violence and threats in 2014. Most of the 566,700 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have been forced to flee as a result of organised crime and gang violence. (IDMC 2015, 6)

A 2009 report, for example, indicated that about 15 percent of homes were abandoned in one urban community in Guatemala, and noted that people internally displaced by violence are “mostly hidden in urban settings,” complicating efforts to calculate the scope of the problem. (Norwegian Refugee Council et al. 2009)

Both economic migration and security-related displacement transform families and communities in fundamental ways. In Mexico and much of Central America and the Caribbean, between 10 and 20 percent of the population has migrated mainly to the United States for work, sending remittances that directly subsidize 30 to 50 percent of the populations at home. (UNDP 2009) Internal migration within countries affects another 20 to 30 percent. In many countries, historical patterns of internal migration (as well as, in some cases, displacement) are also growing. Palma and others suggest that migration patterns need to be understood in regional and systemic contexts: specific forms of internal and international migration complement each other, attracting particular populations (entire families, women, young people) in ways that change over time as result of changing labor opportunities, legal restrictions, and local economic conditions. (Irene Palma, INCEDES, personal communication, June 2015)

Long absences of migrating family members fundamentally transform family and child-raising practices, authority structures, and community and economic life, as evident from recent studies of Guatemala, with effects worsening as migration has become more expensive and dangerous in recent years. UNICEF found that

although it brings unquestionable benefits, especially economic ones, migration also contributes to vulnerability and family disintegration. Children and adolescents spend hours, even days, without parental supervision in the home. This weakens family bonds between those left behind (mostly children and adolescents) and those who leave (mothers and/or fathers). Family disintegration has consequences for social and emotional development and even affects school performance. Family disintegration, problems in raising children, risk behaviors among children and adolescents who are left without parental guidance and increased vulnerability to violence, abuse and exploitation are some results.

Moreover, when fathers or mothers have to leave home to find work, care and attention of the house and the siblings often fall on the shoulders of teenagers, especially girls. These girls

are forced to leave the educational system to perform household chores. In many cases, they are defenseless against sexual and gender abuse or violence from siblings, relatives or neighbors who are aware of their vulnerability. (UNICEF 2010)

The dynamics of remittances themselves generate complex dynamics within families and in communities that merit close attention. Tension and conflict can emerge between family members and neighbors because of *envidias* (jealousy or envy) of those who receive remittances by those who do not. Increasing levels of social stratification are also evident in communities that were once relatively homogeneous economically, as well as growing patterns of boom-and-bust styles of spending rather than incremental capitalization of the family. At the same time, there is certain stigmatization of children whose fathers or parents are absent, vis-à-vis those with parents at home.

While established migrants are symbols of success, driving consumption, investment, and debt repayment, deportees are often stigmatized as failures and social pariahs, and in some countries are registered as criminals. (Belliard 2011) Not only have returnees failed in their effort to provide for their families, which generates significant financial and emotional stress for all, but returnees are also burdened with moral and economic debts that may be impossible to repay. A recent FLACSO report, for example, documented high levels of depression and physical illnesses among recent returnees. (FLACSO/IMO 2014) Children of deportees also can suffer long-term traumatic effects, including psychological trauma, material hardship, residential instability, family dissolution, increasing use of public benefits, and among boys, aggression. (Migration Policy Institute 2015)

Organized crime and illicit trade

Many actors concerned with the escalating problem of violence in Latin America focus mainly on the contributions of the illicit trades in drugs, arms, and human beings and the money laundering associated with them. However, as significant as these enterprises are, they are only some of the contributing factors and consequences of chronic violence.

While “organized crime” refers to illicit enterprises that are centrally controlled, the term “illicit trade” may be a more helpful concept in contemplating the social embeddedness of this phenomenon. Naím coined the term to characterize the decentralized and generalized ways that wide-ranging illicit activities, structures, behaviors, and beliefs increasingly implicate all members of society. Illicit trade can be illegal and/or illicit in some places and accepted in others. “To think of a clean line between good guys and bad guys for the ability to separate illicit trade from licit trade is to fail to capture the reality of trafficking today. Illicit trade permeates our daily lives in subtle ways.” (Naím 2005, 240–41) The concept finds strong echo in the notion of the “grey zone” discussed in Proposition 4. This section provides a summary review of the most significant illicit businesses in Latin America. Their social ramifications are addressed in subsequent sections.

Drug production and trafficking. Today, Latin America remains the sole global producer of cocaine and a major global producer of opiates, marijuana, and methamphetamines. (Latin American Commission on Drugs 2009) Although the United States remains the prime destination for most of these products, moving northward mainly through Central America and Mexico, 30 percent of cocaine today is sent to Europe via West Africa. (Ribando Seelke et al. 2010) The value of the drugs circulating in the region dwarfs the budgets of many countries. Mexican and Colombian organizations alone are said to generate, remove, and launder between \$18 and \$29 billion per year (UNODC 2010, 4), three to four times more than the annual budget of a country like Guatemala.

The immense flow of resources and the criminal networks that traffic in drugs have transformed the nature of politics, security, the economy, and society in the region. The drug business still underpins the internal armed conflicts in Colombia (and previously, Peru), has intensified the vulnerability of state agencies to corruption, has contributed to spiking criminal and social violence, and has deeply influenced cultural norms and social practices in multiple and complex ways. (UNDP/OAS 2010, 185)

In response to the “war on drugs” carried out by various governments in the region, these groups have not only militarized their operations; they have also splintered into multiple cartels which articulate with an increasingly decentralized array of local organizations. In Mexico, for example, Guerrero has demonstrated that, as a result of increased government persecution, the number of cartels nationwide increased from six in 2006 to 52 by 2010; and local organizations grew from zero to 62 nationwide over the same period. (Guerrero 2010) As these organizations and activities decentralize and splinter, they become further embedded into local social structures and increasingly under the radar of national and regional law enforcement capacity. Finally, as local groups are often paid “in kind,” they have to stimulate local markets for drugs in order to turn their products into cash. This serves to catalyze growing use and social acceptance for these products among people living along transit routes. (World Drug Report, 2010)

Human trafficking in Latin America is the leading criminal enterprise after drug trafficking. The U.S. State Department estimated at least 27 million victims of human trafficking in Latin America at any given time, representing about 4 percent of the total regional population, while the International Labor Organization calculated, more specifically, that there were some 20.9 million victims of forced labor between 2002 and 2011. Contributing factors include high global demands for low-wage workers, political upheaval, natural disasters, and economic crisis as well as migration, especially when it is illegal and unregulated. Between 55 and 65 percent of trafficking victims are women and 27 percent are minors. Women and girls constitute about 40 percent of victims in forced economic exploitation, and about 98 percent of victims of commercial sexual exploitation. (Ribando-Seelke 2013)¹⁹

Arms possession and trafficking are closely linked, both to the conflict in Colombia and to the regional drug trade. In the latter case, arms are both “one of its currencies and a critical aid to cultivation and distribution.” (Stohl et al. 2008) Most arms are imported from the United States and Europe, and secondarily from Colombia and a few other Latin American countries, although a handful of Latin American countries manufacture weapons domestically. Trafficking moves north and south from Colombia, and south from the United States into Mexico and beyond (Stohl et al. 2008), although significant movement of arms occurs out of Nicaragua and Panama into Colombia as well.

The prevalence of firearms is much more significant in some countries than in others; and high levels of firearms possession tend to correlate with high levels of homicides. In Brazil, there are between 3.8 and 9.5 million illegal firearms, and 5.2 million registered ones. Most weapons on the black market are believed to have been supplied by Brazil’s legal arms industry, the second largest in the Western hemisphere. About 70 percent of homicides are committed with firearms (Insight Crime No date). In Central America, 77 percent of homicides are committed with firearms; there are an estimated 2.2 million firearms in Central America, of which 60 percent are illegal. These are enough theoretically to arm one out of every three men in the region. (UNODC No date)

The social embeddedness of illicit organizations. One aspect of what makes these organizations so difficult to control is their high levels of diversification. In addition to arms and human trafficking, kidnapping (50 percent of the kidnapping worldwide occurs in the region), robbery, and extortion, criminal organizations operate or infiltrate diverse legitimate businesses to facilitate money laundering or transport needs. Such businesses include construction, banking, remittance companies, shopping malls, entertainment, export-import businesses, agriculture, real estate, and numerous retail products marketed formally and informally. In some parts of Latin America, significant aspects of the “informal sector”—sales of small appliances, CDs, and pirated merchandise—have now been co-opted as highly decentralized mechanisms for money laundering. (Farah 2011)

In areas abandoned or significantly underserved by governments, such organizations can come to control territories and populations, providing social services and exercising social control in direct competition with the state. In Guatemala, for example, drug traffickers have for some time directly challenged the state and the national army for territorial control in several of Guatemala’s 22 departments. In Mexico, the state is similarly contesting drug traffickers for control over certain regions of the country, particularly in the West, North, and Northwest. In Colombia, drug traffickers, community self-defense groups, guerrilla organizations, and military forces have been battling each other over territorial and social control of the country for decades, generating some of the highest levels of social violence in the continent. In Rio de Janeiro, federal and state forces were required to launch the largest military operation in Brazilian history in 2010 and 2011 to recuperate control over major favelas, a process that, as of this writing,

had achieved mixed results. In Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama, drug traffickers dominate frontier and peripheral areas and coastlines, integrating many communities and populations into their economic and political networks. (Meléndez et al. 2010, 13–22) Nonetheless, most governments and international agencies continue to pursue these actors as if somehow separate from the social contexts that enable them to operate and thrive and the social and political roles they have come to play in vulnerable societies. Unpacking the factors that inform the “social embeddedness” of these organizations is critical to any effort to understand their power and their role in vulnerable communities and regions.²⁰

Socially destructive patterns of urbanization

Today, over half of the global population lives in urban areas, and just short of a third of this population—a full 15 percent of the world’s people—live in slums, in conditions that Sampson (2004) has described as “concentrated disadvantage.” In Latin America, a third of all urban dwellers (about 79 percent of the regional population) lacks adequate water supplies, and 40 percent lack adequate sanitation. While many policymakers and practitioners assume that violence in urban areas is worse than in rural areas, few heed the fluid, complex, and mutually generative urban–rural relationship that informs life in both urban and rural areas today.

Davis, in her global study of chronic violence in urban areas, describes how urbanization policies and practices over the past century created a fertile environment for the emergence of peripheral marginal settlements and ripe conditions for the generation and reproduction of chronic violence. She argues that in order to survive in conditions of systematic neglect, people in these settlements developed economic and political systems based on illicit political and economic practices that became an enduring infrastructure for chronic violence. According to the report,

When steady rural-urban migration combined with explosive demographic growth to create a city that spilled beyond its existent infrastructure, large swathes of the urban population began to live relatively informally, often in “no-man’s lands” outside the social, spatial and political bounds of the city. . . . Whether seen as marginal or informal, residents of these areas were ignored because local governments’ concerns with building a modern and more prosperous city meant that peripheral neighborhoods became invisible to city officials. . . .

Concerns about what type of employment opportunities would be offered within informal areas were almost completely absent, including efforts to develop and foster a thriving commercial sector in these same locations—mainly because commercial activities and growth were considered to be principal activities for downtown areas and other well-differentiated zones in the formal city. . . .

In [this context,] . . . the built environment or physical infrastructure of these neighborhoods became the site of self-employment and economic production. . . . Given the neglect

of informal areas, it was the un- and under-employed poor residents of informal neighborhoods who actually were in the best position to use built environmental assets as a source of reproducing or generating their livelihoods. But because such activities and exchanges were always conducted outside the law, these same practices reinforced and strengthened the illegal market for urban services, thus laying the foundation for the emergence of illicit and illegal actors. To the extent that informal political leaders based their local legitimacy on their capacities to protect illegal or illicit markets, both residents and informal leaders needed each other, further tying them together in alternative reciprocities that distanced from the formal city and from the rule of law. (Davis 2012, 74–76)

This analysis demonstrates how a number of macro-level drivers—described elsewhere in this report—interacted with each other to inform the nature of these informal settlements, establishing the foundation for the generation and reproduction of chronic violence. These drivers range from relative state absence and the construction of an illicit economy and a parallel political system, to the social exclusion and inequality of the people in marginal settlements in relation to more privileged groups living inside formally constituted cities.

In recent decades, the expansion of marginal settlements has tended to concentrate in peri-urban settlements. These settlements differ somewhat from the traditional inner-city slums, in that their inhabitants are generally poorer and less educated and live farther away from important job hubs; have less access to social services; travel longer distances to work; and live in conditions that are precarious environmentally. (De Gama Torres 2008, 5–10)

Data from Guatemala provide us with some idea of how such urbanization patterns can contribute to increased violence. While Guatemala continues to be the most rural of Latin American countries, about 51 percent of its population lives today in urban areas, a number that is expected to grow to 56 percent by 2025. Urbanization intensified after the end of discriminatory laws that had prohibited indigenous people from living in cities; it was also spurred by natural disasters, the internal armed conflict during the latter half of the twentieth century, and by the weakening by the economic liberalization of smallholders' economic options in more recent times. Despite state investment in popular housing for several decades starting in the 1950s, an urban housing deficit of 10 percent existed when the national housing program was abandoned with the advent of economic liberalization in the early 1990s.

Today, with fully one-third of the urban population living in marginal settlements, the national housing deficit now affects over one-third of the national population, both urban and rural. Travel times to work locations can range from one to three hours each way for local residents, and public transportation has become a significant locus of social conflict and violence, due to robberies, extortion, and homicides on buses, as well as well as inconsistency of service and high transportation prices. The image of lethal chaos on metro buses is a major contributor to public

perceptions of violence, virtually on par with the images of gang members and criminal organizations. (ASIES 2003; PDH 2014, 129) Weak access to services, the long distances to work, and the precariousness of social networks in such areas place extreme stresses on families and contribute directly to high levels of time poverty, particularly for women. Women's experiences of time poverty are linked to changes in traditional gender relations and reflected in increasingly precarious conditions for raising children.

Socially destructive economic development

Analysts advance various ideas about the relationship between economic development and violence.²¹

Macroeconomic policies. At the most general level, some analysts who focus on the effect of market forces and the logic of modernization assert that violence is intrinsic to development. (Escobar and Nandy, in Parfitt 2013, 1176–79) Violence, for example, was a key element in the nationalistic revolutionary movements in the twentieth century, all of which also sought economic reforms (Parfitt 2013). While Goulet and others argue that the negative effects of development can and should be regulated by ethical criteria, many agree that initiatives to guide the economic policies of major multilateral and bilateral organizations have met with little success. (Parfitt 2013; McNeill et al. 2009, 101, 142; Goulet 2009) Crocker and others maintain that ethical development requires that those on the receiving end of such policies help to shape policies that affect their lives. All, however, concur that neoliberal economic policies tend to fuel violence because they spur “unfair” socioeconomic relations. (Crocker, quoted by Parfitt 2013, 1179) Much has been written about the ways that the economic policies promoted by international agencies in certain post-conflict situations can contribute to conflict and violence. Writing about the economic measures promoted after the peace accords of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala in the 1990s, for example, Paris concluded that

internationally sponsored economic adjustment policies appear to be eroding the relative success of democratic reforms and undermining the prospects of a stable and lasting peace in all three countries—principally because these failed to address the conditions of poverty and inequality that fueled the wars to begin with. (Paris 2010)

The radical changes in sources of foreign exchange in El Salvador provide one example. While 81 percent of exports were agricultural in 1980, this figure plummeted to 11 percent by 2000. In that year, 66 percent of foreign exchange was being generated by remittances and 17 percent by maquilas. (Cuellar 2000 in Adams, 2016a)

Extractive industries. In diverse countries, social conflicts and violence can be generated by extractive and energy-related industries. In each case, a critical factor is the government's capacity or willingness to regulate the industry and mediate between the interests of the industry and affected communities.

Guatemala provides one example with respect to mining: in 2013, 33 licenses for mineral exploitation and 75 for mineral exploration had been approved by the Guatemalan government, with 350 licenses in process (Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines 2013). These operations provoked conflict and violence, for several reasons. Over 73 popular consultations were organized in as many communities to discuss these proposals with the affected populations. Virtually all the communities rejected the plans. However, the consultations were not legally binding, contrary to the beliefs of many community members. Several mining companies proceeded with their projects anyway, with government support, eliciting significant conflict with the local population. The arrival of mining enterprises also caused deep internal divisions within communities themselves, intensified by the inordinate power held by the companies. In one community, researchers reported “high levels of emotional suffering due to both overt violence and socio-cultural upheaval and disruption to their economic patterns of life, . . . similar to those found among populations in contexts of political violence or war.” (Caxaj et al. 2014, 50–57)

Energy generation projects can also provoke conflicts at various stages of the process. In Guatemala, by 2012, 45 publicly or privately owned hydroelectric projects were either under construction or in the planning stages. A first major conflict occurred in the 1980s, when 400 people displaced by the Chixoy Dam project were massacred by government forces. In recent years, conflicts developed between dam proponents and opponents, construction companies, and the government in various communities slated to be affected by dam projects. Additional conflict arose as a result of the government’s failure to consult those property owners affected by efforts to lay down a grid of electric cabling and transmission towers throughout the country. Finally, citizens throughout the country have taken to pirating electricity in response to the skyrocketing energy costs in the wake of the privatization of the sector. (Adams 2015)

Land conflicts. Inequities in land ownership (reflective of the high levels of income inequality in Latin America) and land-related disputes are key contributors to conflict and violence. A 2014 report on Guatemala noted that 92 percent of families have access to only 22 percent of the land. An earlier study noted there were 2,077 active land disputes, at least 80,000 unprocessed land title applications, and boundary disputes involving over 90 percent of the country’s 330 townships. (Brown, Daly, and Hamlin 2005) In a country of about 12 million people, these figures suggest that at least 5 percent of families are directly affected by such disputes, which can also fuel familial, community, ethnic, and other conflicts.

Micro-level economic development efforts, aimed to empower specific sectors or populations, can also inadvertently breed conflict with others. For example, initiatives providing jobs to youth can inadvertently shake family authority structures, provoking increased conflict between parents and their children. (Green 2003; Céspedes 2013) Jusidman’s analysis of gender-based violence in Ciudad Juarez (including femicides) notes how growing employment opportunities

for women and other economic factors—including how real estate prices pushed poor families into areas with no social services or transportation to support them—contribute to changing power relations between women and their partners, especially when the men are unemployed or underemployed themselves. (Jusidman 2010) Promundo’s research on why men are violent toward women also found a correlation between men’s employment status (precarious employment conditions, or lack of work or income) and sexual violence toward their women partners. (Barker et al. 2011, 2013)

Climate change and environmental destruction

According to the 2014 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2014), the effects of climate change in the twenty-first century will reduce economic growth and poverty reduction, further erode food security, and intensify both poverty and inequality in countries throughout the world. People who are vulnerable to the macro-level forces and processes described throughout this section are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The IPCC report notes that the “risks [associated with climate change] are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development.” Moreover, vulnerability to risks linked to climate change cannot be ascribed to a single cause:

Differences in vulnerability and exposure arise from non-climatic factors and from multi-dimensional inequalities often produced by uneven development processes. These differences shape differential risks from climate change. People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses. This heightened vulnerability is rarely due to a single cause. Rather, it is the product of intersecting social processes that result in inequalities in socioeconomic status and income, as well as in exposure. Such social processes include, for example, discrimination on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and (dis)ability.

The report details a wide range of adverse effects that can result from climate change, all of which could—in interaction with other drivers of violence—contribute to increased social conflict and violence:

Impacts from recent climate-related extremes, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires, reveal significant vulnerability and exposure of some ecosystems and many human systems to current climate variability. Impacts of such climate-related extremes include alteration of ecosystems, disruption of food production and water supply, damage to infrastructure and settlements, morbidity and mortality, and consequences for mental health and human well-being. For countries at all levels of development, these impacts are consistent with a significant lack of preparedness for current climate variability in some sectors.

Climate-related hazards exacerbate other stressors, often with negative outcomes for livelihoods, especially for people living in poverty. Climate-related hazards affect poor people's lives directly through impacts on livelihoods, reductions in crop yields, or destruction of homes, and indirectly through, for example, increased food prices and food insecurity.

However, the IPCC also noted that “observed positive effects for poor and marginalized people, which are limited and often indirect, include examples such as diversification of social networks and of agricultural practices.” Finally:

Violent conflict increases vulnerability to climate change (medium evidence, high agreement). Large-scale violent conflict harms assets that facilitate adaptation, including infrastructure, institutions, natural resources, social capital, and livelihood opportunities. (IPCC 2014, 6–7)

The IPCC Report details a series of key risks that span all sectors and regions globally. Many are particularly challenging for vulnerable communities in poorer countries, including:

- i. Risk of death, injury, ill-health, or disrupted livelihoods in low-lying coastal zones and small island developing states and other small islands, due to storm surges, coastal flooding, and sea level rise.
- ii. Risk of severe ill-health and disrupted livelihoods for large urban populations due to inland flooding in some regions.
- iii. Systemic risks due to extreme weather events leading to breakdown of infrastructure networks and critical services such as electricity, water supply, and health and emergency services.
- iv. Risk of mortality and morbidity during periods of extreme heat, particularly for vulnerable urban populations and those working outdoors in urban or rural areas.
- v. Risk of food insecurity and the breakdown of food systems linked to warming, drought, flooding, and precipitation variability and extremes, particularly for poorer populations in urban and rural settings.
- vi. Risk of loss of rural livelihoods and income due to insufficient access to drinking and irrigation water and reduced agricultural productivity, particularly for farmers and pastoralists with minimal capital in semi-arid regions.
- vii. Risk of loss of marine and coastal ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecosystem goods, functions, and services they provide for coastal livelihoods, especially for fishing communities in the tropics and the Arctic.

viii. Risk of loss of terrestrial and inland water ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecosystem goods, functions, and services they provide for livelihoods. (IPCC 2014, 13)

Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Polar regions are the areas where people are predicted to suffer the most extreme effects on livelihood, food, and human security. In Africa, this includes compounded stress on water resources; reduced crop production, and increased droughts in vulnerable areas; adverse effects on livelihood and food security; and increased vector and waterborne diseases. In Asia, increased flooding in multiple regions, drought-related water and food shortages, and increased malnutrition are predicted; and in Central and South America, increased flooding and landslides from extreme precipitation, decreased food production, and waterborne diseases are predicted. (IPCC 2014, 21–24)

For Central America, Giorgi has pointed out how the vulnerability to climate change increases the vulnerability of local populations to illicit and illegal actors:

Well-documented disruption of life, and the immense economic and human costs provoked by the numerous and damaging hurricanes in the region over the past decade, as well as the perverse ways these have made affected populations increasingly vulnerable to illicit and illegal actors and practices, provide some indication of the scope of [the effects of climate change] in the Central American region. (Giorgi 2006)

One example of what Giorgi describes has occurred in the Lake Atitlan region of Western Guatemala: in 2005, drug trafficking, extortions, and kidnappings increased dramatically during the chaos following Hurricane Stan, which left many local people homeless and the region in an extended economic crisis.

The mass media

The mass media play a complex role in relationship to violence, which, like the other processes described in this section, is best assessed in relationship to specific populations. The persecution of journalists in contexts of high levels of violence has received significant public attention and merits strong response from governments and civil society. But the ways that diverse forms of media may contribute to reproducing violence and affect civic perceptions of violence and security requires more systematic investigation.

Whether and how media violence contributes to violent attitudes and behavior has been a topic of fierce debate since at least the 1960s.²² A study by Princeton University and the Brookings Institution found that media violence is one causal risk factor for aggressive and violent behavior, and that “media violence exposure has a larger effect on later violent behavior than do substance use, abusive parents, poverty, living in a broken home, or having low IQ.” (Escobar-Chavez, Liliana, and Anderson 2008) Two recent reports, however, concluded that the link between violent media and violent behavior is not linear:

Youth who have aggressive traits and are stressed are more prone to delinquent and bullying behavior, and are also drawn to these games, but their behavior in real life is not predicted by playing the games. While there may be correlations between violent behavior and watching violent media, there is so far no definitive causal relationships between violent behavior and watching violent media. Instead, it may be more helpful to think about violent media as one of many factors that may contribute to violent behavior. (Bereson and Schlosman 2012; see also American Psychological Association No date)

According to these interpretations, media violence—like other drivers that have been analyzed in this section—can be an important contributor to the generation and reproduction of violence, in interaction with other factors. Martín-Barbero, Putnam, and Reguillo contribute further to this contextualized analysis. Writing before the digital revolution, Martín-Barbero argued that television assumes a disproportionate role in people’s lives in contexts of violence, becoming a “place of coming together, of vicarious encounters with the world.” (Martín-Barbero 2002, 27–29) In the United States, Putnam showed that dependence on television for entertainment contributes significantly to weakening both social and civic engagement, processes stimulated in other ways by violence, as the next sections below explain. (Putnam 2000, 216–46)

Reguillo, in Mexico, notes how narratives of fear circulated by the media contribute to generate the “reality” in which people live: “Far from being weakened, fears are reinforced in the intimidating amplification of the media’s narration.” These constructions contribute directly to the vilification and scapegoating of certain actors—for example, gang members, youth, and poor people in general—a phenomenon that is examined below. (Reguillo 2002, 198) Similarly, Moodie (2009) details how Salvadoran media and political leaders together contributed to galvanizing a national furor and powerful public support for hard-line policies through sensationalist reporting of violence. In scenarios like this, people often come to perceive that crime and violence are worse than they actually are, as *Latinobarómetro* documented in its recent survey of the region. (Seligson et al. 2012)

In recent years, an increasing diversity of media—video games, cell phones, and social media—have come under increasing scrutiny for the possible ways that they contribute to generating and reproducing violence. Cyber-bullying, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have become powerful platforms for youth violence, and social media are regularly used by criminal groups to make threats. Recent research in the Western Highlands of Guatemala documented the significant problems experienced by parents and children in the use of cell phones, computers, and social media. While young people—like their counterparts elsewhere—are intensely focused on the scintillating virtual world that they access through computers and smart phones, many of their parents (even those who are literate) have little or no capacity to access this world, much less to monitor what their children are accessing and protect them from dangerous engagement.

III. Contributors to Violence Reproduction among Individuals and Families

PROPOSITION 2:

Chronic violence threatens the capacity of individuals and families to foster healthy patterns of physical, mental, and emotional development.

This section highlights key findings in the massive neuroscientific, psychological, and sociological literature that illuminate the complex ways that violence and social conflict affect the critical initial stages of human development—on both the microsystem (the individual) and mesosystem (individual and primary relations) levels of Bronfenbrenner’s model. We look first at effects on the parental–infant bond, parenting capacity, and families. The final part provides an overview of the impacts of collective and continuing traumatization on vulnerable groups

Parental–infant bond

The “maternal–infant bond,” first theorized by John Bowlby in 1951, remains universally recognized as the single most important element in enabling human beings to “thrive,” and it continues to underlie psychological theory and child care practices to date.²³ Bowlby posited that securely attached infants become more successful in all realms of life than their insecurely attached counterparts. Since then, of course, as the importance of men as equal caregivers has been recognized and affirmed, this has come to be referred to as the **parental–infant bond**.²⁴

Secure attachment enables people to develop resilience, affection, and intimacy, and it is a fundamental predictor of the capacity for moral development:

What the caregiver gives his or her child in those first few critical years is like an internal pot of gold. . . . Filling the child up with positive emotions is a gift more precious than anything material. . . . [that they carry] inside throughout their life. [It] gives the individual the strength to deal with challenges, the ability to bounce back from setbacks, and the ability to show affections and enjoy intimacy with others, in other relationships. It overlaps with what London psychiatrist Michael Rutter refers to as “resilience” . . . [It] predicts both how emotionally well-adjusted an individual turns out as an adult, but also predicts their moral development. (Baron-Cohen 2011, 48–49)

Conversely, the absence or rupture of this fundamental bond undermines development of these key capacities, especially the ability to develop genuine emotional attachments:

Least damaged are motor skills such as walking and manual dexterity, including, for example, the physical capacity to do damage or violence. Most affected are children's ability to express themselves and their emotional adjustment—especially their capacity to establish and maintain genuine emotional attachments. . . . [Rupture can provoke] affective disorders [that become] fully apparent in later childhood and adolescence and can lead to significant behavioral and relational problems throughout life. (Bowlby, quoted by Bronfenbrenner 1979, 133, 156)

Childhood trauma

While the complex and broad role of traumatization in violence reproduction is reviewed at the end of this section, the particular importance of trauma for child development is addressed here. Multiple studies confirm that people who are traumatized as children are more likely to continue to suffer long term “post traumatic psychopathology” than those who are suffer traumatization at later ages. (See the literature review in Van der Kolk et al. 2005, 389–94)

The **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) studies** conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente, for example, demonstrated that traumatic experiences in childhood are a prime source of physical, psychological, and behavioral problems throughout life. And they also provided a new scientific basis for approaching human development through what the World Health Organization terms *biopsychosocial approaches*. Moreover, they show that traumatic experiences tend to occur in highly interrelated clusters, rarely alone.

The ACE studies used a questionnaire that asked respondents about a dozen common adverse childhood experiences. (See the endnotes for a copy of the U.S. survey and additional references.²⁵) The results showed that the more traumatic experiences suffered in childhood, the more illnesses, mental problems, and destructive behaviors people will suffer throughout life. Further studies of demographically representative samples in five U.S. states confirmed these results, demonstrating that “ACEs are common, highly interrelated, and exert a powerful cumulative impact on human development that becomes evident in problems throughout the lifespan.” (Larkin and Shields 2012)

A World Health Organization Expert Panel concluded that ACEs are a primary cause of health and social development problems worldwide:

[ACEs] . . . affect multiple domains of health and social function. . . . As such, many conditions that public health seeks to prevent as if they were the primary problems—such as smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, depression, STDs, and so on—are seen to be the diverse outcomes, or symptoms, of a common set of underlying determinants. Consequently, ACEs themselves are the primary problem, and for a truly preventive, upstream approach, public health and social development policies and programmes need to be explicitly aimed at ACE reduction. (WHO 2009, 5)

The expert panel developed an expanded set of questions to explore ACEs in diverse countries worldwide. (See the international version of the survey in the endnotes)²⁶ Although we have not been able to confirm whether these have been applied in the field, various U.S. states have used the model to build holistic approaches to relevant social policies. Diverse nonprofit organizations are also using it to address problems ranging from homelessness to alcoholism and drug abuse (Larkin and Shields 2012); and some primary health care providers serving disadvantaged people now use the survey as a basic diagnostic tool with their patients. (Tough 2011)²⁷

Extreme stress and parenting

The capacity to parent comes under multiple stresses in contexts of chronic violence, as a result of the interaction of the macro- and micro-level processes that reproduce this phenomenon. Siegel, Hughes, Baylin, and other psychologists and neuroscientists have shown how the high levels of fear and stress associated with long-term violence and insecurity can undermine parents' capacity to build and sustain basic bonds with their children. Many of these dynamics, of course, are not limited to parenting alone. The neuroscientist Emile Bruneau, for example, notes that in response to threats, human beings tend to react with more authoritarian behavior, more conformity, and more xenophobia—all reactions that are evident in the perverse behaviors described in this and the following sections.²⁸

Successful parenting and child development depend on neurological and biological pathways in parents' brains that enable them to “naturally” parent in appropriate ways. Unmanageable or chronic stress can obstruct parents' ability to nurture and sustain the parent–infant bond. It can suppress parents' ability to feel and express open and positive feelings, undermining emotional bonds and strong connections, and contributing to a negative and defensive engagement between parent and child. Siegel describes how unresolved trauma suffered by parents can affect their children:

The [traumatized] parent . . . may unintentionally and unknowingly be providing the child with a set of responses that are disorienting and disorganizing. As an attachment figure, such a parent has become a source of fear and confusion, not of safety and security. This can be the result of active aggression or of exhibiting a fearful or confused state of mind. The intense and frightening moments of disconnection with the parent remain unrepaired. As the parent disappears into rage or panic himself, the child becomes lost in terror. These disorganizing and disorienting experiences become an essential part of how the child learns to self-regulate behavior and emotional states. The child has the double insult of becoming engulfed in confusion and terror induced by the parent, and of losing the relationship with the attachment figure that might have provided a safe haven and sense of security. Disassociation can be an outcome of these experiences and produce an internal sense of fragmentation of the self. (Siegel 2012, 320)

Boesten, for example, describes how the violence suffered by mothers raped during the Peruvian internal armed conflict undermined their capacity to raise their children and participate in a healthy family life:

The idea that the past is the past, . . . that not only do raped women learn to live with their experiences, but also that the “natural bond” between the mother and child erases the violence with which it was conceived, is simply not true. To the women who have to live with those memories, the physical consequences, including children born from rape, these events are never in the past. As the experiences of Cecilia and Beatriz, who had much difficulty sustaining a peaceful post-conflict family life, indicate, the sequels can be many and are likely to reverberate into the next generation; dismissing these experiences from a perspective of women’s “natural” role as mothers only emphasizes the gender binary, and in doing so, perpetuates inequality and the possibility of violence. (Boesten 2014, 5)

The capacity for empathy and for “evil”

As the brains of both parents and children “turn off” the emotional pain resulting from the vicious cycle of disconnection and rejection discussed by Siegel, they develop more negative feelings toward each other, seeing each other and the world in increasingly egocentric and black-and-white terms. In short, their capacity for empathy becomes weakened. (Hughes and Baylin 2012, 96–101)

“Empathy” refers to one’s capacity to see and treat the “other” as a human being, even when we might disagree fundamentally with his or her attitudes, beliefs or actions. The neuroscientist Simon Baron-Cohen argues that the capability for empathy depends both on our experience of parental love as well as on certain genes, and that it is fundamental for healthy intimate, social, and civic relations—i.e., for robust human development. (Baron-Cohen 2012, 10–13)

According to Baron-Cohen, when we lose the capacity for empathy—either transitorily or permanently—“we are solely in the ‘I’ mode. In such a state we relate only to things, or to people as if they were just things.” His neurological research demonstrates that people’s capacity to cause extreme hurt to others (usually understood as the capacity for “evil”) can be better understood instead as an erosion of empathy. Following Martin Buber, he argues that the mechanism underlying the erosion of empathy is the act of perceiving and/or relating to other people as objects or things. (Baron-Cohen 2012, 4–5)

One of the major circumstances that can block our capacity for empathy is when we feel our safety or survival to be under threat. Psychologists often remind us that the tools that enable us to cope with a short-term crisis can become destructive if they become a “normal” way of responding in everyday life. This is in fact what occurs with the ways that people tend to cope with the persistent stress associated with chronic violence. The simplified black-and-white frameworks that enable people to survive in such situations, by enhancing their capacity to assess rapidly and act quickly in such circumstances, do not leave room for the more nuanced thinking and socially mediated actions associated with empathy and that are possible in other circumstances:

The stressed out brain has no time for ambiguity, complexity, or uncertainty. Survival is all about rapid assessment and quick action, requiring the reduction of complexity and the narrowing of options. This is a job for the amygdala and the lower limbic system, not for the hippocampus, with its need to compare and contrast, or for those higher, unique human parts of the prefrontal cortex that would only gum up the works with subtlety and complexity. (Hughes and Baylin 2012, 97)

In such circumstances, as we will see below, people trust and engage less with others. Both real-life threats as well as traumatically induced perceptions of threats can stimulate self-protective tactics and expedience over more complex pro-social strategies and long-term vision. In both cases, actions are characterized by a reduced capacity for empathy as well as for the more complex and nuanced processes of deliberation and thinking that are possible when people can appreciate and engage constructively with each other. These analytical insights have profound implications for how we understand and approach the challenges faced by people exposed to the conditions of chronic violence. They invite us to probe into why certain people or groups engage in destructive or violent behavior, and to desist from facile notions such as “violent men” or “cultures of violence.”

Social determinants of health

Wilkinson and Marmot’s findings on the social determinants of health take a complementary approach to this issue, documenting the consistent ways that the destructive tendencies described in this report can consistently and dramatically undermine physical and psychological health. Effects include chronic distress, psychosomatic symptoms, substance abuse, despondency and depression, cancer, hypertension, diabetes, coronary problems, and depressed immune systems—results corroborated by other analysts. (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003)²⁹ The World Life Expectancy Rankings, for example, for the Northern Triangle countries, show high levels of mortality in many of these categories. (World Health Rankings 2015)

A recent study on global trends in maternal and child health reports that 56 percent of maternal and child deaths occur in “fragile settings.” These include marginal areas in wealthy countries. In the city of Washington, for example, there is a tenfold difference in the infant death rate from the poorest to the wealthiest neighborhoods. The rates in the city’s poorest wards are on par with those documented for El Salvador and Cambodia, while those in the wealthiest neighborhoods are comparable to Stockholm and Tokyo. (Hauslohner 2015, B4)

While the social dynamics that exacerbate health differentials like these have been studied relatively little, a recent article on how mothers “normalize” the malnutrition of their children provides some clues:

Local power differentials, often taking the form of gender inequalities, as well as the competing priorities of quotidian subsistence struggles and systematic mistreatment at the lev-

el of the medical referral infrastructure, reinforce the normalization of child malnutrition. . . . [As one mother reflected:] “We didn’t know we were malnourished. We thought it was normal to have short children, and no one told us differently.” (Chary et al. 2013, 87–95)

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence against women today remains extremely high, both globally and in Latin America—although reporting rates remain quite low. A 2013 United Nations report calculates that 35 percent of women worldwide experience either physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, although some national studies show that up to 70 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner. (WHO 2013) Worldwide, over 10 percent of all women have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives. (UNICEF 2014) Studies from Latin America report similar figures:

- In western, rural Guatemala, a participatory survey calculated that a majority of women had been battered sexually and physically. (Moser and McIlwaine 2001)
- In two marginal communities of El Salvador, a third to a half of women reported being abused physically by men. (Hume 2007)
- In Antioquia, Colombia, a 2001 study reported that one-third of married women were victims of physical and verbal abuse. One in five had been battered. (Jimeno 2001, 226)

Numerous scholars have focused in the past decade on the drivers of male violence and the effects of deprivation and chronic social exclusion on masculine identities and behaviors. They point to a kind of “maverick” or “protest” form of masculinity that emerges among youth growing up on the margins of mainstream society. The concept of “social death” among young men, detailed in Proposition 3, helps to explain how violence can be exacerbated when normal routes to masculine legitimacy—including economic capacity and sexual access to women—are systematically blocked. The mechanisms often involve violence—joining a gang; the conspicuous display of power demonstrated by ownership of expensive objects, vehicles or property, guns, and the exercise and display of control—often via brutal relations over women. (Baird No date, 1–4; Barker 2005; Vigh 2006, 104) Along these lines, Barker et al. advance the following factors to explain male violence toward women in high-violence scenarios:

- The belief that men have more rights than women;
- Experiences of violence in childhood (i.e., traumatic experiences described elsewhere in this section);

- Feelings of economic disempowerment: feeling stressed, ashamed or depressed because of not having enough work or income; and
- Alcohol use. (Barker et al. 2010)

To characterize gender relations in postconflict contexts, the USAID Conflict Management and Mitigation Team coined the concept “hypermasculinity,” “in which the strictures against femininity and homosexuality are especially intense and in which physical strength and aggressiveness are paramount.” They suggest that women, conversely, are pressed into a “hyper-femininity,” in which traditional women’s roles can become reinforced, homogenized, and intensified. (Dwyer et al. No date, 18ff)

From a complementary angle, Boesten notes how rape and other forms of gender-based violence can be further intensified and brutalized during wartime, and continue at high levels after formal armed conflict ends as one form of a much broader pattern of everyday violence.

The rape regimes perpetrated by the armed forces and Shining Path suggests that wartime rape often reproduces and reinforces existing gendered hierarchies, reflecting long-standing racism and sexism, despite different moral missions. . . . [The] impunity of wartime sexual violence reflects peacetime values regarding gender and gendered violence. . . . [Higher] incidences of sexual violence against women [in postwar scenarios] may be part of a broader spectrum of postwar, everyday violence that includes family violence, criminal and gang violence, police corruption, and institutional discrimination.” (Boesten 2014, 5–9)

Changing economic roles and behavior among women also influence violence levels. In patriarchal societies like those of Latin America, women often tend to seek out men with greater power and social prestige, while the violence displayed by men in such conditions can also contribute to intensifying their relative power over women. (Baird No date, 18–20) As women in some sectors increasingly break out of traditional gender roles by working outside the home, they acquire jobs, income, and power that shifts the power dynamics between them and the men in their lives—sometimes provoking violent responses from men, as noted by Barker above. The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, for example, identified the breakdown of traditional gender relations as women move out of the domestic sphere into paid work in maquiladoras and other entry-level urban employment (Jusidman and Marín 2010; Sanford 2008, 104–9) as an important factor in the increase in **femicides**. INCIDE’s report on Ciudad Juarez provides a detailed historicized account detailing how socioeconomic and political transformations in men’s and women’s roles and living patterns, as well as other factors, stimulate both social and gender violence in that city. (Jusidman and Marín 2010)

Parental violence toward children

Parental violence toward children, as noted above, is the most widespread form of domestic violence in Latin America and globally—and the most invisible. A total of 80 to 90 percent of children worldwide have suffered physical punishment in their homes, and one-third have experienced severe punishment from the use of an implement (UNICEF 2006). The violence suffered by children in Latin America confirms—and in some cases surpasses—these estimates:

- 35.6 percent of parents interviewed in El Salvador admitted having hit their child with an object in the previous week; (Hume 2007)
- Eighty percent of parents in favelas in Rio de Janeiro surveyed by Promundo believed that physical punishment of children was legitimate, and 35 percent of their children had been physically abused by their parents in the previous three months; (Barker et al. 2010)
- Between 47 and 84 percent of children surveyed in eight marginal communities in Honduras reported that family violence was the most important negative influence in their lives. (FORPAZ 2014)

The link between domestic violence against children and youth and the phenomenon of youth violence and gang membership has been amply documented, forcing “youth to the street, where they also find a hostile environment that far from offering them support, reinforces violent linkages.” (Smutt and Miranda 1998, 171) In Mexico, for example, almost half of a sample of adolescents detained in Mexican prisons for major crimes reported having suffered violence in their homes. (Azaola 2015)

Drug and alcohol use

Domestic and public violence are also exacerbated by increased alcohol and drug use, which are both cause and effect of the processes of social stress addressed in this report. Alcohol use especially continues to be seen as “normal” by many Latin Americans, which can render its effects relatively invisible. However, multiple analyses conclude that alcohol and drugs are among the major contributors to violence in the region. Five percent of all deaths are alcohol-related, and it is the single leading risk factor for both disability and illness in lower- and middle-income countries, while ranking fifth globally. The relative effects of alcohol consumption depend both on drinking patterns and consumption levels, which vary significantly from country to country.

While some countries have relatively low consumption levels—Bolivia, Guyana, and Nicaragua, for example—the ways in which people drink are highly hazardous. In general, drinking patterns are most dangerous in Central America and Mexico and least dangerous in the Caribbean countries, contributing directly to domestic violence, marital and financial problems, child abuse, violent behavior outside the home, as well as a range of high-risk behaviors, including

unsafe sex and the use of other psychoactive substances. Binge drinking and other particularly hazardous patterns are particularly high among young people. (PAHO 2007, 3–5) Central Americans also suffer the highest levels of alcohol-related mortality—perhaps due to compromised health and nutritional status or to high-intensity binge drinking. (WHO 2014) In a 2004 survey, Guatemalan women said that drinking was the most important form of violence in their lives, and associated alcohol with sixteen different kinds of violence, ranging from inside the home to workplaces and the community. (Moser and McIlwaine 2004)

Despite the fact that drug use remains relatively low in Latin America (3–5 percent), surveys show that it is among the top factors blamed for violence, along with fights, robberies, and gangs. (Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 22) National averages mask dramatic internal differences in various countries. For example, while drug use in certain Colombian cities was between 40 and 60 percent of the local population, and 10 to 20 percent in Guatemala City in 2004, usage in some rural areas was insignificant. Use of some drugs, however, is increasingly stimulated by their low cost in comparison with alcohol, and by local drug-trafficking organizations, which, because they are paid in kind, depend partly on resales to generate earnings. Groups with relatively high levels of tolerance for drug use in Colombia also tended to have positive perceptions of drug traffickers. (Moser and McIlwaine 2004)

Transformation of family and social structures

How the breakdown of traditional social systems over past decades contributes to rising social violence has been amply recognized, well before the intensification of urbanization. In the 1960s, for example, Nash found that as communal structures of belief and local systems of social checks and balances were weakening in one indigenous community, people increasingly resorted to individualized means of social control, including homicide. (Nash 1967) Today, however, with 80 percent of Latin Americans living in urban areas, historic family and community relations, which were once based on agrarian peasant social structures, have been definitively transformed.

Many of the macro-level processes described above have contributed in complex and interactive ways to shaking family structures and economies. These include the disorderly forces of urbanization, rising education levels combined with shrinking livelihood options, the lack of basic public services, migration, illicit trade and economic liberalization, and increased access to mass media, which has increased public exposure—but not always access—to the privileges and consumption patterns of both legal and illegal elites, both regionwide and internationally.

People with radically different levels of privilege and access live in contiguous urban spaces, but in great isolation from each other. The luxuries and benefits enjoyed by privileged groups are routinely in evidence through the media and by walking down the street. They contribute to extravagant new models of consumerism manifested in different ways among diverse social sectors. These are visible in styles of architecture, cars, dress, jewelry, and leisure activities, as is detailed below.³⁰

An intensified “generation gap” between parents and children is evident in many studies, and is linked to an increase in tensions and the breakdown of family relations. National and international migration can undermine parental legitimacy and authority as young people adapt to life in new contexts more rapidly and often develop identities that are radically different from those of their elders. (Pottinger 2005; Clark 2009) Parents’ authority is shaken when their offsprings’ livelihoods no longer depend on community and/or family-based pursuits, and because youth are quicker to adapt to new scenarios than their elders. (McIlwaine and Moser 2004) Higher educational levels among younger people—even in countries where the reach of state-sponsored education remains relatively weak—also tend to further distance them from less educated parents and grandparents. (Green 2003) However, reduced livelihood options for young people who have gone through school have also reduced interest in education and have increased young people’s vulnerability to illicit trade. (Jusidman 2010; Jusidman and Marín 2010) These dynamics have contributed to increased levels of fear among parents about their children, which in some cases has led to authoritarian and violent forms of parental and community-backed disciplinary efforts. (Adams 2015)

In rural areas, the crisis of traditional agriculture brought on by the deregulation of international food commodities forces youth to find other work, for which they sometimes earn more than their parents. (Dickens and Fischer 2006; Offit and Clark 2010; Green 2003) Some observers note that young people often scorn their elders, and that some parents see their children as a “lost generation.” Others describe parents and children who have ceased to have life goals in common, which in previous times were critical unifying factors. (Foxen 2010) New information technologies further exacerbate these tensions. Although young people’s high skill levels with new technologies are undoubtedly an asset, they can also contribute to undermining the authority of their elders and increasing their vulnerability to illegal networks and the perverse social values that are associated with them. (Martín-Barbero 2002)³¹ As young people struggle to find their way in dangerous settings as international migrants or in urban or rural communities that have been infiltrated by criminal groups, illicit actors can come to inspire more respect than relatively less-experienced parents.³²

Some researchers exploring family relations in marginal urban settlements conclude that as institutions, families are more effective in rural areas than in urban areas, despite their often rigid hierarchical nature. (Gayle et al. 2007) However, others show that the breakdown of traditional roles and relations is also acutely felt in rural areas.³³ INCIDE’s study in four Mexican cities shows how the macro-level violence drivers described above—plus various national-level dynamics—contributed to transforming family and rising violence. They show an increased incidence of divorce, women heads-of-households, and recomposed families; a decrease in nuclear families; and increased domestic and gender-based violence, both inside and outside the home. Decreases in actual earnings during recent decades have forced more women especially into the workforce and have increased the number of jobs that all wage-earners need to survive. Chaotic

urbanization patterns and a lack of social services have reduced both informal and formal support for raising families, while children spend more time at home unattended and women have less time to care for their families and themselves. (Jusidman 2010; Jusidman and Marín 2010)

Individual and collective traumatization

Diverse studies reviewed concur that the most vulnerable to long-term traumatization in such circumstances are those who have fewer social protections: lower socio-economic status, lower educational levels, and weaker support networks. Women—especially single and widowed women—are more vulnerable than men. Children are the most vulnerable of all because of the particularly powerful effects of trauma during this critical developmental stage. While the proportion of people who suffer traumatization in conditions of chronic violence will obviously vary, the following findings provide some idea of its potential magnitude.

- Eighteen percent of unaccompanied Central American migrant children detained at the U.S. border in 1990 had PTSD. Fifty percent had symptoms of stress-related psychiatric disorders consistent with those described by Van der Kolk and colleagues. On average the children had suffered four traumatizing events in their homes or communities before leaving, and four more during their journey to the U.S. (Rodríguez et al. 1990)
- Fifty percent of children exposed to diverse levels of war-time violence in El Salvador still displayed nine major symptoms of PTSD five years later. (Walton et al. 1997) His findings were consistent with those of a world-wide study on the impact of war on children. (Parson 2000)
- Fifteen to 20 percent of humanitarian workers in Guatemala and teachers in El Salvador working in high violence settings suffered long-term effects of traumatization. (Currier et al. 2013; Rojas Flores et al. 2015; Roland et al. 2014)
- Twenty-five percent of Peruvian indigenous people who suffered traumatization during Peru's internal armed conflict continued to display symptoms ten years after the war's end. This figure coincides with the proportion of other traumatized groups studied elsewhere who continue to display symptoms over the longer term. (Pederson et al. 2008)

The long term impacts of collective violence appear to be more devastating than other forms of collective traumatization:

- Between 17 and 38 percent of people exposed to political (collective) violence in Colombia may suffer long term traumatization, according to three studies. (Pérez Olmos et al. 2005; Pineda et al. 2002; and Sistiva-Castro and Sabatier 2005, all cited in Norris 2009)
- Ten to 20 percent of those exposed to natural disasters in several Latin American countries manifested PTSD in the first year post-disaster. However, while traumatization from

natural causes is generally lower than from social causes, it “may be considerably higher in sheltered, displaced, or high-risk populations who have particularly intense experiences or ongoing adversities.” (Norris 2009)

While collective traumatization of vulnerable populations is likely to have the most massive effects in circumstances of chronic violence, the traumatization of political leaders can also have devastating effects on those whom they govern. The findings of a recent conference on post-war trauma noted that leaders who have suffered traumatization themselves (in war or otherwise) are at risk of generating and perpetuating trauma and violence via the institutions they control and the decisions they make. (ISJR 2015, 15)

Because trauma is generated and perpetuated at every level of the system of human development as well as intergenerationally among people living in conditions of chronic violence, an ecological approach is required. (Elbedour et al. 1993) The potentially massive scale of the challenge and the essentially social nature of the “wounds” suggest that priority should be placed on socially oriented approaches to shore up family and community level protective mechanisms and the broader social fabric rather than on individualized approaches. (Parson 2000; Pederson et al. 2008; ISJR 2015)

IV. Contributors to Violence Reproduction in Social Relations

PROPOSITION 3:

Social relations become weakened and polarized when people live in conditions of chronic violence.

When people live in conditions of chronic violence, their social relations, behaviors, and attitudes suffer in consistent and interrelated ways. Many of these patterns underlie or overlap with changes in civic relations, attitudes, and behaviors, which will be discussed in Proposition 4, and build off of the intimate forms of violence described above. They occur mainly in Bronfenbrenner’s meso-system (primary relations) and exosystem (local/community relations and systems), and interact fluidly with both micro-level individual development and macro-level societal processes.

Social silence and amnesia

People living with the constant presence of violence tend to retreat into themselves, stick closer to home, and engage less with others (even within families)—except sometimes for a “safe” inner circle. **Social silence**, which until recently was most extensively documented as a protective

response in scenarios of armed conflict, increases and can appear as a kind of indifference or resigned acceptance, accompanied by constant low-level anxiety. One Salvadoran woman described it this way:

Learning how to live means only talking about good things—nothing dangerous. It is better not to talk about dangerous things because, in the first instance, you don't know who you are talking to, and another thing is that you can't do anything. If you speak just for the sake of it, when they look for revenge, how do you defend yourself? (Hume 2008a, 71–72)

Social silence is often associated with “**social forgetting or amnesia**”—the tendency to block out thoughts and awareness about threatening things that we cannot control. Illicit actors or others who gain power through violence also can impose silence from above, which can provoke tacit or overt complicity from those silenced. (Jimeno 2001, 221–38; Auyero 2000; Hume 2008a, 2008b; McDonald 2005)

Crime talk

“Crime talk”—that is, scripted and fear-driven popular exchanges about crime and violence—can proliferate in the vacuum left by silence, and is fed by sensationalist mass media and the state, as well as by neighborhood gossip. Crime talk has been shown to reproduce and circulate discriminatory stereotypes, stimulate scapegoating (usually of the weakest sectors), and spur increased segregation, stigmatization, and the negation of citizen rights—all of which can fuel further violence. (Caldeira 2000, 695ff; Offit and Cook 2010)

Formation of exclusive in-groups

In scenarios of chronic violence, people often gather into smaller, more exclusive, and “safer” in-groups, where “everyone knows everyone” and can unite behind clearly defined common interests. This exclusivist socialization strengthens what Putnam calls “bonding social capital” over “bridging social capital.” While it can be critical in providing protection or refuge that may be lacking in society at large, it is often constructed around “us vs. other” dichotomies, such as those associated with the survivalist patterns of thinking described by Hughes and Baylin above. Insiders bond in part by projecting unwanted qualities (for example, the blame for violence and wrongdoing) onto “others”—sometimes by creating myths that often distort or invert the realities of what is actually happening.

These formations take diverse forms. The intensification of ethnic identity can serve in this way, as a mechanism of collective self-protection. Another well-documented example is that of youth gangs, both in Latin America and the United States, which provide protection, structure, discipline, economic alternatives, and a sense of belonging for young people whose families and communities are unable to provide them. In Latin America, pentecostal churches, of both the Catholic and Protestant strains, also provide an unambiguous “safe haven” for people numbed by the ambiguities, uncertainties, and tension of chronic violence.³⁴

In Honduras and elsewhere in Central America, evangelical churches provide a safe refuge—acknowledged and respected by all sides—for gang members seeking to leave their organizations. (Wolseth 2008; Steigenga 2007; Perlman 2010; USAID 2006) In Peru and Guatemala, evangelical faith provides a “new beginning” for people in rural communities burdened with unspoken—and “unspeakable”—experiences of conflict, permits exoneration after inflicting certain types of violence, and promotes a “change in life” and the possibility of living more peacefully with their neighbors after conflict. (Adams 2012; Theidon 2004)

While evangelical churches can be particularly important spaces of social cohesion and organization in conflict-ridden communities, there is a correlation between pentecostal beliefs and the tendency to unquestioningly accept political authority. Millennialism and the charismatic act of speaking in tongues particularly appear to be consistent predictors of political quiescence across religious affiliations. (Steigenga 2007)

While the groupings just described differ dramatically in terms of their social orientation and effects, they share a critical quality of providing a safe haven to their members through a tight and exclusive community with clear rules and expectations, providing refuge from the uncertainties and insecurities of a hostile environment.³⁵ In Proposition 4, we will see how some protective groupings can evolve into parallel polities that contest state power—certain youth gangs and criminal organizations, for example.

Scapegoating and xenophobic attitudes

Scapegoating (rebellious youth, for example) and xenophobic attitudes against “others” (for example, youth, migrants, LGBT people, nonbelievers, and “foreigners”) are critical mechanisms in the construction and sustenance of these exclusivist insider/outsider dichotomies. (Adams 2012, 28) They enable people immersed in chronic violence to create dangerous new “commonsense” justifications for social values and actions like those described in the previous sections. Just as protesters were labeled “subversives” or “communists” in earlier decades,³⁶ political leaders and governments in many contemporary democracies use similar strategies to justify draconian hard-on-crime policies.

Throughout the region, fearful constructions of youth and other marginal groups, poverty, and violence sustain authoritarian and exclusionary politics, and nurture vicious cycles of mistrust, polarization, and repression.³⁷ These ills in turn stimulate a culture of victimhood, draconian state policies, and intensified social conflict and violence between accused and accusers. Intrinsic to the construction of the scapegoat or the xenophobic object is the conception of self as “victim”—even when the protagonist may be constructing a justification for violent action. Identification as a “victim” reduces one’s personal sense of responsibility, allays impotence and guilt, and masks the reality of the moral “grey zone,” in which both victim and perpetrator coincide and deeply influence and condition each other. These mechanisms permit people to distance themselves from notions of wrongdoing by shifting the blame to individuals or groups perceived as (often racialized) “others.” For example:

- In El Salvador, media and governmental scapegoating of one young gang leader provoked nationwide hysteria and support for hard-line policies, and the image of the “dangerous other” shifted from guerrillas and soldiers during the war to young people in peacetime. (Moodie 2009, 81–85)
- In rural Guatemala, Burrell (2010) notes how the scapegoating of young people denied those youth who were labeled *mareros* of their rights, justifies local violence, and undermines the ability of members of the community to imagine collective futures that include their young people.
- In another Salvadoran community, blaming “others” for wrongdoing enabled local residents to sustain a myth that “our community has always been perfectly safe,” even when some were being victimized by their own children and others were financing hit men to resolve interpersonal disputes. (Hume 2008a, 2008b)

Scapegoating and xenophobia are often generated, fed, and amplified by the mass media, which play a central role in formalizing the notion of these “others” as enemies, and in rooting these constructions as public “truths.” As Reguillo notes, “The media has given the [gang] a huge symbolic power which opens the door to fear, [as have] heavy-handed responses by the government without actually looking at the socioeconomic and political model that cultivate these forms of extreme identity.” (in Valenzuela Arce et al. 2007, 313)

“Social death,” social invisibility, and the perverse search for respect

The term “social death,” which was coined by Henrik Vigh, describes the experience of young men who grow up in socioeconomic circumstances deprived of the possibility to transition from adolescence to adulthood. While Vigh was writing from his observations of youth in Guinea Bissau, this concept also describes very well how many young men must live in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere in the world. (Vigh 2006, 104) The lack of decent work creates a “social moratorium,” blocking young men’s ability to become economically independent, marry, and form their own homes. In this liminal context, work in the informal sector, illicit trade, criminal pursuits, and migration become the obvious alternatives. For young women, the ability to bear a child provides a clearer path to adulthood and to combat the sense of being a “social zero.” However, this “advantage” is, of course, countered by the trap of unemployment, poverty, and low educational levels experienced by so many single and teenage mothers in scenarios of chronic violence.

A sense of hopelessness and valuelessness is reflected consistently in depictions of life in marginal communities and scenarios of long-term violence. Analysts describe people who feel like they are a “social zero,” who feel “invisible”—engulfed in “hopelessness, fatalism, despondency, resignation.” As a resident of a villa miseria in Buenos Aires expressed it: “Not even God remembers us.” (Auyero 2000; Adams 2012, 21–22; Koonings and Krujit 2007, 138)³⁸

This complex mix of impotence, shame, and entrapment can generate rage and a **perverse search for respect**, which can in turn become violent. Gilligan, working from his long experience with inmates in U.S. prisons, argues that the experiences of shame, humiliation, and violence are deeply intertwined:

[All acts of violence] are attempts to ward off or eliminate the feeling of **shame or humiliation**—a feeling that is painful, and can even be intolerable and overwhelming—and replace it with its opposite, the feeling of pride. (Gilligan 2009) (See the endnotes for more detail.)³⁹

Vallejo, in his novel *Virgen de los Sicarios*, described how this sense of invisibility and exclusion can become expressed through an inverted sense of morality and rage:

How can anyone murder for a pair of tennis shoes? you, a foreigner, ask. . . . “Mon cher ami,” it’s not because of the shoes. It’s about the principles of justice that we all believe in. The person who got mugged thinks it’s unfair that they robbed him because he paid for them; the one who robs him thinks it’s unfair that he doesn’t have a pair himself. (Vallejo 1994, 68)

Social stratification and symbolic dispossession

Social chasms within marginal communities also emerge—for example, between those who benefit from remittances or profit from illicit trade and those who do not. Such displays generate the “symbolic dispossession” of those outside these tiers and circles, constantly reminding them of what they lack. In Northern Mexico, for example, “narco-migrants” bought up ranches to buy respectability, financed the construction of new shopping malls where no one could afford to shop, and transformed the traditional cockfights from modest venues for local farmers into public spaces for displaying their wealth and power. These new patterns constantly reminded the local people of what they did not have, and increasingly became the model of what they wanted, spurring those who could to build houses on a whole new scale with the same opulent aesthetic modeled by the narco-migrants. (McDonald 2005)

Similarly, in a working-class neighborhood of Managua, local consumption patterns and the social imaginary were transformed as local gangs were absorbed into drug-trafficking networks. The narco-leaders set themselves apart with their multiple homes, expensive vehicles, and women. Pushers in the next tier down were recognizable through their extravagant homes and European brand name consumer goods, while local mules had to content themselves with house improvements and national brand name products. (Rodgers 2007) The following description from Colombia describes how these differences become internalized and normalized as a new social imaginary in the broader social sphere:

The aesthetic code of the drug trafficker in Colombia is part of its national identity: . . . ostentation, exaggerated, disproportionate, and laden with symbols that seek to confer status and legitimize violence. . . . [However] the narco-aesthetic in Colombia does not any longer belong

only to the drug trafficker, but forms part of popular taste, . . . ensuring its continuity through time and across cities. . . . No stronger system for social cohesion exists to provide an alternative to the model of the power and social justice that drug trafficking represents. (Cobo 2009)

Reactive/self-referential social interactions

Reactive/self-referential social interactions prevail over thoughtful and empathetic approaches. When fear and uncertainty prevail, the capacity for nuanced thinking as well as collective deliberation and decision making come under challenge neurologically, and these neurological responses can be reinforced by perverse social patterns. The range of socially destructive behaviors described in this section intensifies the reactive and self-protective behavior triggered both by the “fight-or-flight” response and traumatic experiences. The self becomes the primary focus; short-term, survival-driven tactics prevail over longer-term deliberation and strategy; empathetic capacity wanes; individual decision making takes precedence over collective processes; and more formalistic and scripted social interactions prevail—all of which can contribute to generating greater perceptions of violence and threat. As will be discussed in more detail in Sections VI and VII, this pattern is critical because it directly affects the “sense” that people make of the violence, which significantly influences their capacities to deal with it.

The “grey zone”

The normalization and increased social acceptance of violence and illegal or illicit practices in scenarios of long-term violence and repression was observed by Primo Levi during his internment in Auschwitz. “Grey zone” is his term to describe how—in conditions of extreme violence and fear, when everyone is focused on survival—the distinctions become blurred between moral and immoral, licit and illicit, right and wrong, and even between victim and perpetrator. (Levi 1998, 36–69)

The idea that chronic exposure to violence and the associated fear tends to corrupt people’s values and behavior is not always so evident to many policymakers and private citizens, especially in longstanding democracies. In an effort to understand why many of his readers in Western democracies were unable to understand why the prisoners at Auschwitz did not try to escape or rebel, Levi conjectured that in countries where elementary needs are satisfied,

people tend to experience freedom as a natural right; . . . the idea of imprisonment is firmly linked to the idea of flight or revolt; . . . escape [is] a moral duty and the obligatory consequence of captivity. . . . Like the nexus imprisonment–flight, the nexus oppression–rebellion is also a stereotype. . . . It is never the most oppressed individuals who stand at the head of movements.

The most oppressed people, he explained, lose so much of their fundamental humanity that strategically conceived and organized rebellion is impossible. (Levi 1998, 158–60)

Latin American scholars came to similar conclusions regarding life under authoritarianism. Questioning why his colleagues in Western democracies paid so little heed to the social effects

of fear, Corradi (writing long before 9/11) conjectured that “in the United States and other advanced industrial democracies, there is a marked reluctance to consider fear as something other than a personal emotion, and, hence, a phenomenon within the exclusive purview of psychology.” Along similar lines, he concluded that “free societies do suffer the occasional occurrence of collective frights or panics, but they do not know fear as the permanent and muffled undertone of life.” (Corradi et al. 1992, 1–2) These differences in worldview may further explain why the dynamics created by fear, repression, and violence have thus far received relatively so little attention from policymakers and practitioners. The increased social support and tolerance for violence linked to this dynamic are discussed in the next section.

V. Contributors to Violence Reproduction in Civic Relations and Attitudes toward Governance

PROPOSITION 4:

Chronic violence undermines the practice of civic relations and weakens social support for democracy.

This section describes a series of adaptive responses to violence that affect civic capacity and behavior, and appear consistently in the literature. While these patterns build on, and are sometimes inseparable from, the social tendencies described earlier in this report, they tend to occur in a broader range of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system: from the mesosystem (individual relations) and the exosystem (local/community relations and systems) to the macrosystem (regional and national). In such conditions, a major challenge becomes how to cultivate “proto-citizenship.”

Reconfiguration of public and private spaces

Hand in hand with increasing social isolation, the intensification of bonding over bridging social capital, and other dynamics described in the previous section, public and private spaces undergo significant reconfiguration, as is well described in this depiction of the transformation of one Puerto Rican community:

As crime increased, . . . the wealthy of Ponce moved to spacious suburban dwellings, . . . abandoning the public spaces once used by all. . . . Open and public spaces, provided and monitored by the city, now are used mostly by the poor. The city’s public spaces and private clubs denote the deep chasm between rich and poor, regarded as so natural now that few even mention it. . . . Ponce created and maintains, a city of segregated and class-designated

spaces: one composed of house and club gardens, with protected mangoes and orchid; the other comprises concrete basketball courts and noisy public spaces [of] “unwholesomeness and dirt.” (Dinzey-Flores 2013, 120)

All over Latin America, **gated and walled communities** with private security effectively isolate the upper and middle classes from others, as Caldeira describes:

Closed condominiums, the new type of fortified elite housing, are not places people walk or even simply pass by. They are meant to be distant, to be approached only by car and then only by their residents. . . . They are turned inward, away from the street, whose public life they explicitly reject. They are controlled by armed guards and security systems, which enforce rules of inclusion and exclusion . . . [and] are the residential version of a broader category of new urban developments that I call fortified enclaves . . . that include office complexes, shopping centers, etc. that are all private property for collective use. . . . People who inhabit these spaces value living among selected people (considered to be of the same social group) and away from the undesired interactions, movement, heterogeneity, danger, and unpredictability of urban streets. (Caldeira 2000, 258)

In Managua, Rodgers notes that this segregation was reinforced through a network of high-speed highways that link “archipelagos” of gated neighborhoods of upper- and middle-class people with each other and with key commercial districts—overlaid on a city of working-class and low-income people living in marginal communities. (Rodgers 2007)

Poorer populations have less capacity to protect themselves from the criminal groups that have asserted increasing control over marginal and working-class communities, although they also increasingly live and work behind barred windows and doors, blocking off entrances into neighborhoods or communities where possible, and abandoning the streets and other public spaces. Residents of marginal settlements in Buenos Aires, for example, describe living both in growing fear and isolation from each other as well as from outsiders—cab drivers, ambulances, and commercial suppliers who no longer want to risk coming into the community. (Auyero 2000) The abandonment of public spaces undermines the social infrastructure for civic action because it can “diminish socializing among friends and relatives, reduce membership in community organizations, weaken trust among neighbors, and erode community unity,” severely reducing traditional practices of mutual aid. (Perlman 2010, 298)

Citizen security commissions

In some rural communities and urban neighborhoods, citizen security commissions have emerged and function with diverse degrees of legality. These range from informal night watch groups to those catalyzed by international funding and/or government authorization. Some patrol without arms, while others use them with or without government authorization. Early

versions of such groups began in Colombia in the 1970s and evolved into paramilitary organizations. Later dismantled, they subsequently resurged, often linked to criminal organizations.

In Peru, groups called *serenazgos* have to a large extent supplanted the role of local police in providing community security, although their effectiveness is limited by the insufficient support received from police and higher-level law enforcement agencies. (Costa, cited by Basombrío et al. 2013, 79–102)⁴⁰ In Guatemala, although the government authorized citizen security commissions in 2007, these groups have been left largely to fend for themselves, due to inadequate intermediate-level law enforcement and judicial capacity. Some have resorted to violent de facto measures, such as illegal detentions, lynchings, and/or social cleansing (Rodas 2012). Some entities, mobilized by the fears of parents and community authorities about how to control young people whose behavior has transgressed locally acceptable bounds, employ authoritarian and violent measures, spurring the youth to seek refuge in local youth gangs or via migration. (Adams 2015)

Direct justice

Direct justice becomes a default solution when the state proves incapable of providing security to its citizens. **Lynching**—a collective act that can involve hundreds of people—has become a significant recourse in some countries. In Bolivia and Guatemala, for example, it is used by groups with strong ethnic or local identity and cohesion, a high incidence of crime, and weak rule of law. (Mendoza 2007) It has increased in other circumstances as well—for example, in marginal communities in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. In Bolivia, Goldstein interprets lynching as a perverse moral complaint expressed by populations that consider themselves to be “defenseless victims.” (Goldstein 2003)⁴¹

In his analysis of lynchings in two postwar rural communities of Guatemala, Falla writes that they emerged as a cathartic solution to a growing “psychosis” of fear provoked by repeated hold-ups of cars, the rapes of young women, and the desperation and fury provoked by the unresponsiveness of local authorities. He details the extensive community-wide organization required to carry out the killings, and notes that various participants (who also portrayed themselves as “victims”) justified these actions as “object lessons” for young people—as a way to teach them not to use drugs or drink or rob. (Falla 2006, 338–48)

In other areas, individual **revenge killings** or for-hire killings of suspected wrongdoers can flare into scenarios of high violence. In a rural community in eastern Guatemala, for example, “eye for eye” homicides increased dramatically in the postwar period at a time when criminal organizations began to exercise increasing control in the region. (Metz et al. 2010)

In several countries of the region—such as Brazil, the Northern Triangle of Central America, and Mexico—the “**social cleansing**” of children and young people in marginal communities by both

private groups and state security forces have been extensively reported. The international president of Covenant House reported in 2012 that over 6,000 children had been killed in Honduras in the previous 15 years, and that the national security forces were suspected in about one-third of those cases.⁴² Recent analyses from El Salvador also report the social cleansing of gang members by groups associated with the national police in the wake of the collapse of the gang truce in early 2014. In December 2015, El Salvador's human rights ombudsman, David Morales, presented the findings of a study on abuses reportedly committed by the state security forces, noting that 92 percent of the human rights complaints over the previous year had been against the national police, the army, and other state institutions responsible for combatting crime. In 2013 in Brazil, at least 2,212 people were killed by the police, according to independent monitors, although the number is likely to be substantially higher because several states do not keep records of killings by police. (Romero et al. 2015)

Private security guard industry

Middle- and upper-middle-class people as well as working-class communities have increasingly sought out protection from the private security guard industry. These private guards—most of whom are armed, and many of whom are illegal—now outnumber police in virtually every country of the region. This occurs on a scale ranging from 1.2 to 1 in Chile to 4 to 1 in Guatemala and El Salvador. (Basombrío 2012; Guillén 2005; Mendoza et al. 2003)⁴³ A recent study of security guards indicate that this work is held in relatively low status by guards and their families, as working conditions are often brutal and short term. However, it can imbue rural men migrating into urban areas with broadened capabilities to negotiate in complex urban spaces and a heightened sense of masculinity associated mainly with carrying a gun—an example of the construction of the “hypermasculinity” discussed above. (Dickins de Girón 2011, 105–23) The effects of these dynamics on the role of these men in the domestic sphere and the potential links between work as guards and recruitment into gangs or organized criminal groups would be important to explore in specific analyses.

Illicit nonstate entities with para-state powers

All the dynamics just described are facets of a major trend prevailing in scenarios of chronic violence—the tendency for nonstate entities to fill the vacuum by assuming para-state powers. (Watson 2007) On the far end of this continuum is the control that some drug trafficking organizations come to exercise—such as La Familia in Michoacán today, or Pablo Escobar at the height of his power in Colombia. The relative security and peaceful living conditions that such groups can provide to specific communities is sometimes referred to as “narco-peace”; they essentially govern the community or region, providing goods, services, and security that is not forthcoming from the government itself, as noted in this report on a Mexican community:

“They’re a second law,” said a schoolteacher in Zitácuaro. . . . “Maybe the first law. If you need to collect a debt, you go to them. They’ll charge you a fee, but you’ll get your money. The police work for them. When they arrest people, they don’t take them to police headquarters but to La Familia.” (Finnegan 2010)

Given their illegal status and increasingly high level of conflict with state forces, such organizations are often both occupier and benefactor. Violence remains the fundamental tool of social control, and the social rights and freedoms of people under their power exist in service of their interests. Nonetheless, these entities can enjoy significant social legitimacy through the services they provide and the Robin Hood–like ideologies they sometimes profess, which can resonate powerfully with the social exclusion experienced by members of the communities where they operate. (Rodgers 2006; Leeds 1996, 68; Salazar 2001)

Gangs—from youth organization to criminal networks

Youth gangs have a long history in Latin America, and they have multiple and diverse roots in the societies in which they develop. The social-ecological explanation for gangs conceives of them as a partial replacement for crucial social institutions—such as the family, school, and labor market—which the poverty and administrative breakdown characterizing slums and inner cities have weakened or rendered dysfunctional. Cohen, Miller, and others coming out of the Chicago School saw them as examples of forms of resistance to limited or “blocked” opportunities. (Cohen 1955; Miller 1958) Both notions complement and fuel the dynamics of “social death” described above.

In a review of the literature about gangs throughout Latin America in 1999, Rodgers advanced a definition that reflects basic commonalities for a range of entities that display enormous variety. Gangs, he suggested, are self-formed groups of socially recognized youth who

- consider themselves to be a distinct group;
- are generally perceived as a specific social aggregation by others;
- are bound together by shared values; and
- are collectively associated with illegal and violent behavior, both in practice and in general perception. (Rodgers 1999, 1–4)⁴⁴

Beyond these basics, however, gangs continue to be enormously heterogeneous, making it critical in each case to understand the group in its historical and geographical context, and to identify what particular dynamics actually characterize and drive it as it evolves over time. As Rodgers points out, some gangs are more political in tone, others are more concerned with the accumulation of wealth, still others are more closely tied to criminal networks, some are more protective, and others are more predatory with respect to their own communities. (Rodgers 1999, 2)

Brazilian gangs date back to organizations formed in the nineteenth century, but the most powerful ones evolved as criminal organizations in the national prisons in the 1970s and 1980s, expanding later onto the streets and developing links with Colombian drug cartels and national gambling racketeers. In Argentina, gangs were functioning as early as the 1960s in Córdoba, and were at-

tributed to the social disorganization of slums and the social exclusion suffered by the young people in relationship to Argentine society. In Colombia, some gangs linked up with drug cartels by the 1970s, with which they operated as sicarios—at first in order to support themselves and their families. Subsequently, however, “death became an expectation, almost an aim.” (Rodgers 1999, 8)

The evolution of gang members to the point where they consider death to be an expectation has also occurred in Guatemala. A government study in the 1990s concluded that gangs were a phenomenon of social protest—“composed of young people who seemed to be more or less ‘normal,’ except that they were better educated than most city youth, they stole goods, and moved within milieus of their own creation. . . . [The studies] concluded by defining the Maras as a ‘phenomenon of organized protest.’” (Levenson 2011, 60) By the late 1990s, however, Levenson reported that “some of these youth may not be violent, but their preoccupation with violence and with death and their crimes against ordinary people alert us to a world in deep trouble.” (Levenson 2011, 130)

What can account for the fact that in Guatemala, El Salvador, Brazil, and elsewhere, young people in gangs today are dedicating their lives to violence, social destruction (including that of their own communities), and death—including, for many, their own? In previous pages, we have described a number of factors that may contribute—inhuman living conditions in urban areas; a lack of prospects for decent livelihoods; the perverse effects of incarceration; the stresses put on families by migration; the power of drug trafficking organizations; the traumatic effects of chronic exposure to violence on children. However, the specifics need to be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

As various scholars note, in many countries of the region—in the context of rising everyday violence and generalized insecurity—the image of gangs have become a potent social symbol of everything people are afraid of, and hate. In the wake of the armed conflict in El Salvador and Guatemala, for example, gangs emerged as a “catchall, in many ways, for the anxieties and differences” among youth, parents, and elders nationwide. (Burrell 2013, 139) At the national level, they became identified as the new “national enemy,” replacing the “communists” of earlier times. This gangs’ image evolved through the interaction of the fear-based and aggressive actions of local authorities and citizens; hard-line national and international policies and practices; fear-mongering by the mass media; and, more recently, the increasingly militarized dynamics of transnational criminal networks that have incrementally instrumentalized some gangs for their purposes. (Moodie 2009; Ziberg 2007; Levenson 2013; Burrell 2010)

A gang member who spoke to a researcher in 2007 expressed it this way:

I mean, I don't think about reincorporating myself into society. Since I am being marginalized, I marginalize them too, you know what I mean? Everything I give is negative, and everything they give me is negative too. . . . I am telling you, in the beginning, when we get into a gang, we look at the rest of the world with indifference. Because in any case, they have closed the door

on us, so we close ourselves into a corner where we just defend what is ours. Then we begin to have problems with the law and other people who resent us for taking things. . . . Because during the whole time that one is in a gang, one comes to hate everyone for the way we are discriminated against, do you get it? (Tobar 2007, 46; author's translation)

Licit forms of nonstate governance

To complete this complex picture of the diverse entities that “act like a state,” it is important to note the role of two other kinds of entities that coexist with those mentioned above. The role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies in providing state-like social services is important to identify and explore—although they obviously operate in very different ways and under different constraints than the illicit groups described above. Their relative power and legitimacy can be an important factor in the analysis of popular perceptions of the state and the ways that people cope with this vacuum.

Finally, in various countries of the region—Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Brazil, for example—aboriginal peoples and a few other historical groups continue to operate their own traditional justice systems in what can often be uncomfortable relationship with national judicial systems and other nonstate governance entities. The resurgence of indigenous (or “traditional”) law in these countries occurs at a time when the state's rule of law has become increasingly privatized and fragmented—and, in some cases, when organized crime has effectively colonized parts of the state apparatus. Hence, these new systems exist in a “kaleidoscope of legal, semi-legal, and illegal orders—or sovereignties in contention,” opening the door to potential conflicts that neither the state nor communities may have the capacity to constructively mediate or resolve. (Sieder 2011, 7–8)

Public support and tolerance for violence

Public support and tolerance for violence grows when states prove incapable of containing violence, as does support for measures that can endanger democratic governance. Examining opinion poll data from the Americas Barometer (LAPOP), Cruz concluded that

support for the break with democracy due to criminal violence is the highest in precisely those countries where violence is a serious problem. In no other circumstance or country is there so much support for a break with democracy as in those countries where violence prevails. (Cruz 2008, 240)

[The impact of violence on the social support for democracy, therefore] is not related only to the prevalence of crime and insecurity but above all to the conditions that erode the legitimacy of the institutions in charge of providing security. . . . [As result, people] detach themselves from democratic values, ignore the rule of law, and support authoritarian alternatives. . . . Violence is pernicious to the frail path to democratization in the Central American countries because it can destroy the infrastructure of legitimacy that is necessary for new regimes. (Cruz 2006, 241–42)

Opinion polls on Colombia, Guatemala, and other countries with high levels of violence, corroborate Cruz's argument—demonstrating the high levels of support for violence:

In Medellín:

- 70 percent approve of killing someone who raped their daughter;
- 71.9 percent approve of the use of violence for family or for political or economic gain;
- 38.4 percent approve of eliminating someone who poses a threat to the community;
- 42.5 percent approve of using violence in defense of the community; and
- 26.8 percent approve of social cleansing. (Duque et al. 2010, 71–73)

In Guatemala:

- 48.8 percent approve of taking justice into their own hands;
- 56 percent would approve of a coup d'état under conditions of high crime; and
- 39.2 percent approve of (authoritarian) *mano dura* government policies (social cleansing, gang roundups, etc.). (Azpuru 2010)

Corruption—institutionalization of the “grey zone”

The blurring of right/wrong, moral/immoral, and state/nonstate are fundamental dynamics of corruption. How might the more socially contextualized framework advanced here shed new light on the challenge of corruption? We look here at the case of Mexico, for which a team of social scientists published a national-level analysis of corruption that provides an historicized and multidisciplinary perspective on the evolution and dynamics that drive this phenomenon there. Lomnitz-Adler summarizes the challenge faced in his country as follows. The phenomenon is often attributed to the “culture of corruption” that dates back to the colonial period, and was fed by the distance between the king of Spain and the local authorities. However, as Lomnitz-Adler points out, the kinds of practices that existed in New Spain also existed in many other countries—including England, Italy, and Chile. Why do none of them suffer the problem to the same degree as in Mexico today? He points to four factors.

First, the historical weakness of the Mexican state is a major contributor, which obligated Mexican citizens to resolve issues, both large and small, through informal means. Second, between one-third and two-thirds of the Mexican population depends for their livelihood on the informal economy—in which, by definition, their activities occur at the margin of the law. The only way to function in such an economy is through acts of corruption—both large

and small. Third, a relatively small percentage of the population actually pays taxes. As Lomnitz-Adler points out, it is impossible to demand civic responsibility from those who do not pay taxes—“you get what you pay for.”

Fourth and finally comes the politics of drugs and arms control of the United States. The Mexican border witnesses the heaviest international traffic in the world—one that is based on enormous economic differences between the two countries. If laws tighten on one side, some activities move across the border where regulations are looser. Because the United States only minimally regulates arms sales, Mexico has relatively little power to control their flow into the country. If U.S. citizens provide an enormous market for illegal drugs, the Mexican government is hard-pressed to control the engagement of its citizens in this enterprise. From country to country and region to region, the particular dynamics that drive corruption will of course vary. However, analyses like these that take into account the broad range of factors that contribute to the problem are essential for building more effective strategies than prevail at present. (Lomnitz-Adler 2014)

Public distrust in the state

Public distrust in the state and perception of the state as “enemy” also grows in such circumstances, both because the state fails to protect people and because weak states can also be predatory. The Americas Barometer and a wide range of local surveys conducted over many years have documented how across the continent, “breakdowns—real or perceived—of rule of law in the realms of judicial institutions, crime, and corruption appear to erode support for the rule of law among citizens,” causing them to support authorities that eschew the law in their efforts to apprehend criminals. (Seligson et al. 2012, 199–200) The Americas Barometer’s 2012 report concluded that “there is fertile ground among the publics of the Americas for leaders to install regimes that fall well short of the liberal democratic ideals of highly contested and broadly inclusive political processes.” (Seligson et al. 2012, 210)

In general, it appears that national political institutions are more distrusted than local governments. In 2012, for example, regionwide, national institutions were trusted by only half the population, while local governments fared significantly better; in 2012, 44 percent said they were neither good nor bad, 30.7 percent that they were good or very good, and only 24.5 percent that they were bad or very bad. (Seligson et al. 2012, 199–212) The ethnographic reports cited in Proposition 4 corroborate these findings with detailed descriptions of how citizens who live with high levels of violence perceive the state. Rodgers, for example, coined the notion of “state as gang” to characterize this trend in Nicaragua (Rodgers 2006), while Reguillo reports that chronic violence produces a

sense of abandonment and defenselessness [that] . . . finds its greatest expression in the figure of the politician. . . . Instead of protecting and providing, [these actors] threaten and rob, [and] are perceived as the main persons responsible for what the participants call ‘social chaos.’” (Reguillo 2002, 189)

Popular opposition to due process and human rights

Popular opposition to due process and human rights, which are fundamental tenets of democracy, also grows in these scenarios. (Sieder 2008, 85) Nonetheless, national and international policymakers, civil society leaders, intellectuals, and political elites have been slow to recognize and address the public skepticism about due process and human rights that can grow alongside support for hard-line policies that target gangs, migrants, and other marginal groups. (Koonings and Kruijt 2007) A total of 75 percent of Salvadorans, for example, approved of the hard-line policies that illegally targeted gang members in 2005, resulting in the arrest of 19,000 young people—91 percent of which were later determined to be legally unwarranted. (Cáceres, WOLA, and El Faro, cited by Moodie 2009, 83–85, 99)

Support for human rights can waver because, in circumstances of consistent state incapacity or dysfunction, people learn that their own **human rights are ephemeral or ignored**. (Burrell 2010, 96) One classic example is the outrage felt by community members who, victimized by a local thief or extortionist, turn him in to the authorities—only to see the suspect released a few days later on grounds of insufficient evidence. Migrants quickly learn that they “move in and out of rights” as Burrell has expressed it. (Burrell 2010) They pass from being citizens (although facing high levels of social exclusion at home) to becoming undocumented migrants with no legal rights, and subject to contradictory state action in the United States. Similarly, young people who move from their homes and classrooms into gangs, or who are vulnerable to social cleansing operations simply because they are young, perceive the ephemeral nature of their civil and human rights (Burrell 2010; Ziberg 2004; Acosta 2011). (See other reflections on effects on due process and human rights in the endnotes.)⁴⁵

As noted above, in contexts where people do not experience local or national governments as providing them with basic justice, other mechanisms and logics of justice emerge. Thus, alongside the mechanisms of direct justice described in the previous section, recurrence to **divine justice** also appears consistently in the literature. In our study of a Guatemalan rural community, informants talked about justice as something provided by the divine as well as something provided by the community itself, but virtually never as a service to be expected from the national government. As a resident of Apatzingán, Mexico, said to a reporter about the violence unleashed by drug traffickers in his community: “The government won’t protect you—only God can calm these storms.” (Partlow 2013, 22) Divine justice is also invoked by gang members in Honduras, drug traffickers in Mexico, and community members in Bolivia and Brazil that justify taking action into their own hands. Pentecostal churches, as noted above, also offer a clear ideology of divine justice that can be particularly powerful for such populations.

Citizen as “victim” and the limits to the “rights” agenda

The behaviors described in this and the previous two sections are a complex mix of aversive and aggressive acts, some of which can occur in association with contradictory feelings. These in-

clude shame or guilt for having acted with violence or rage and/or feelings of impotence because of the inability to protect oneself or someone else. These difficult feelings may help to explain the propensity for people living in conditions of long-term violence to consider themselves (passive) “victims.” As noted above, this notion, for example, crops up in the justification of people who have participated in lynching: “No one is here to protect us, so we had to act.”

Certainly, identifying oneself as “victim” helps to override feelings of guilt, impotence, and remorse for violent actions or omissions. Seeing oneself in this way, however, also brings with it a notion of oneself as passive and incapable of action—quite distant from the idea that one would be responsible for oneself and for others. If we think of citizenship as being composed of responsibilities and rights, responsibilities clearly must exist in order to be able to construct “rights.” This provokes questions about the wisdom of emphasizing “human rights”-based advocacy when working with people in scenarios where human rights are, in fact, chronically “ephemeral” or effectively nonexistent.

Might such conditions instead call for invoking people to exercise fundamental human responsibility for themselves and for others—i.e., the community? Might this shift in emphasis make possible the construction of a more socially rooted practice of proto-citizenship, i.e., citizen-like behavior in conditions in which the state does not (for whatever reason) provide security nor ensure basic citizen rights?

What are the prospects for social action in contexts of chronic violence?

While international aid agencies and philanthropic organizations continue to assume that citizen-led development and grassroots participation are fundamental underpinnings for democracy, development, and the prevention of violence, little attention has been paid to what happens to such processes in contexts of chronic violence. The Development Research Centre, in a massive ten-year study of 150 organizations, found that citizen action becomes most constructive in promoting good governance through strategies that involve both state and society. The report argues that six factors can make the difference between successful and failed citizen action:

- the nature of the institutional and political environment;
- the existence of prior civic and organizational experience;
- access to internal (state) champions;
- the ability to work in ways that are historically and culturally resonant;
- the ability to choose appropriate issues and frame them effectively; and
- the ability to work in a coordinated, multifaceted, multilevel ways.⁴⁶

When the state cannot protect its citizens from everyday violence, however, the report concludes that “civic engagement can lead to disempowerment, more clientelistic practices, a less responsive state and an increasingly divided society.” (DRC 2011) Citizen groups often have difficulty expanding beyond the grassroots level, and may cope through some of the mechanisms discussed in this report, including

- withdrawal into partial citizenship or self-censorship, withdrawal from public spaces and facilities, leaving them to illicit actors;
- peaceful coexistence with violent actors; and/or by
- the establishment of parallel governance or security structures. (DRC 2011, 33–34)

For example, leaders who try to maintain autonomy in communities that have come under the control of criminal groups can become vulnerable to being co-opted, immobilized or eliminated. Twenty-five community leaders in Rio de Janeiro, for example, were targeted by drug trafficking organizations between 1987 and 1995, and over 800 were killed in the next nine years. (Leeds 2006) Organizations in Central America describe being extorted by gangs to hand over funds received from international aid organizations. The infiltration or cooptation of NGOs or community-level grassroots organizations by illicit forces, already occurring, may increase as international aid wanes in countries that are highly dependent on it. (Leeds 1996, 2006; Adams 2011) Some organizations may be more resilient than others in such circumstances, however. Moser and McIlwaine found that organizations that provide direct relief survive longer and retain more legitimacy than others—for example, women’s organizations, child care centers, Alcoholics Anonymous, and evangelical churches. (Moser and McIlwaine 2006)

The chronic difficulties that weak and fragile states have in providing adequate security for their citizens calls into question the wisdom of top-down approaches to reducing violence, and reaffirms the importance of placing a priority on bottom-up efforts rooted in the vulnerable groups or communities themselves. (DRC 2011, 33–35) While the DRC project provides one set of elements required to make such organizations successful, various forms of these criteria presuppose the existence of a functioning state. Other analytical approaches focus more on the existing capacity of communities or micro-level groups—including “community assets,” the capacity for “collective efficacy,” and “resilience.” However, each of these processes for building micro-level power, as the authors citing them carefully note, can have both constructive and destructive consequences for the quality of social and civic efforts.

Bronfenbrenner’s notion of “thriving,” defined above, describes a series of processes that should be present if a group or community is developing adequately. These include the flourishing of individuals and families; their development as increasingly inclusive social and civic

participants; and the evolution of an enhanced capacity for reflective action. Among the indicators that could be used to measure such processes are

- progressive reduction in the indices of traumatic childhood and adult experiences;
- progressive improvement in standard measures of human development;
- the group's increasing understanding of its social and civic conditions—and its challenges, needs, and capacities; and
- growth in the group's breadth, density, inclusiveness, and diversity, and the extent of social and civic relations and practices.

Along with the challenges for effective action faced by groups living in contexts of chronic violence, there are also the challenges that may exist in the interactions between local organizations and the professional NGOs that are often the intermediaries between these groups and international and national funders.

Until the 1970s, Latin American civil society organizations were mainly grassroots groups with minimal resources and high levels of popular legitimacy (even in deeply polarized societies). However, the NGOs that have flourished since the democratic transitions of recent decades have largely become dependent on the national and international organizations that fund them. The liberal democratic values espoused by many professionalized social organizations, which are often aligned with the ideologies of their funders, can differ substantially from those of the populations facing the challenges described here. (Koonings and Kruijt 2007) This dependence can undermine their legitimacy as “representatives” of local interests, and disconnect them ideologically and materially from the latter. NGOs providing services or resources, moreover, are often perceived as brokers, making them objects of conflict and competition among potential clients. (NORAD 2008)

The differences between grassroots organizations and NGOs—rural vs. urban interests, minority vs. majority ethnic identification, and economic vs. cultural priorities—are intertwined as well with differences in social class and differential access to the power held by the state, local business interests, and the international community. (Binford 2005) Finally, issue-driven groups—such as groups focusing on women's rights, violence, economic development, youth, protection against mining, judicial reform, and education—often become mutually isolated from each other because of the particular problems they address, through their dependence on different funding streams, as well as by the competition for gaining and maintaining financial support from funders.

This pattern of isolated, “siloeed” approaches to problems that often overlap significantly with each other represents an obstacle both for visualizing and addressing a complex challenge like that of violence in a unified and systematic way. As noted above, while peacemaking initiatives,

for example, characterize their efforts as “peacebuilding,” organizations working with gangs characterize theirs as “violence prevention,” and groups working on gender-based violence may focus on “women’s empowerment,” on reproductive rights or on providing refuge for women and children. All these realities affect the nature and effectiveness of the kinds of interventions that are made on violence-related issues.

VI. Chronic Violence: A Systemic, Self-reproducing, and Long-term “Normality”

PROPOSITION 5:

Chronic violence is a self-reproducing, complex system, and it constitutes a long-term “normality” that affects the entire ecological system of human development.

Chronic violence is a systemic phenomenon that is reproduced both by the synergistic interactions between the macro-level processes and the individual, social, and civic behaviors, practices, and attitudes described above. Furthermore, as we have seen, because chronic violence is driven by and manifests in such a broad range of biological, social, and political trends, it tends to become naturalized and perceived as normal. In summary, the systemic, contagious, and self-reproducing dynamics described in the previous four propositions⁴⁷

- undermine the fundamental and primary processes of physical and psychological development necessary for people to prosper as human beings and citizens;
- cause belief systems, relations, and values to evolve in function of survivalist priorities;
- contribute to the experience of the “grey zone,” characterized by the increasing coexistence and confusion of licit and illicit, right and wrong, moral and immoral in behavior, belief systems, cultural practices, and institutions;
- generate the potential for the continuing and chronic traumatization of affected populations—and for processes of traumatic reenactment that can further contribute to extending these dynamics intergenerationally; and
- imbue human behaviors, relationships, beliefs, institutions, and macro-level global processes with increasing polarization, conflict, and violence.

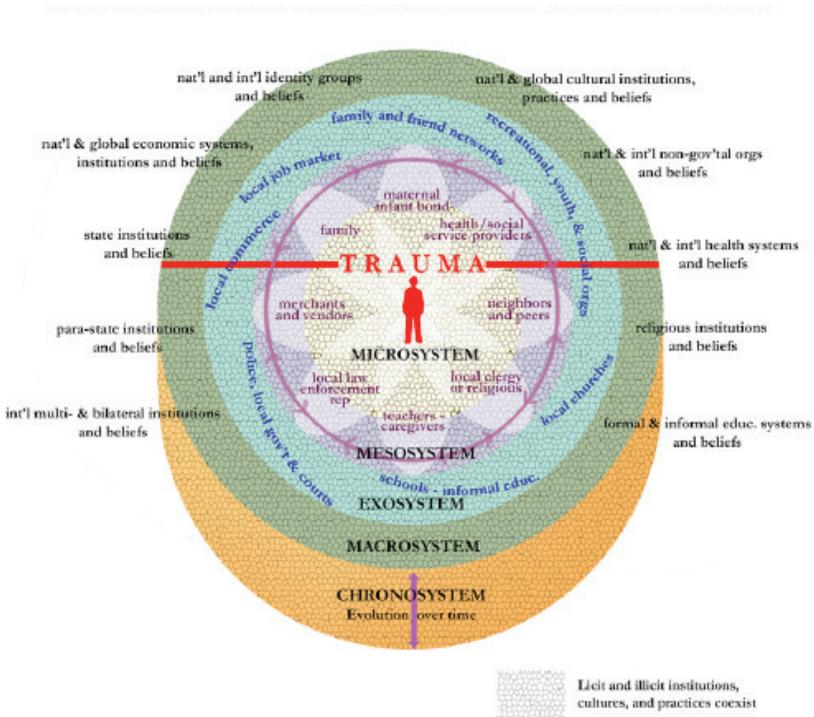
Chronic violence affects each tier of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system

- **In the microsystem**, chronic violence undermines primary development, weakening maternal–infant bonds, parenting capacity, and critical family support, and making vulnerable groups more prone to adverse childhood experiences and the lifelong physical and mental ailments and behavioral problems these can provoke.
- **The mesosystem is transformed by everyday violence and disrupted primary power relations.** The relations between developing people and their primary networks become weakened, more conflictive, and/or break down. Distrust, social silence, isolation, and increased tolerance and use of illegality and violence further endanger the potential of affected groups to thrive. Illicit and socially destructive beliefs, behaviors, and relationships become confused with their opposites. Self-perception as “victim” focuses vulnerable groups more on their needs and “rights” rather than responsibilities, limiting civic attitudes and action.
- **Exosystem—de-facto and formal institutions include both licit and illicit institutions, practices, and actors.** The confusion between moral and immoral, legal and illegal, formal and informal becomes increasingly structured, naturalized, and self-reproductive in the nature of institutions and behavior of social and civic actors. Public institutions and service providers (local government, schools, health care providers, and law enforcement) are often fragile or inadequate. Nonstate entities (both licit and illicit) that perform state-like functions assume relatively more power.
- **Macrosystem—contradictory and mutually counterproductive (both licit and illicit) structures, institutional and cultural practices, and beliefs coexist and interact.** The macro-level drivers of chronic violence (Proposition 1) condition the possibilities for robust public and private institutions and a culture and practice of citizenship, threatening the potential for democratic development. The confusion between the licit and illicit permeates institutions and cultures, as well as citizens’ beliefs and attitudes about, and engagement with, them.
- **Chronosystem—chronic violence tends to reproduce itself over time and intergenerationally.** The chronosystem refers to the continuity of the system over time. In circumstances of chronic violence, the forces operating through the four tiers of the system tend to reproduce violence within each system, between them, and intergenerationally. The collective intergenerational transmission of trauma is a critical force that perpetuates violence over time.

Figure 2 shows some of the fundamental changes to the system of human development in conditions of chronic violence. The dynamics of trauma can be expected to exist and be reproduced throughout

the entire system through the mechanisms detailed previously, and the boundaries between licit and illicit—as these apply to beliefs, cultures, practices, and institutions—become blurred.

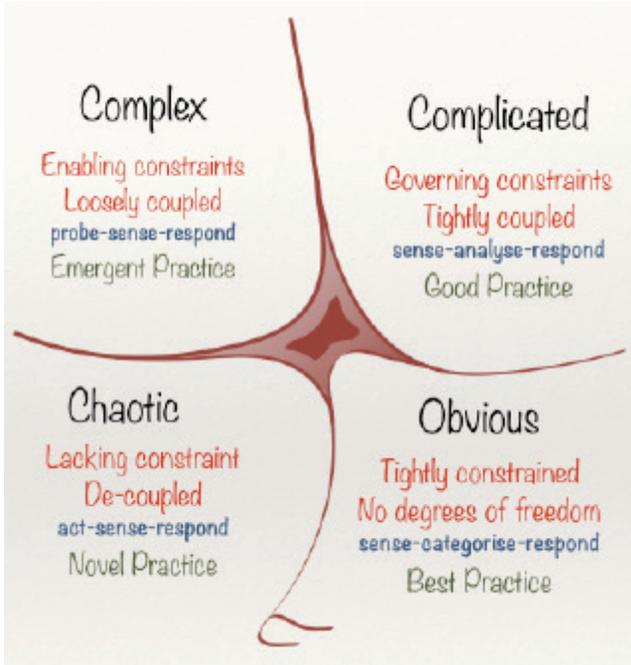
Figure 2. Ecological System of Human Development in Chronic Violence



Chronic violence and human development: A complex system

The phenomenon of human development in conditions of chronic violence is a “complex” system, and in some cases can also be a chaotic system, as these are characterized in the Cynefin Framework⁴⁸ depicted in Figure 3 below. In the beginning of this paper, we noted that many problems associated with chronic violence are all too often addressed as if they were simpler and more linear problems than they actually are. According to the Cynefin Framework, in “obvious” and complicated systems, there is a clear relationship between cause and effect. Obvious (or “simple” or “known”) systems occur in the realm of “known knows.” The right answer is self-evident and is considered best (i.e., pre-determined or established) practice. Complicated systems occur in the realm of “known unknowns.” While a “right answer” does exist, it may not be readily known or available. Thus, expertise and analysis is required to find it through good practice. (Snowden et al. 2007; also see Kurtz and Snowden 2003 in Endnote⁴⁹ for a more detailed explanation.)

*Figure 3. The Cynefin Systems Framework
(Used with the permission of Cognitive Edge, 2016)*



In complex systems, by contrast, it is impossible to know from the onset all the variables at play as this is the realm of “unknown unknowns.” Answers are not immediately self-evident and must be discerned through experimentation and in retrospect. Collective, conscious, and reflective processes of “sense-making”—based on an understanding of the nature of the challenge—become critical in such scenarios. (Wieck 1995, 2005)

Snowden and Boone, as well as Ricigliano and Chigas note that complex systems are characterized by

- **Interconnectedness:** Each of the elements in the system exist in relationship to each other, and any element affects and is influenced by other components of the system. This requires that any element be addressed in terms of its relationship with other elements.
- **Non-linearity:** the relationship between cause and effect is not linear nor unidirectional as occurs in simpler systems. The scale of cause and effect is not necessarily proportionate or linked in time and space.

- **Feedback:** Because elements and phenomena in the complex system are interconnected, a change in any one part of the system will affect other parts; and these changes may return to affect the element that induced the original change, perhaps in unanticipated ways.
- **Patterns:** Certain relationships and feedback between parts in a system may recur over time, forming recognizable patterns, and these patterns themselves can form feedback loops; and
- **Emergence:** Because the behavior of the system evolves from the interaction of all its parts, and because the agents and the system itself constrain each other, the evolution of the system will be unpredictable. Therefore, solutions can only be learned in retrospect—in contrast to the more linear problem solving process in simple or complicated systems. Problem solving requires experimental efforts that are “safe to fail,” and approaches that are allowed to arise from the circumstances. As Snowden notes, “Hindsight does not lead to foresight because the external conditions and systems constantly change.” (Snowden and Boone 2007, 3–4). (See also Williams 2011; Quinn Patton 2011; Snowden and Boone 2007; and Eoyang 1996 in Ricigliano and Chigas 2011, 3; Snowden and Boone 2007, 1–11)

Chaotic systems occur in the realm of “unknowables” in which actors assume that “the relationship between cause and effect is impossible to determine because [it] shift[s] constantly and no manageable patterns exist—only turbulence.” Following this logic, the task in such circumstances is to intervene immediately to establish order, and over time to transform the situation from chaos to complexity. (Snowden et al. 2007, 10–11)

In the first and second cases, the operating assumption is that “x” problem of violence should be manageable through a certain set of identifiable practices. It is assumed that, if not self-evident, these can at least be discerned through investigation, and that it is possible to “scale them up” following the use of good or best practices. At the other extreme, violence is seen as a “chaotic system.” No immediately evident cause–effect relationship exists, and there is no time to analyze it systematically. Immediate action is imperative; the primary goal is to find “what works” rather than “right answers.” Thus, quick, vertical command and decision-making processes prevail over more time-consuming collective thinking, experimentation, and discernment. While this kind of response may be imperative in a short-term emergency, the danger is that the responses in such circumstances will continue to be adopted even when the challenge has become transformed into a complex system—which requires the more nuanced and collective approach described above. The authoritarian and fear-based nature of the *mano dura* approaches to gangs and organized crime in Central America could perhaps be understood in these terms—as well as the dangers that these approaches represent to democratic norms and processes.

As the analysis in the previous pages demonstrates, how people make sense of the violence they live directly influences (either positively or negatively) the process of violence reproduction itself. Snowden defines “sense-making” simply as “how we make sense of the world so we can act in it.” (Snowden 2008) Klein’s definition refers more directly to the social nature of the process, which is critical for this study:

Sensemaking is the ability or attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation. More exactly, sensemaking is the process of creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order to make decisions. It is “a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate **their trajectories and act effectively.**” (Gary Klein et al., cited in Snowden 2008; Klein et al. 2006, 71) (See additional references in Endnote⁵⁰)

Critical to any effort to intervene in violence reproduction is that the relevant actors—vulnerable communities, policymakers, scholars, and social activists—partake in a conscious process of understanding how they “make sense” of this challenge.

PART TWO.

Challenges for Public Policy, Research, and Social Action

In recent decades, international policymakers, practitioners, and social action organizations have largely failed to stem the spiraling challenge of violence suffered by growing numbers of people around the world, in large part because of our limited understanding—and in some cases, frank misunderstanding—of the nature of the challenge. This final section summarizes how the Framework shifts the lens through which we perceive and address this challenge, discusses its possible relevance to other parts of the world beyond Latin America, and identifies initial questions raised by the Framework for policymakers, researchers, and social activists.

VII. How the Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework Shifts Our Approach to Violence

The Chronic Violence and Human Development Framework offers a new lens that enables us to shift how we understand and approach the challenge represented by spiraling social violence around the world.

From “eliminating violence” to “enhancing human development”

The Framework broadens our focus from the essentially negative and narrow goal of eliminating or reducing specific kinds of violence to the more fundamental and broader goal of enabling vulnerable groups to “thrive” as individuals, social beings, and citizens. The reduction and elimination of violence thus become strategic, but intermediate, targets in the pursuit of the more fundamental objective of “human development.” Placing violence prevention in function of this more basic goal will also help to mitigate the unfortunate tendency of many efforts to reduce violence by enhancing security to provoke new and unanticipated forms of violence.

As noted earlier, in order to “thrive,” people need conditions that enable them to:

- flourish as individuals physically and psychologically, which entails strengthening the capacity of families and primary social networks to provide critical support for children, young people, and each other;
- develop and grow as both social and civic participants, by building increasingly expansive, inclusive, and constructive networks in what may continue to be long-term conditions of chronic violence; and

- develop a more conscious and critical understanding of their conditions and needs through an enhanced capacity for reflective action, which enables these actors to better discern right action—even in circumstances that may well continue to be challenging.⁵¹

From violence measured as homicides to a broader set of indicators that track violence in relationship to human development

The relationship of chronic violence to human development offers an opportunity to develop a robust set of quantitative and qualitative indicators for identifying, understanding, and tracking violence that would transcend that currently offered by homicide statistics. Further research could identify the potential utility of using a broader array of violence statistics (gender, child-related, etc.), tracking traumatization levels in diverse social groups, as well as specific kinds of violence- and trauma-related behavioral and attitudinal patterns. These could be pegged to relevant human development indicators—for example, via the Human Development Index, the recently launched Sustainable Development Goals, and the indicators for thriving, detailed in Endnote 6.

From seeing violence as a series of discrete problems to “violence” as a systemic phenomenon

Our understanding of the fundamental nature of the challenge of violence shifts. Instead of perceiving violence as a series of discrete problems—domestic, youth, gang, school, criminal, political violence, each with its own solution—this Framework views it as an integral, complex, and systemic phenomenon that is generated and reproduced through the complex interactions of macro-level structural factors and the survivalist behaviors, beliefs, and practices that prevail among vulnerable groups. And it contemplates how the diverse forms of violence mutually construct each other.

From a linear “cause–effect” challenge to a complex systemic phenomenon

As noted earlier, the challenge of violence is all too often approached as if it were either a simple problem or—at the other extreme—a chaotic one. In both cases, this can lead to misconceived interpretations and interventions. If we assume instead that the relationship between violence and human development is complex, we will be better prepared to engage with the unpredictable but patterned ways that multiple forms of violence interact with and reproduce each other. To develop an initial idea of the nature of this system, the Framework described in these pages can be used to identify and investigate the forces that contribute to reproducing violence and map out the ways that they interact with each other. (See Adams 2016a, 2016b for initial attempts.)

Systems mapping techniques can then be employed to explore how forces relate to one another and to identify where it might be possible to interrupt the reproductive cycle and/or to enhance the conditions that permit people to “thrive.” Such questions are best explored collectively, by people who will approach the challenge in different ways. And, since a critical variable in violence reproduction is how the problem of chronic violence is understood by relevant actors, such processes also

need to contemplate and facilitate reflection about how vulnerable communities, policymakers, and change agents “make sense” of violence and the violence/development nexus, as noted earlier.

As noted in the previous section, because of the complexity of the challenge, “solutions” to the problems that chronic violence poses to human development cannot be found deductively. “Safe to fail” experimentation is required to generate, test, monitor, and evaluate diverse theories of change—ideally working from an understanding of the social assets that exist among the affected populations. Time and continual observation and reflection are required to see what solutions emerge from practice. (Snowden et al. 2007). Methodological emphasis should be placed on experimentation and “harvesting outcomes” rather than on launching and monitoring pre-planned activities, while keeping in mind that these lessons may not necessarily be “transferable” to other environments or susceptible to being “scaled up.” See endnote for a summary description of “outcome harvesting.” (Wilson-Grau 2013)⁵²

From isolated, “siloed” approaches to integrated, intersectorial, interdisciplinary, and relational approaches

Researchers and policymakers taking holistic approaches need to contemplate the fact that violence is a relational challenge that links diverse social groups over time. Failure to recognize this reality may inadvertently provoke additional violence. For example, working with youth to address youth violence without contemplating their relationships with families, peers, and larger institutions can have a perverse effect. Continued support for community security commissions without ensuring adequate support from higher-level law enforcement and judicial agencies can destine these efforts to fail. The continuing focus on women as victims of domestic violence often overlooks the rapidly changing power relationships between men and women, and the role of both male and female adults in perpetrating violence against children. Programs that rely on normative approaches and fail to take into account existing knowledge about the neurological and biological processes that drive behavior in high-violence contexts, or the socioeconomic circumstances of vulnerable groups, will also be limited in their effectiveness.

Top-down perspectives complemented by bottom-up approaches

The focus should expand from a primarily top-down perspective on violence (the state-centered focus on security, criminality, and deviance) to also include a bottom-up perspective that focuses on how violence is lived by those who experience it most directly, and the multiple drivers that reproduce it. From this bottom-up angle, it becomes immediately evident that the diverse forms of “violence” that are often pursued as separate problems by diverse institutions actually often converge and become inseparable in the bodies, minds, and lives of vulnerable people and groups. The larger context in which these types of violence are formed, and the relationships and interactions between them, thus become critical to forging approaches to effectively address them, along with an emphasis on building from existing “social assets” rather than imported strategies and techniques.

From the notion of a “problem” to be solved to a “dilemma” that must be managed

This report’s bird’s-eye review of the complex web of macro- and micro-level factors that generate and reproduce chronic violence make it reasonable to assume that this challenge is not a “problem” that we can expect to “solve” but a long-term dilemma that must be managed. A similar conclusion has been advanced recently by Moser and McIlwaine,⁵³ and was implied in the 2011 World Development Report. (Moser and McIlwaine 2014; World Bank 2011) In fact, it is realistic to expect this challenge to affect growing proportions of the world’s people over time. Certainly, the capacity of specific vulnerable groups to substantially reduce or “resolve” the multiple macro-level factors described above is extremely limited—not to speak of the destructive behavioral dynamics described in Propositions 2, 3, and 4—as is the capacity of many of the fragile and conflict-affected states or local governments where this phenomenon tends to prevail the most.

However, true to the nature of the “complex system” that chronic violence represents, it is impossible for anyone to predict what our collective capacity to address this complex of challenges may be. Instead, it becomes incumbent on us to generate multiple opportunities for research, experimentation, and collective learning that will enable us to develop innovative, strategic approaches to address this challenge. While a major focus should be placed on identifying strategic opportunities to affect macro-level or structural factors in specific circumstances, a new and vital focus of attention should be placed on better understanding and enhancing the capacity of people and vulnerable groups to “thrive”—as Bronfenbrenner defines the term—assuming that many or most of the macro- and micro-level dynamics and behaviors affecting them may continue to be adverse.

VIII. Questions for Policymakers, Scholars, Practitioners, Activists, and Affected Populations

The complex and, to date, largely unmapped ways in which chronic violence affects human development call for a sustained effort of diverse actors who can collectively enrich our understanding of this challenge and how we might best address it. These include policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and thought leaders in critical fields of relevance, as well as activists and the people who live with these challenges every day. Toward this end, a loose network of organizations and individuals in various institutional settings are beginning to apply this Framework to the challenges faced in the Northern Triangle of Central America. Initial questions for these and other explorations include the following:

How to stimulate locally rooted—and economically sustainable—efforts that enable vulnerable groups to “thrive” in chronic violence. Enabling families, micro-level groups, and communities to enhance their capacity to “thrive” in conditions of chronic violence is key. Given the scale of the challenge, “appreciative inquiry” or “assets-based” methodologies that build from existing strengths of vulnerable groups (rather than from needs or deficits) and that con-

template the ways that “sense-making” occurs are critical. What can we learn from existing efforts? What is the role for collective processes of critical thinking, learning, and reflection in enabling vulnerable groups to recognize and transcend the challenges posed by chronic violence? What mechanisms can help vulnerable actors to forge strategies to transcend these patterns?

Resilience and chronic violence. This analysis complements and overlaps with the growing literature and intervention efforts focusing on “resilience”—especially as applied to building intragroup and intergroup cohesion and positive adaptation in fragile systems. How can this synergy be deepened?

Given the primacy of strengthening conditions for primary development, what are the best existing strategies to use in these kinds of circumstances? What are the major obstacles that require further experimentation and innovation?

Gender-based and family violence. How can more recent efforts focusing on male identities and violence, as well as on the changing power dynamics between men, women, and youth, best integrate with the longstanding efforts to reduce violence against women, on the one hand, and against children, on the other? How is it possible to generate more productive and collective attention to the violence by both men and women against children in ways that better contemplate the complex set of variables that drive these dynamics?

Public health and medical institutions. How can the links between chronic violence and people’s lifelong physical and mental health and behavior be better understood and addressed by vulnerable populations and the professionals who work with them?

Traumatization during childhood and throughout the ecological system of human development is a major contributor to the reproduction of violence among vulnerable populations, but remains largely unrecognized and addressed. How can we further deepen our understanding and capacity to address the dynamics of collective and chronic trauma—as opposed to individual trauma—and the effectiveness of existing approaches for these challenges? How to more realistically contemplate the socially embedded and reproduced dimensions of this challenge in future interventions? Given the potentially massive scale of the affected populations, how to best approach this challenge?

A new perspective on “corruption”? The blurring of moral, legal, and ethical categories (Primo Levi’s notion of the “grey zone”) as well as conditions of chronic state weakness or dysfunction are fundamental dynamics of chronic violence. How might a more experientially derived and systemic understanding of corruption through this lens help to generate better understanding of and more effective policy responses to this phenomenon?

Educational institutions. How does chronic violence affect learning and teaching, educational institutions, staff, and students? How can formal and informal educational institutions help students, families, and micro-networks to build resilience and constructive human relations in contexts of chronic violence?

Transitional justice efforts. How can transitional justice efforts better take into account the—by now—relatively predictable situations of chronic violence that emerge in many postconflict or “transitional” societies? How to more accurately situate our understanding of war-time violence in the broader continuum of violence (pre-war and post-war) that tends to exist in many contexts?

Economic development efforts and livelihood generation are critical to enable vulnerable groups to transcend long-term marginalization, but can also exacerbate family and community conflicts by further disrupting existing power and authority structures. How can these initiatives better contemplate their complex social implications and, in a more holistic fashion, advance the ability of vulnerable families and communities to “thrive”?

The mass media and emerging information technologies are well known to exert profound influences on how vulnerable populations experience and understand violence. What can be learned from existing research and efforts to address this complex of challenges? How might it be possible to enable affected populations and policymakers at all levels to understand and address these questions?

Integrating approaches to conflict, violence, security, and development. What might we learn by integrating and unifying the disparate and often conflicting frameworks used to address formal and informal armed conflict, violence prevention and reduction, chronic violence, human security, citizen security, and human development?

What does it mean to understand and work with a systems approach on “complex systems”? How to forge methodologies to investigate, map, and interpret the systemic dynamics that generate and reproduce chronic violence that are comprehensible and manageable for affected populations, social change agents, and policymakers? How to integrate into this effort a more nuanced and active understanding of the ways that the diverse actors involved “make sense” of violence, its causes, and its implications?

While this report explores these and related issues, it inevitably raises more questions than answers. Our purpose is to lay down a foundation to help us to better explore the complex and growing challenge of chronic violence to human development. The hope is that by making it possible to examine this challenge through a systems lens, the Framework will strengthen our capacity to address the challenge in more integrated, strategic, and effective ways.

Endnotes

- 1 The 2013 Human Security Report, on the other hand, concluded that “there is reason to believe that the historical decline in violence is both real and substantial.” (Human Security Report 2013: 12) It appears that this analysis rests on the UCDB’s analysis of the decrease in formal armed conflicts around the world since the Cold War, in combination with the conclusions reached by Steven Pinker in his recent book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. (2011) Although Pinker never explicitly defines the term, he analyses various kinds of violence—including domestic, homicides, genocide, and armed conflict—and claims that violence is declining because of certain global trends. These include: the emergence of a state monopoly over the legitimate use of force; the role of “commerce as a positive-sum game”; increasing respect for women; rising cosmopolitanism that has expanded human empathy for others different from oneself; and the growing power of reason to control violent impulses. He regards the exceptions to these trends as minor blips in an otherwise robust trend of increasing world peace. We will see, however, that the inverse of many of these trends are in fact among the major factors that contribute to reproducing the chronic violence that this report describes.
- 2 Briscoe edited a series of papers on the challenges of understanding and addressing the role of non-conventional armed actors, which is available at <https://www.clingendael.nl/publication/non-conventional-armed-violence-new-challenges-and-responses>.
- 3 The Report proposed a global compact to pursue the following goals to achieve a minimum level of human security:
 - Universal primary education—for girls as well as for boys
 - Adult illiteracy rates to be halved—with the female rate to be no higher than the male one
 - Primary health care for all—with special stress on the immunization of children
 - Severe malnutrition to be eliminated and moderate malnutrition rates to be halved
 - Family planning services for all willing couples
 - Safe drinking water and sanitation for all
 - Credit for all—to ensure self-employment opportunities
- 4 Maslow argued that individuals can pursue their needs for safety and security only when their basic physiological needs have been met. Included among these basic needs are both the freedom from danger and absence of threat. Only once basic safety is assured, he posited, can belonging or love typically found in families, friendships, membership in associations, and within the community become a priority. (Maslow 1970)

Bronfenbrenner’s claim that human connection is a primary need, on par with and inseparable from Maslow’s “basic” physiological needs of food, shelter, warmth, and drink, is fundamental to the framework posed here. Violence affects people’s sense of security simultaneously both in physical and psychological ways, and this sense of endangerment can remain indefinitely. In such conditions, social and civic development is adversely affected because of the ways that people develop and act as their survival-oriented needs prevail.
- 5 See discussions of “sense-making” in Sections VI and VII.
- 6 Changes that can serve as indicators of “thriving” include:
 - Progressive reduction in the indices of traumatic childhood and adult experiences;
 - The group’s increasing understanding of its social and civic conditions—and its challenges, needs, and capacities;
 - Reduction in the destructive social and civic beliefs, practices, and behaviors; and
 - Growth in the group’s breadth, density, inclusiveness, diversity, and the extent of social and civic relations and practices.
- 7 Pearce further develops the notion of “non-dominating power” as a remedy for violence in her 2013 article, *Power and the Twenty-first Century Activist: From the Neighborhood to the Square Development and Change*. 44(3): 639–63. International Institute of Social Studies: The Hague.
- 8 John Gaventa and Jenny Pearce note that the “powercube” (available at <http://www.powercube.net>) can also be used as a “violence cube” as a way to investigate the intersections of different levels of power or violence; to identify and trace the relationships between visible, hidden, and invisible forms of power or violence; and to identify diverse spaces of participation.

- 9 “Around the world, in 2010 self-harm took more lives than war, murder, and natural disasters combined, stealing more than 36 million years of healthy life across all ages. In more advanced countries, only three diseases on the planet do more harm.” Accessed at <http://www.newsweek.com/2013/05/22/why-suicide-has-become-epidemic-and-what-we-can-do-help-237434.html>.
- 10 The WHO 2002 study reported homicide averages 14.4 percent per 100,000 in the high income countries and 32.1 in the low income countries (World Health Organization 2002, 10) with considerable differences within and between countries and regions of both categories. (Pearce 2007) Along similar lines, the 2011 UNODC study noted that low levels of violence are related to higher stages of development and income equality, with rates increasing in countries with lower levels of development. The major exception to this pattern is in the middle and high income countries of Central and South America where organized crime and inequality play a more important role than average human development goals. (UNODC 2011, 29–31)
- 11 Slutkin argues that different forms of violence are all “syndromes” of the same disease.

... considerable evidence shows that having been a victim of violence increases the risk of someone perpetrating community violence (DuRant et al., 1994, 1996; Barkin et al., 2001; Morris et al., 2002; Mullins et al., 2004; Kelly, 2010). However, it is also now clear that exposure to community violence (outside the family unit) leads to an increased likelihood of family violence, both against intimate partners and abuse of (or violence against) children, as well as an increased risk of violence against self or suicide (Mullins et al., 2004; Devries et al., 2011).

Furthermore, exposure to (observing) violence between parents leads to a greater likelihood of being a perpetrator of intimate partner violence (Stith et al., 2000; Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe, 2001; Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Naved and Persson, 2005) or child abuse (Kaufman and Zigler, 1987; Heyman and Slep, 2002; Milner et al., 2010), and to being exposed to community violence (Hanson et al., 2006). Being traumatized as a victim of child abuse also leads to community violence (Widom, 1989; Crooks et al., 2007), intimate partner violence (Stith et al., 2000; Ehrensaft et al., 2003), and child abuse (Kaufman and Zigler, 1987; Heyman and Slep, 2002; Milner et al., 2010). Exposure to war and political violence, particularly when accompanied by posttraumatic stress disorder, leads to being a perpetrator of intimate partner violence and community violence (Archer and Gartner, 1976; Landau and Pfeiffermann, 1988; Sela-Shayovitz, 2005; Catani et al., 2008; Clark et al., 2010; Landau et al., 2010; Teten et al., 2010; Widome et al., 2011). Exposure to violence in the media leads to the perpetration of violence in the community and at home (Huesmann et al., 2003), as does witnessing violence in video games (Huesmann, 2010). Suicide, a type of violence directed at oneself, can also frequently follow exposure to intimate partner violence, community violence, (Cavanaugh et al., 2011; Devries et al., 2011) or other suicides (Gould, 2001; Gould et al., 2003; Jeong et al., 2012).

Further evidence of this cross-syndrome connection has been shown, for example, in studies by Eric Dubow and Rowell Huesmann in war settings. These studies have shown, in the setting of Israeli Jew, Israeli Arab, or Palestinian Arab, that exposure to or involvement in ethnopolitical violence leads to the performance of violence against spouses and peers, removing any pretense of the primacy of “reasons” for violence (Dubow et al., 2009; Landau et al., 2010). Like the example of different forms of tuberculosis, something common has been transmitted—in this case, a tendency toward violence, likely mediated by underlying biological processes. A violence disease or predispose state is present. Therefore, something is being transmitted across and between various “types” of violence. Because something common is being transmitted, likely involving common intermediate brain pathways, these different “types” of violence should be called syndromes of the same violence disease. (Slutkin 2013)

- 12 Thanks to Brinton Lykes for leading me to Lewis’ work on fear.
- 13 The humanly destructive effects of trauma and its definitive role in provoking violence were first recognized by social and clinical psychologists and are now confirmed by a growing body of evidence from neurobiologists and criminologists, among others De Zulueta 1993; Van der Kolk 1989; Van der Kolk et al. 1996; Beveridge 1998; Gilligan 1997; Groth 1979; and Lewis et al. 1979.
- 14 It was characterized by Freud as “a breach in the protective barrier against (over)stimulation leading to feelings of overwhelming helplessness” and “the urge to escape coupled with the perception of not being able to do so” (Freud, quoted by Levine 1997, 197).

- 15 Van der Kolk et al. note that epidemiological research has shown that, whereas men—the initial population studied to establish the diagnostic criteria for PTSD—most frequently are traumatized by accidents, war, assaults, and natural disasters, childhood abuse is by far the most frequent cause of traumatization in women (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). . . . Women are much more likely to be traumatized in the context of intimate relationships than men are: 63% of the almost 4 million reported assaults on males are by strangers, whereas 62% of the almost 3 million attacks on women in the US are by persons they know . . . (Van der Kolk et al 2005, 389–90)
- 16 Milroy also refers readers to the epigenetic literature.
- 17 Various scholars concerned with these collective trauma have, moreover, question the utility of the concept of PTSD in such situations because it essentially pathologizes and medicalizes the experiences of normal human beings who are responding in normal ways to extreme conditions. (ISJR 2015; Pederson et al. 2008)
- 18 An ILO news release on January 30, 2013 calculates that 47 percent of Latin America’s non-agricultural employment is in the informal sector. Available at http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_203629/lang-en/index.htm, accessed October 21, 2013.
- 19 Among the contributing factors to human trafficking in Latin America, Ribando-Seelke notes that
- Both individual factors and outside circumstances contribute to human trafficking within and from Latin America and the Caribbean. Individual risk factors include poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, a history of physical or sexual abuse, homelessness, drug use, and gang membership. The IOM in Colombia has identified other personal characteristics common among trafficking victims. These include a tendency to take risks in order to fulfill one’s goals, a focus on short term rewards that may result from short-term risks, and a lack of familial support and/or strong social networks. These risk factors that may “push” an individual towards accepting a risky job proposition in another country have been compounded by “pull” factors, including the hope of finding economic opportunity abroad, which is fueled by television and internet images of wealth in the United States and Europe.
- Outside factors contributing to human trafficking include the following: (1) the high global demand for domestic servants, agricultural laborers, sex workers, and factory labor; (2) political, social, or economic crises, as well as natural disasters occurring in particular countries, such as the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti; (3) lingering machismo (chauvinistic attitudes and practices) that tends to lead to discrimination against women and girls; (4) existence of established trafficking networks with sophisticated recruitment methods; (5) public corruption, especially complicity between law enforcement and border agents with traffickers and alien smugglers; (6) restrictive immigration policies in some destination countries that have limited the opportunities for legal migration flows to occur; (7) government disinterest in the issue of human trafficking; and (8) limited economic opportunities for women in Latin America. Although women have achieved the same (or higher) educational levels as men in many countries, women’s employment continues to be concentrated in low-wage, informal sector jobs. (Ribando-Seelke 2012, 4)
- 20 UNODC 2010; Ribando-Seeke 2010; Brands 2010; Briscoe 2010; Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy www.drogasedemocracia.org/Arquivos/declaracao_ingles_site.pdf.
- 21 Thanks to Leah Aylward and Lyuba Zarsky for their assistance on this section.
- 22 The negative effects of media violence were first identified by the Surgeon General’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, which was formed in 1969 to assess the impact of violence on the attitudes, values, and behavior of viewers. The resulting report and a follow-up report in 1982 by the National Institute of Mental Health found that as a consequence of seeing violence on television, children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, more fearful of the world around them, and more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others. In subsequent years, multiple studies reconfirmed this analysis. For example, media violence was found to increase the relative risk of verbal, relational, and physical aggression (ISRA 2012) as well as both increased callousness toward victims of violence and increased fear of being victimized (Kunkel 2007).

Cantor's review of the literature found that

media-violence viewing consistently is associated with higher levels of antisocial behavior, ranging from the trivial (imitative violence directed against toys) to the serious (criminal violence), with many consequential outcomes in between (acceptance of violence as a solution to problems, increased feelings of hostility, and the apparent delivery of painful stimulation to another person). Desensitization is another well-documented effect of viewing violence, which is observable in reduced arousal and emotional disturbance while witnessing violence, the reduced tendency to intervene in a fight, and less sympathy for the victims of violence. Although there is evidence that youth who are already violent are more likely to seek out violent entertainment, there is strong evidence that the relationship between violence viewing and antisocial behavior is bidirectional. There is growing evidence that media violence also engenders intense fear in children which often lasts days, months, and even years. (Cantor 2000)

A cross cultural analysis of the behavioral impacts of violent video games found that

The evidence strongly suggests that exposure to violent video games is a causal risk factor for increased aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, and aggressive affect and for decreased empathy and prosocial behavior. [There is] . . . weak evidence of cultural differences in susceptibility and type of measurement effects, and no evidence of sex differences in susceptibility. Results of various sensitivity analyses revealed these effects to be robust, with little evidence of selection (publication) bias. (Anderson et al. 2010)

However, work by other scholars, for example, Ferguson (2014) concludes that there is no clear link between violent behavior and violent media. The American Psychological Association launched an analysis in 2013 of peer-reviewed research on the impact of media violence and is reviewing its policy statements in the area. Both should be completed in 2015 (<http://www.apa.org/research/action/protect.aspx>).

- 23 In 1951, John Bowlby published *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, the seminal work on the maternal–infant bond, which today constitutes a basic assumption of psychology (see Bowlby 1951), and this was followed by “The Nature of the Child’s Tie to His Mother” (Bowlby 1958) and many later publications.
- 24 For more literature about the importance of men’s involvement as fathers, see the essays by Bruce et al., Engle, NCOFF, and others in Barker 2005.
- 25 The CDC/Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey format: Using a list of ten adverse childhood experiences, from divorce to child abuse, the ACE study surveyed about 17,000 people over fifteen years; mainly upper and middle class Californians who were assumed to be generally low risk. The questions employed in the ACE survey (2009 BRFS ACE MODULE) are:
1. Did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill or suicidal?
 2. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic?
 3. Did you live with anyone who used illegal street drugs or who abused prescription medications?
 4. Did you live with anyone who served time or was sentenced to serve time in a prison, jail or other correctional facility?
 5. Were your parents separated or divorced?
 6. How often did your parents or adults in your home ever slap, hit, kick, punch or beat each other up?
 7. Before age 18, how often did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick or physically hurt you in any way? Do not include spanking.
 8. How often did a parent or adult in your home ever swear at you, insult you or put you down?
 9. How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult, ever touch you sexually?
 10. How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult, try to make you touch them sexually?
 11. How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult, force you to have sex?

For a list of publications and outcomes from the ACE study, see the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/outcomes.htm>. For information on how ACE studies have been applied by different social organizations and governmental agencies in the United States, see Special Issue of *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 40, no. 4 (2012), especially the Introduction by Larkin, Shields, and Anda: “The Health and Social Consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Across the Lifespan: An Introduction to Prevention and Intervention in the Community.” For approaches to treatment of trauma using the ACE framework, see Center for Post-Trauma Wellness, <http://www.posttraumawellness.net/about>.

26 The following global adverse childhood experiences categories were agreed by the WHO Expert Panel in 2009:

- Abuse
- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual
- Discrimination
- Forced marriage

Sexual exploitation

Peer violence

- Bullying/sibling/sexual

Neglect

- Emotional/social isolation
- Physical—Nutritional
- Child labor/child trafficking
- Begging

Household dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Mother/Father/Sibling/household member treated violently
- Incarcerated household member
- Parental separation/loss or death of parent
- As a child were you involved in caring for a critically (chronic) ill parent
- Parental discord
- Residential mobility/instability

Community dysfunction

- Witnessing severe physical violence
- Discrimination
- Collective violence
- War zone resident
- Torture (witness to) (WHO 2009).

27 Although the critical impact of trauma on vulnerable populations is now widely accepted, and is increasingly being contemplated in the intervention practices of major international organizations, some scientists have expressed reservations about certain aspects of the ACE studies. Hardt and Rutter, for example, conducted a review of studies using retrospective reports by adults of their own adverse experiences in childhood and concluded that, while such studies can be very useful, more research is necessary to understand the kinds of biases they can contain:

Retrospective reports in adulthood of major adverse experiences in childhood . . . involve a substantial rate of false negatives, and substantial measurement error. On the other hand, although less easily quantified, false positive reports are probably rare. Several studies have shown some bias in retrospective reports. However, such bias is not sufficiently great to invalidate retrospective case-control studies of major adversities of an easily defined kind. Nevertheless, the

findings suggest that little weight can be placed on the retrospective reports of details of early experiences or on reports of experiences that rely heavily on judgement or interpretation (Hardt and Rutter 2004).

- 28 See Bruneau 2015.
- 29 See Foxen 2008, 67; Green 2003; McDonald 2005; Metz et al. 2010; and Hume 2007, 2009.
- 30 See McDonald 2005, 117; Rodgers 2007; Dennis 2003; Burrell 2009; Foxen 2008, 2010; Leeds 2006.
- 31 See also Gayle 2007; Green 2003; Martín-Barbero 2002; Smutt and Miranda 1998, 171; Moser and McIlwaine 2001, 63; Hume 2008, 64; and Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff 2005, 229.
- 32 See Foxen 2008; Gunst 1999; Moodie 2009; Burrell 2009; Ziberg 2007; Dennis 2003.
- 33 See Metz et al. 2010; Foxen 2008, 2010; Green 2003; and Camus 2005.
- 34 “Pentecostalization is the acceptance of certain religious beliefs such as dramatic personal conversion, millennialism, and in some cases, biblical literalism, and the experience of particular religious practices such as speaking in tongues and divine healing” (Steigenga 2007, 368).
- 35 On the role of Pentecostal churches, see Steigenga 2007 and Wolseth 2008; on gangs, see Baird No date; Barker 2005; Levenson 1988; and Salazar 1990.
- 36 See Corradi, Weiss Fagen, and Garretón 1992; Lechner 1993; O’Donnell 1983; Hinkelammert 1977; and, for a more general treatment in relationship to human behavior and repressive regimes throughout history, see, for example, Hamerton-Kelly 1987.
- 37 See Corradi, Weiss Fagen, and Garretón 1992; Lechner 1993; Reguillo 2002; Hume 2007; Snodgrass-Godoy 2006; Caldeira et al. 1998; Levenson 1988; Marroquín Parducci 2007; Carroll 2007; Headley 2005; Domínguez 2010; Valenzuela Arce et al. 2007; Martín-Barbero 2002; Hume 2008a; Rotker 2002; Martín-Barbero, 2002, 2009.
- 38 See, for example, Goldstein 2003, 35; Green 2003; Cunst 1999; Camus 2005; Jimeno 2001; Riaño 2006; and Duque, Arbey Toro, and Montoya 2010.
- 39 James Gilligan, in “The Psychology of Shame, Pride, Guilt, and Innocence,” notes:

Why does shame cause violence, and why does guilt inhibit it (or does it?). How can we understand this theoretically? From a dynamic point of view, shame can be conceptualized as a motive of defense against wishes to be loved and taken care of by others (which many people, especially men, experience as the state of being passive and dependent, as opposed to being self-reliant and taking care of oneself, or being active and autonomous). When people with the capacity for feelings of shame (that is, people who do not have a passive dependent personality disorder) find themselves wanting to be loved and taken care of by others, they experience an upsurge of shame, which typically motivates them to move in the opposite direction by becoming active and aggressive, independent and ambitious. If they do not perceive themselves as having nonviolent means for becoming independent and being able to take care of themselves (such as skills, education, and employment), the activity and aggressiveness stimulated by shame can manifest itself in violent, sadistic, even homicidal behavior.

Guilt, by contrast, can be conceptualized as a motive of defense against active aggressive wishes to harm others the very wishes and impulses that are caused by shame. When people who have developed a capacity for guilt feelings (that is, people who are not psychopaths, or antisocial personalities) find themselves hating another person and experiencing wishes and impulses to injure them, those feelings and wishes stimulate feelings of guilt. The guilt feelings inhibit them from expressing or acting out those wishes, and motivate them to introject the anger instead, directing it against themselves, as a result of which they experience a need for punishment, which may manifest itself in masochistic or even suicidal behavior. (Gilligan 2009, 11)

He continues:

The psychology of shame, pride, guilt, and innocence can be understood as constituting the psychology of self-love and self-hate, which in turn is central to the vicissitudes of love and hate toward others. Taken as a whole, this analysis

can increase our understanding of what is arguably the most urgent social-psychological issue in the contemporary world: the causes and prevention of violence. (Gilligan 2009, 16)

- 40 See also Arias 2009; Hume 2008a; Ortiz 2006; Brands 2010; Dickens and Fischer 2006; Zepeda 2010.
- 41 In Mexico, there were 198 completed or attempted lynchings between 1988 and 2005 (Guillén and Heredia 2005) and 35 cases in 9 months of 2010. In Guatemala, there were 421 cases between 1996 and 2001 (Mendoza and Torres Rivas 2003) and 110 in 9 months of 2009. On lynchings, see also Snodgrass Godoy 2006; Binford 1999; Castellanos 2003; Guillén and Heredia 2005; Mendoza and Torres Rivas 2003; and Mendoza 2007.
- 42 See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-m-ryan/honduras-children-violence_b_1574086.html; <http://www.casa-alianza.org/hn/>; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jun/30/duncancampbell>; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/may/29/duncancampbell>.
- 43 Private security forces in Latin America:
- Argentina: 150,000 legal security agents and 50,000 unregistered agents vs. 120,000 police;
 - Chile: 40,000 security agents vs. 35,000 police;
 - El Salvador: 70,000 security agents in 2001 vs. 16,889 police;
 - Colombia: 149,155 security agents vs. 119,146 police;
 - Mexico: 450,000 legal and 600,000 unregistered security agents vs. 390,781 police in 2009;
 - Guatemala: 28,000 legal and 50,000 unregistered security agents vs. a 22,000 police in 2010 (in Adams, 2012)
- 44 Thrasher's 1927 definition of gangs underlies Rodgers' construct:
- A gang is an interstitial group, originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face; milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory. (Thrasher, quoted by Rodgers 1999, 1)
- 45 For other reflections about due process and human rights, see Pitarch et al. 2008; Burrell 2009; Caldeira and Holston 1999; Binford 1999; Goldstein 2003; and Foxen 2010. For a review of diverse views about the impact of international human rights ideologies in the region, see Wilson 2008.
- 46 According to the Development Research Centre report, requirements for effective citizen action are as follows: While the critical role of citizen-led development and grassroots participation for democracy and development today constitute fundamental operating assumptions for foreign aid, civil society, and philanthropy, relatively little solid evidence has been gathered about the actual effects or utility of citizen action, what it entails and what is required for it to be successful. The "Citizenship DRC," a decade-long project led by the Development Research Centre, explored this question in 150 sites in 20 countries, publishing its final conclusions in 2009. This project found that the role of citizen action in promoting good governance becomes most effective through strategies that work across state and society linking champions of change together from both sectors. In practice, they note, state and society exist in relationship to each other and are interdependent and mutually constructive. The study concludes that the specific quality of the social and political effects of citizen engagement, whether they are more constructive or more destructive, depends on several things. These include:
- *The institutional and political environment* . . . In post-conflict and fragile societies, citizen action has largely been restricted to involvement in grassroots associations, whereas in states where democratic practices and norms are more institutionalized, citizens enter participatory spaces and social movements in addition to joining local associations . . .
 - *Prior citizen capabilities* . . . to act, citizens need self-confidence and a belief that they can have an impact. They also need knowledge of their rights and legal entitlements, of state procedures and other civic issues. And they need skills—how to hold meetings, organize petitions, litigate, network, raise media attention . . . where this is lacking, it is unrealistic to expect citizens to deliver accountability or development goals. Yet, these capabilities are also an outcome of citizen engagement. . . Where citizen capabilities are weak, strengthening them through practice can contribute important intermediate steps to broader success.

- *The strength of internal champions.* Change often happens when there is both citizen pressure on the one hand, and political will from inside the state on the other. . . . Working at the interface of state and society can mean efforts to empower champions inside to build the necessary will to support those seeking change from the outside.
- *History and style of engagement.* . . . Modes of interaction differ for historical and cultural reasons. . . . Understanding these differences in history is crucial for designing context-appropriate programs. . . . can highlight past mistakes and reveal where an established pattern of citizen engagement already exists.
- The nature of the issue and how it is framed. The nature of the issue itself, and how it is framed by proponents, can drive the form of engagement and nature of the response.
- *The location of power and decision making.* In an increasingly globalized world, it is crucial that citizen engagement follow the changing patterns of power—from the local, to the national and global—in order to bring about effective change. . . . A coordinated, multifaceted, multi-level way of approaching citizen engagement is crucial for positive incomes. (DRC 2011, 41–44)

47 Thanks to Philip Thomas for pointing out the systemic, rather than linear, dynamics of chronic violence, and for helping me identify the particular implications that this reality has for the nature of the challenge it presents.

48 See <http://cognitive-edge.com/> for a more detailed explanation.

49 In their 2003 article, Kurtz and Snowden explain in more detail the nature of relationships in the complex domain:

This is the domain of complexity theory, which studies how patterns emerge through the interaction of many agents. There are cause and effect relationships between the agents, but both the number of agents and the number of relationships defy categorization or analytic techniques. Emergent patterns can be perceived but not predicted; we call this phenomenon retrospective coherence. In this space, structured methods that seize upon such retrospectively coherent patterns and codify them into procedures will confront only new and different patterns for which they are ill prepared. Once a pattern has stabilized, its path appears logical, but it is only one of many that could have stabilized, each of which also would have appeared logical in retrospect. Patterns may indeed repeat for a time in this space, but we cannot be sure that they will continue to repeat, because the underlying sources of the patterns are not open to inspection (and observation of the system may itself disrupt the patterns). Thus, relying on expert opinions based on historically stable patterns of meaning will insufficiently prepare us to recognize and act upon unexpected patterns.

The decision model in this space is to create probes to make the patterns or potential patterns more visible before we take any action. We can then sense those patterns and respond by stabilizing those patterns that we find desirable, by destabilizing those we do not want, and by seeding the space so that patterns we want are more likely to emerge. Understanding this space requires us to gain multiple perspectives on the nature of the system. This is the time to “stand still” (but pay attention) and gain new perspective on the situation rather than “run for your life,” relying on the entrained patterns of past experience to determine our response. The methods, tools, and techniques of the known and knowable domains do not work here. Narrative techniques are particularly powerful in this space. We have described elsewhere a range of methods designed to stimulate emergent patterns in complex knowledge interactions by increasing the number of perspectives available to a decision maker. (Kurtz and Snowden 2003, 469)

50 According to Snowden, two major theorists on sense-making are Weick and Dervin. Weick was concerned primarily with sense-making in organizational contexts, and defined it as “the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals’ ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalize what people are doing” (Weick 1995; Weick et al., 2005).

Dervin, who prefers the term “sense-making,” focuses more specifically on the individual dimension and communication. In an early paper, she defined it as:

behavior, both internal (i.e. cognitive) and external (i.e. procedural) which allows the individual to construct and design his/her movement through time-space. Sense-making behavior, thus, is communicating behavior. Information seeking and use is central to sense-making (as it similarly is seen as central to all communicating) but what is meant by these terms is radically different than what is typically meant in the positivistic tradition. (Dervin, B. 1983)

51 Changes that can serve as indicators of “thriving” include:

- Progressive reduction in the indices of traumatic childhood and adult experiences;
- The group’s increasing understandings of its social and civic conditions—and its challenges, needs and capacities;
- Reduction in the destructive social and civic beliefs, practices and behaviors; and
- Growth in the group’s breadth, density, inclusiveness, diversity, and the extent of social and civic relations and practices.

52 The “outcome harvesting” methodology, developed by Wilson-Grau, is particularly helpful in

complex programming contexts where relations of cause and effect are not fully understood. Conventional monitoring and evaluation aimed at determining results compares planned outcomes with what is actually achieved. In complex environments, however, objectives and the paths to achieve them are largely unpredictable and predefined objectives and theories of change must be modified over time to respond to changes in the context. Outcome Harvesting is especially useful when the aim is to understand how individual outcomes contribute to broader system-wide changes. (Wilson-Grau 2013, 2–3)

53 In a 2014 editorial, Moser and McIlwaine noted that:

Ten years ago, there was optimism that violence could be reduced through a better understanding of the phenomenon, additional resources and a marked policy shift towards safety and security.⁽³⁾ Violence, like poverty, was seen as yet another development problem or constraint that could be challenged and overcome. . . .

Today, in 2014, while it may be considered controversial, we need to adopt a different positionality and to recognize that urban violence is not going away. Indeed, violence is an integral part of the current model of development itself. While it may deepen, transform and mutate into unforeseeable forms, violence is here to stay. Recognizing this may be the first step towards a new approach that enables those who are more vulnerable and affected by violence not only to manage and control the daily manifestations of violence they experience, but, more importantly, to empower them to contest and confront the structural causes that lead to violence. (Moser and McIlwaine 2014)

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