Intersecting Violences

A Review of Feminist Theories and Debates on Violence against Women and Poverty in Latin America

Author: Patricia Muñoz Cabrera | Editor: Mandy Macdonald

Central America Women's Network

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Intersecting Inequalities

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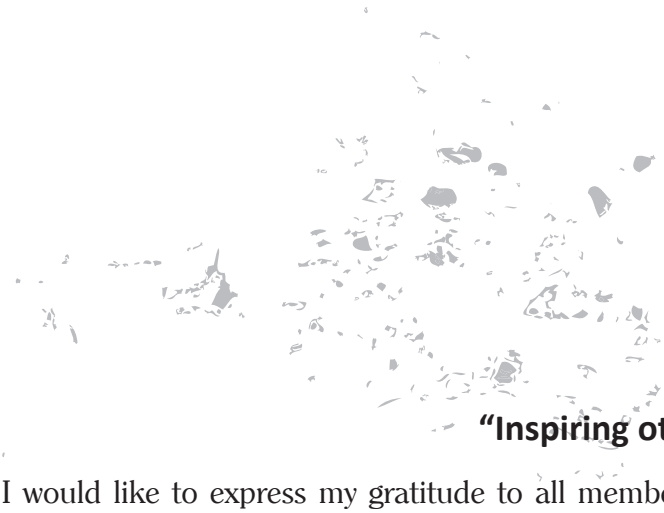

Acknowledgments

“Inspiring other women & men to join in the struggle.”

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Finally, this work is dedicated to those women who continue to struggle against violence and social injustice, inspiring and involving women & men to join in the struggle.

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Executive Summary

Feminist research has shed important light on the relationship between VAW and women's poverty. This paper provides a critical review of the scholarly literature on violence against women (VAW) and its link with women's poverty. In particular, it reviews how women and feminist scholars conceptualise the role of neoliberal policies in the reproduction of VAW and women's poverty in Latin America with a particular focus on Central America. The review is organised in four chapters:

Chapter 1 makes a case for intersectionality as an appropriate approach to the complexity inherent in VAW and poverty in Latin America. Intersectionality has been defined as "a complex system of multiple, simultaneous structural causes of oppression" in which discrimination on grounds of sex, race/ethnicity, age, sexual preference, and other factors, including poverty, interact to generate a continuum of forms and gradations of violence. The main argument here is that, because of the history of racial, sexual and gender politics in Latin America, VAW and women's poverty can be most productively examined through an intersectional lens. The chapter also explores the concept of feminicide or femicide (broadly defined as the murder of women because they are women) and looks at the differently nuanced uses of these terms by different scholars.

Chapter 2 discusses how the multiple structures of economic neoliberalism and political and patriarchal power oppressing women at the macro (regional, national) level are inextricably linked to economic, social, sexual and cultural forms of VAW at the micro, or local, level, and analyses the role of institutions as (re)producers of economic violence against women.

Chapter 3 reviews some recent scholarship which probes the issue of VAW from an intersectional perspective. As the history of the continent shows, in countries ravaged by institutional violence and armed conflict, women with "multiple subordinated identities" (such as indigenous, poor women or non-indigenous, poor, lesbian women - see section 1.1) tend to be affected by the nexus of violence and poverty in ways which call for a radical re-examination of the concept of "woman" as articulated in the VAW theoretical paradigm. An important question in this chapter is how women's social locations and their perceived sense of identity affect the way they conceptualise VAW and poverty.

Chapter 4 discusses scholarship on the role of the State and religious institutions in the pervasiveness of VAW in Latin America. A crucial issue here is how scholars conceptualise the relationship between VAW and social constructions of masculinity. A subsidiary question is whether increased levels of critical consciousness amongst men can influence the development of non-hegemonic or less dominant discourses and practices of masculinity. Finally, this chapter reviews recent research on femicide/feminicide as an extreme form of VAW and examines the failure of public institutions to control it.

This review finds that feminist paradigms or models which integrate economic, sociological and cultural variables appear to be the most appropriate for unpacking the complexity inherent in the continuum of VAW and the persistence of women's impoverishment which these intersecting structures of inequalities generate. An integrated approach seems likely to provide the most holistic and structural reading of VAW and its link with women's poverty.

Also, while considerable attention has been given to forms of VAW affecting women's lives and bodies in material terms, further research on the interface between material and symbolic violence is needed, in particular, the processes through which many forms of domination, abuse and everyday violence become "routinised", i.e., constructed as natural by dominant cultures, institutions and ideologies, to such an extent that they can be said to shape women's daily existence.

Introduction

Both violence against women (VAW) and the increasing feminisation of poverty around the world have long preoccupied feminist and women scholars. The current interlocking crises in food security, labour, economies, climate and care have heightened this preoccupation into urgency. The studies reviewed in this paper show that, although VAW has been recognised as a human rights violation, abuse and neglect of women's economic, social and cultural rights have not. Women continue to be denied access to material resources on equal terms with men and to be systematically excluded from the political and policy spaces where crucial decisions affecting their lives are made. To make matters worse, the State and its institutions continue to overlook the structural violence impinging on women.[1]

The relationship between VAW and women's poverty has become a formal area of research in the past two decades, since studies revealed that women were confronted with different sources of discrimination which hinged largely upon the gendered dimensions of their t social identities. Concomitant with gender-based analysis of VAW and its impact on women's poverty, studies revealing the intersecting structures of oppression impinging on indigenous, black and non-heterosexual women and girls gradually began to make their way to the forefront of research circles and policy arenas. As a result, new policy and conceptual space was opened for examining the interconnection between women's structural subordination and the myriad forms of violence perpetuating their poverty.

A key question in this paper is not so much *how* women are abused and discriminated against in Latin American societies but *why*. What are the structural causes of their subjugated status in these societies? What is the relationship between cultural, sexual, racial and economic structures and the pervasiveness of both VAW and women's poverty? What makes these oppressive structures so resilient? What is the connection between patriarchal constructions of the State and religious institutions and the particular forms of violence and poverty affecting women? These are some of the questions guiding this review of recent scholarship and theoretical debates on VAW, poverty and intersecting structures of inequality in Latin America.

A major finding in this review is that even though one should recognise the seminal contribution of feminist economic theoretical paradigms to the issue of women's poverty and subordinated status in Latin American societies, paradigms which integrate sociological, cultural and intersectional variables seem the most appropriate for unpacking the complex structural causes underlying the continuum of VAW and the persistent condition of impoverishment this subjugated condition generates.

1 The Norwegian sociologist and peace researcher Johan Galtung defines structural violence as the mechanism through which social, economic and political systems institutionalise harm. In his view, institutionalised discrimination, inequities and injustices such as the pervasive subjugation of women, exploitation of undocumented workers, and segregating housing policies for the poor are examples of structural violence (1969: 167-92).

Methodology and Scope

This paper is structured in four chapters as outlined above in the Executive Summary. It reviews recent scholarly literature on VAW through an intersectional lens, analysing how research on VAW and poverty cuts across race/ethnicity, age, class, t and other differences. It also considers the concern with identities, for, as many indigenous, Afro-descendant and lesbian women in Latin America consistently point out, while VAW affects all women because they are women, the issue is complicated by racial, ethnic, class, age and heterosexist discrimination.[2]

Although this review concentrates on Latin American research, it takes stock where relevant of research produced by European and US scholars. However, I have focused particularly on the work of Latin American researchers in order to bring these debates to a European readership, in the hope that this work will contribute to transnational and cross-cultural debates on VAW and the structures of inequality perpetuating the subordinated status of women around the world.

2 The categories mentioned here are not an exhaustive list. States and international organisations vary in the number of grounds of discrimination they specify in national legislation or inernational human rights instruments; the UK-based Equal Rights Trust (www.equalrightstrust.org) gives a very extensive list, saying that *"Discrimination must be prohibited where it is on grounds of race, colour, ethnicity, descent, sex, pregnancy, maternity, civil, family or carer status, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, birth, national or social origin, nationality, economic status, association with a national minority, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, health status, genetic or other predisposition toward illness or a combination of any of these grounds, or on the basis of characteristics associated with any of these grounds".*

Chapter 1:
Key Concepts, Terms and Definitions

1.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a complex and often contested concept in academia. However, since its creation in 1995, it has proved immensely useful as a theoretical, conceptual and policy tool for unpacking the multiplicity and simultaneity of causes and dimensions of women's oppression. A good general introduction to the concept can be found in the introductory primer, ***Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice,*** published by AWID (2004).

1.1.1 Origins of the concept

The term 'intersectionality' was coined by the legal expert Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1995. The Afro-American scholar came to this concept inspired by and building upon the accumulated knowledge of resistance and emancipation inherited from her ancestors: pioneering black feminist thinkers, who, since the days of slavery, fought against the objectification of their bodies and against the yoke of racism, sexism, and discrimination based on gender and social class. Crenshaw defines intersectionality as expressing a *"complex system of multiple, simultaneous structure of oppression". In her theoretical framework, intersectional subordination "is often the consequence of one burden interacting with existing vulnerabilities to create a new dimension of disempowerment"* (1995: 359).

Crenshaw's main argument is that women of colour experience racism in ways that differ from black men's experience of racism, and sexism in ways which differ from white women's perception of sexism *(ibid.)*. She was inspired by two conceptual frameworks – *"multiple jeopardy"* and *"interlocking factors of oppression"* – which had been introduced in US feminist circles by black women scholars of the second black women's renaissance (Beal 1969; Combahee River Collective 1982; Smith 1982; Lorde 2007; Carby 1987; King 1988) and which had also been embraced by *Chicano* (Mexican descendants born in the USA) feminists of colour (Anzaldúa 1983; Moya 2000). Crenshaw argues that women of colour and migrant women in the United States suffered simultaneous racial and gender oppression and draws a distinction between **structural** and **political** intersectionality. By structural intersectionality she means the convergence of systems of race, gender and class discrimination resulting in women being subjugated in particular ways. Political intersectionality highlights the points of intersection of multiple oppressions, the relative positioning of the subordinated groups, and the conflicting political agendas of the multiple groups to which oppressed subjects belong.[3]

An intersectional approach to women's oppression in Guatemala

Yakin Ertürk, the former UN Rapporteur on VAW, uses the concept of intersectionality in her 2005 report on Guatemala, where she states that VAW "is widespread in Guatemalan society and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetuators of violence sustains parallel and multiple structures of power". Ertürk stresses the intersectional nature of VAW and the toll it takes upon women's power to act upon the oppressive conditions of their existence:

Women's exposure to violence is related to their position in the multiple systems of inequality and shows a tendency to increase as these systems intersect, creating layers of discrimination and exclusion for different groups of women.

Ertürk distinguishes four basic systems of inequality: class (which produces poverty), ethnicity, urban/rural residence, and displacement. These systems intersect with gender hierarchies which construct "diverse categories" of women, to intensify the subjugation of women in Guatemalan society in differentiated ways. Ertürk identifies "disability and sexual orientation" as other factors intervening in violations of women's human rights. She concludes that intersecting forms of discrimination exacerbate women's vulnerability and place them at risk of violence. (2005: 8)

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3 The terms 'subject' or 'social subject' are used here to refer to individuals considered as agents in their social and historical contexts.

Crenshaw followed pioneering US black feminist thinkers, such as Ana Julia Cooper (1890) and Sojourner Truth (1850), who consistently warned against dissociating theorising on womanhood, gender and sexual oppression from the disenfranchising impact of racism.[4] She deliberately builds upon those thinkers' experiential knowledge of interlocking oppressions to develop a model which could illuminate how the continuum of violence against women of colour and poor women was informed by dimensions other than their being women. In one of her studies, she focuses on battering and rape to show how the disempowerment of women of colour is the product of "intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, and how these experiences tend not to be represented within the discourse of either feminism or antiracism" (1989: 359). Crenshaw's contention is that theorising on VAW should locate discussion at the point where sources of discrimination such as racism, gender discrimination, ageism and heterosexism intersect, for intersections provide useful insights into the structural and political aspects of VAW while also highlighting the role of public institutions.

US sociological theorising on women's oppression since Crenshaw has been informed by two models, the **additive** and the **intersectional.** The additive model approaches sources of violence as an accumulation of oppressions (poverty + gender discrimination, poverty + racial/ethnic discrimination, etc.); however, many black and other feminist scholars in the United States consider that this approach fragments the analysis of VAW and overlooks the important fact that "women" as an analytical category is intersected by simultaneous and multiple sources of identity which go "beyond gender", such as race, class or sexuality. By contrast, intersectional analysis approaches sources of violence or oppressions as a nexus in which poverty cuts across gender, race, sexuality and/or other categories.[5] See Annex 1: Intersectionality and power analysis: The domination matrix.

1.1.2 The interplay of multiple discriminations

Elizabeth Spelman (1988) and Patricia Hill Collins (1998, 2000, 2006) are among those feminist scholars who have endorsed the intersectional model, and both have consistently criticised US mainstream feminist scholarship for failing to consider the salience of race and class in their theories on patriarchy, gender and sexual discrimination. More recently, Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard P. Eibach (2008) have re-examined the concept of intersectionality with reference to an "interactive model" that presupposes "multiple subordinated identities" which a person experiences as a whole, contending with discrimination as a "multiply marginalized other" (2008: 378). They argue that people with multiple subordinated identities will endure more prejudice and discrimination than those with a single subordinate identity:

> *"The double jeopardy thesis is typically supported by findings demonstrating that on many economic and social indicators such as wages, job authority, and occupational status, people with intersecting subordinate identities (e.g., Black women, Latinas, and some groups of Asian-American women) are at the bottom, falling below White women and ethnic minority men."* (2008: 379)

They go on to argue that in a process which they call "synergistic interaction", oppressed subjects perceive their multiple social identities as inextricable from one another, and this empowers them to fight discrimination as a "multiply marginalized other" (2009: 391).

Many of the scholars who have developed Crenshaw's framework further have overlooked the

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4 Traditionally, the main argument in US black feminist theorising on VAW has been that along with patriarchy, white supremacist ideologies have travelled throughout US history as policies, practices and stereotyping. Deborah Grey White (1987) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) speak of a crossroads of ideologies in which slavery defined black women as inferior to white men and women, and to black men.

5 For a discussion of the distinction between the additive and intersectional approach to women's subordination see Spelman 1988 and Hancock 2007. Leslie McCall (2005) and Sylvia Walby (2007) have developed useful theoretical insights on the complexity of intersectionality in connection with categories of identity.

relationship between intersecting oppressions and power systems. In developing the intersectional paradigm, Crenshaw was driven by a concern with both patriarchal and (white) supremacist discourses, contending that both define women of colour as subordinated to men in general and to white women in particular. In her study on violence against migrant women, Crenshaw refers to "the almost routine violence" shaping women's everyday lives, and the inability of policy-makers and the judiciary to understand the complexity inherent in VAW as experienced by poor women of colour, migrant women and other categories of women. It was precisely the politicisation of VAW – its transformation from a private into a public concern and its linkage with the entangled ideologies of white supremacy and patriarchy – which led Crenshaw to revisit the discourse on identity politics in order to explore the root causes of VAW.

1.1.3 The Latin American context: Intersectionality and the legacy of colonialism

In the Latin American context, a 2006 study by **CLADEM** (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer) suggests that VAW transcends all dimensions of social life – regardless of race, class, religion, income – and often intersects with structural violence, as the growing levels of poverty, social inequality and the lack of employment opportunities show. This assertion may pose a problem to women scholars working on VAW from an intersectional perspective. Indeed, transcendence can obscure the differentiated impact VAW has on women who by virtue of their ethnicity, language, cosmogony/religion, race, class, and phenotype, are defined as multiply inferior: inferior to other men because of their gender, to non-indigenous women because of their race, to well-off women because of their being poor, to heterosexual women because of their being lesbian. As Monroy Henríquez notes (2006), the factors determining women's exclusion are generational, gender-based, geographical, ethnic, political and socio-economic.

Studies examining the condition of more excluded groups of women, such as indigenous women and women of African descent, emphasise the racism, ethnic discrimination and the state of dispossession from which they have had to redefine their sense of subjectivity and social agency. Importantly, the colonial legacies underlying structural VAW in Latin America are seldom discussed in mainstream feminist theoretical work on VAW produced by non-indigenous or non-black feminist scholars. This suggests that much feminist scholarship has overlooked the structural heterogeneity of Latin American women as a category of analysis. In two recent publications, Victoria Sanford (2008, 2009) uses Guatemala as a case study to explore the historical continuum of colonial domination and dispossession which has shaped racial and ethnic relations in the continent. This continuum, she notes, has defined the relationship between the state and indigenous people, women in particular, within the boundaries of direct violence, terror and land dispossession. Thus women who belong to a subjugated people tend to conceptualise violence as inextricably linked to state violence and terror.

1.2 Analysing VAW and poverty in Latin America: Different approaches

> ***"We view the gender perspective as a Western-centred notion originating from a hegemonic culture. Therefore, we believe that it is crucial to develop a gender approach which incorporates ethnic difference and permits analysis of the roles, relations and identities of men and women from their own logic. It is necessary to encourage internal and intercultural dialogue on women's rights, exploring the interconnections between individual and collective rights. These rights define the sense of identity of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples".*** (Bezarés Cóbar 2008: 21)

The processes of unravelling this web of intersecting factors of oppression and discrimination with which women are faced, and of trying to establish perspectives and priorities on which to base analyses of VAW, have generated lively debate among feminist scholars in Latin America. This section outlines some of the main areas of debate.

1.2.1 Different perspectives define intersectional priorities

Although racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies and their interactions have shaped the emergence and development of nation-states and social relations in Latin America, this review found few studies which probe the nexus of VAW and poverty from an intersectional standpoint. Most of the studies view patriarchy-derived gender discrimination as the most significant source of women's oppression, but very few explore how racial, class and other discriminations cut across VAW. Approaching VAW intersectionally remains a major challenge to feminist theorising and praxis in Latin America.

Many studies highlight the importance of unequal power relations in understanding the root causes of women's poverty (e.g. Arriagada 2006); others emphasise "gender asymmetries" as perpetuators of discrimination against women in labour markets and political spaces (Azar et al. 2008; Bradshaw 2002); yet others stress the role of patriarchy in VAW and women's impoverishment (Dignas 2008; CLADEM 2007; Mélidas 2008). Some of these works are discussed further in section 2.2. Significantly, intersectional analysis is more likely to appear in research carried out by indigenous and Afro-descendant women or by scholars who specialise in indigenous and black studies (Bezarés Cóbar 2007; Silva 2007; Mujer Maya 2009).

This gap suggests that even amongst Latin American feminist scholars different theoretical positions result from privileging or prioritising one dimension of analysis of the VAW/poverty nexus over others. This is often linked to the methodological and epistemological standpoints of researchers themselves. To some scholars, sexual and gender oppression are the most important sources of subjugation in women's lives. Thus, to many white, mestiza or ladina lesbian scholars, patriarchy-derived heterosexist normativity - i.e. the imposition by patriarchy of heterosexuality as the only accepted norm - seems to constitute the primary source of disempowerment and disenfranchisement (Mendoza 2001). To Berlant and Warner , heterosexist normativity occurs when "the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations [...] make heterosexuality seem not only coherent [...] but also privileged" (1998: 548). Some scholars -e.g. Rich (1980/2003); Schutte (1997)- contend that even within heterosexual relations, the ideological arrangements promoted by the patriarchal state and religious institutions have established a normative idea of female sexuality; Indigenous or black lesbian women, on the other hand, will more likely be affected by racism by virtue of their skin colour and heterosexist discrimination by virtue of their sexual choice.[6]

On the other hand, to scholars researching the impact of VAW amongst indigenous, black, nonheterosexual and working-class women, the intersections of race, class and sexual oppression constitute the key focal areas of feminist enquiry. To many black and indigenous women scholars in the Americas, the history of patriarchal and racist violence in the emergence and development of nation-states is an important element in the analysis of structural inequalities informing the nexus VAW/poverty. Sueli Carneiro (2001), for instance, contends that the legacy of European hegemonies in the Americas which objectified black men and women continues to pervade the Latin American mindset. Jean Franco (2006) argues that European colonisers constructed an idea of indigenous peoples as "alien" to a Western-based notion of modernity and that this legacy has permitted mestizo elites to commit crimes against indigenous men and women with total impunity. Mirta Kennedy is among those white scholars who recognize the importance of the racist colonial legacy: she notes (2009) that

> *"the colonial oppression which inaugurated discrimination against women in Latin America was achieved through the matrix of violence and racism. This matrix is at the very heart of feminine identity in the continent".*

This tension becomes clearer if one considers the way Latin American women scholars engage with

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6 For an analysis of the epistemic significance of multiple oppressions in processes of identity construction, see Moya and Helms-García 2000.

"women" as a category of analysis. Few of the works reviewed explore the multilayered meanings informing the notion of "women" in the context of the "VAW and poverty" nexus. Julia Monárrez Fragoso holds that the constructed superiority of some categories of women and the constructed inferiority of others is an important element informing the root causes of VAW. She holds that, regardless of their age, women with special needs, women from different class, race and ethnic groups, and women living in poverty experience VAW in very different ways, adding that the process of explaining sexual, gender, class and racial differences in biological terms has naturalised social inequity. Building upon Stolcke (2000: 42), Monárrez posits a biologisation of difference resulting from an ideological process through which modern societies try to overcome the contradictions generated by class stratification. Biologisation of difference becomes particularly visible in times of social conflict: instead of a critical rethinking of the system which subjugates women, social conflict is neutralised through blaming the victims for their inferiority (2002: 10, 11). In the context of feminicide (see section 1.4 below) and other forms of VAW. Monárrez urges consideration of how class hierarchies cut across race, gender and sexuality in ways which privilege well-off women and intensify the expendability of poor, working-class women (2002). Based upon empirical evidence, she demonstrates that many of the murdered women of Ciudad Juárez were active in the tertiary (services) sector, notorious for its high concentration of exploited and poorly educated women workers.

Monárrez's critique shows that both the analytic discourses and the research priorities informing feminist scholarship on VAW are heterogeneous and not entirely exempt from power differentials. It also evokes the contention of several US feminists of colour during the 1980s, that the "empowered subject" claimed by white, middle-class US feminist theorists was primarily white and socially privileged, whereas the subject claimed by progressive male intellectuals was primarily male. In Audre Lorde's apt summary:

> *"Racism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance. Sexism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance"* (Lorde 1982: 115).

Progressive white feminists such as Sally McWilliams (1985), Teresa De Lauretis (1990) and Jane Roland (1994) have echoed this view, recognising that the female subject is not a homogeneous category: "white academic feminists have recognized the terrible mistake we made in assuming that all the individuals in the world called 'women' were exactly like us" (Roland 1994: 631). As De Lauretis explained, "speaking out within and against feminism by women of color" has forced US feminism "to confront, both emotionally and conceptually, the presence of power relations that just could not be analyzed, altered, or even addressed by the concepts of gender and sexual difference" (1990: 133).

1.2.2 Gender-based violence or violence against women?

A second area of debate in the works reviewed relates to the term **"gender-based violence"** (GBV). Scholars such as Sue Turrell caution against equating GBV with VAW, arguing that the term obscures the appalling reality that women and girls constitute the vast majority of GBV victims and men the majority of perpetrators. Unambiguous use of the term "violence against women" exposes more tellingly governments' failure to address power inequalities between men and women in both the public and private spheres (Turrell 2007: 1). Geraldine Terry (2004) and Prieto and colleagues (2007) clarify that GBV and VAW are not synonymous and that the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) approaches VAW as a "sub-category" of GBV, covering any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Terry 2004: xiv; CAWN 2008: 2).

Other scholars stress the relevance of "gendered violence" in their reflection on masculinities (e.g. Jacobson et al. 2000). Marcela Lagarde's use of the term "gender-based violence against women"

highlights the significance of gender difference in the set of sexual, social, economic, judicial, political and cultural factors which determine men's domination of women (2006: 15-16).

For their part, Enrique Gomáriz (2007), Andrés Montero (2004), Luis Bonino Méndez (1998) and Patrick Welsh (2001) offer useful insights on GBV from the perspective of male scholars (see also §4.1 below). Montero refers to male-based violence (*violencia de género masculino*) to specify that it is violence against women perpetrated exclusively by men; while Bonino Méndez speaks of "masculine VAW" to problematise the notion of *micromachismos*, and Patrick Welsh writes of machista violence against women and "intrageneric violence" to problematise the social construction of masculine identity as embedded in relations of domination and violence.

Lesbian women's organisations such as **Cattrachas** in Honduras have taken this debate a step further, arguing that the term "gender-based violence" assumes a false bipolarity created and perpetuated by patriarchy's heterosexist ideology. This heterosexism is invisible when the term "gender" is used with the assumption that only two genders exist. The term "gender-based violence" obscures the fact that neither of the two hegemonic genders (femenine and masculine) can embrace the content and contours of lesbian existence or give a full account of the heterosexist oppression experienced by lesbian women, an oppression intensified by the cultural myth of the family as a nuclear and heterosexual institution. **Cattrachas** uses "genders" and "violences" to embrace the plurality of gender realities informing VAW in Central America. These violences, they insist, are the product of both patriarchal ideology and heterosexist supremacy.

Scholars and researchers working with indigenous and Afro-descendant women in Central America also suggest that violence should be referred to in the plural, since indigenous people have historically endured intersecting violences both as individuals and collectively, as peoples (Iximuleu Chnab'jul 2008: 12). Echoing the creators of intersectionality, Brazilian scholar Sueli Carneiro (2001) argues that for Afro-descendant women, a feminist standpoint should incorporate gender as one "theoretical variable' which cannot be dissociated from other axes of oppression. Racism, for instance, is a constitutive element of Latin American societies and determines gender hierarchies. Carneiro stresses the structural nature of the violence committed against black women in Latin America, insisting upon the need for feminist scholars to reflect on the colonialist matrix of power which drives these intersecting violences and the role of historical memory in preserving the knowledge of past violations of women's human rights. Carneiro invites feminist scholars to re-examine the gender inequality paradigm informing Latin American feminist theorising and to recognise the simultaneous axes of oppression at work in the disenfranchisement of the continent's black and indigenous women. Carneiro refers to "internal inequalities" generated by the male hegemonic system and calls on feminist scholars to dismantle the "complementary ideologies" (i.e. racism) that this system has generated (2001: 2).[7]

Bearing in mind this key debate among feminist scholars, and the importance of maintaining the focus on "women" as a distinctive, multilayered and complex category of analysis, this paper draws a clear distinction between VAW from GBV, and approaches the issue of VAW as an intersectional concept.

1.3 VAW in the public sphere: From "women's issue" to human rights violation

One of the major concerns in the works reviewed here is women's struggle to get VAW recognised as a violation of human rights. Christine Chinkin and Hilary Charlesworth (1993) have made a major contribution in this field. They argue that the category of universal human rights has been "structurally

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7 Here Carneiro evokes what Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach call "synergistic interaction", a process that leads oppressed subjects to perceive their multiple social identities as inextricable from one another and empowers them to fight discrimination as a "multiply marginalized other" (2009: 391).

biased against women" and that the very notion of universal human rights hinges upon the "normative superiority" of men: "in the major human rights treaties, rights are defined according to what men fear will happen to them" (1993: 63, 69). International lawyers and institutions ignore the importance of human rights violations in the private sphere, where many women spend most of their lives; while equality between the sexes has not yet been awarded the status of "a fundamental and basic tenet of a communal world order" – for instance, sex discrimination is not placed on an equal footing with racial discrimination. They call upon feminist scholars to re-examine the lists of "*jus cogens* norms"[8] (such as genocide, slavery, murder and disappearance) enshrined in international treaties, so as to give greater prominence to a range of other human rights which are often missing from such lists but are inextricably and specifically related to women's rights: the rights to sexual equality, food, reproductive freedom, freedom from violence and oppression, and peace.

Recent studies of the history of the feminist movement in Latin America trace the radical shift in the global mindset about VAW. From being viewed as a "women's issue" and therefore relegated to the private sphere, it has become understood as a matter of public concern and a human rights violation (UNIFEM 2007; CLADEM 2007: 8), and forms of VAW such as intra-familial and intimate partner violence have been recognised as public issues requiring appropriate legislation, institutional mechanisms and resources. CLADEM's monitoring report on feminicides (2007) reminds us of the long and often hazardous struggle to achieve this shift. Latin American feminists and activists fought on several fronts to make clear the gendered and sexual nature of VAW and to push governments to treat VAW as a human rights violation.

As the studies reiterate, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW)[9], the **UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women** (1993), and the **Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women** (1994), known as the **Belém do Pará Convention**, are all adequate frameworks for making national governments accountable for commitments they have made internationally. CLADEM's report, in particular, highlights the **Belém do Pará Convention** as a very appropriate framework for fighting for the eradication of VAW, which has empowered women in their capacity to produce analysis, to develop policy proposals and to monitor governments' compliance with their commitments. Significantly, this Convention has also provided women with material to set international judicial precedents, as in the case of María da Penha, which resulted – after many years of campaigning in the Brazilian state's adoption of new legislation againt domestic violence, the Lei 11.340/06 *para o combate da violência doméstica e familiar contra la mulher* (also known as the Lei Maria da Penha) (CLADEM 2010; Pinto Coelho et al. 2008: 5471-2).[10]

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8 *Jus cogens* (literally, 'compelling law') is a fundamental principle of international law accepted internationally as a norm from which no derogation is ever permitted.

9 Although CEDAW (adopted by the UN GA 1979, effective 1981) does not explicitly mention violence against women, in its General Recommendation no. 19 (1992), the Committee responsible for interpreting and monitoring the implementation of CEDAW clarifies that States Parties to the Convention are obligated to take all appropriate means to eliminate VAW. See Šimonović 2009, a guide to CEDAW from the chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2007-08.

10 In 1983, Maria da Penha survived two murder attempts by her husband. In 1998, despite two sentences by the Ceará Court in Fortaleza, Brazil (1991 and 1996), the aggressor was still free. Maria da Penha, CEJIL and CLADEM took the case to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR/OAE). The Brazilian state remained silent throughout the process. In 2001, the IACHR sanctioned the Brazilian government for omission, negligence and tolerance of VAW in the da Penha case, and stated that the Brazilian state had failed to comply with several articles of the Belém do Pará Convention. It made several recommendations aimed, among other things, at improving public policies on the legal treatment and handling of perpetrators of VAW and adequate training of the judiciary and the police force. The da Penha case is emblematic in the struggle against VAW worldwide. For the first time, the Belém do Pará Convention was effectively used as a framework to enforce legislation protecting women's right to a life free from VAW and to hold a State accountable for impunity. In 2002, the process was concluded in the Brazilian courts, and the aggressor was arrested. In 2003, the case was taken to the CEDAW Committee, which summoned the Brazilian State to adopt legislation on domestic violence. The new law was passed on August 6th, 2006.

Gloria Maira recalls that it was thanks to constant pressure by feminists that the international community recognised women's rights as an "inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedom" and governments committed themselves to guaranteeing this. In 1993 violence against women and girls became formally defined as a serious violation of human rights and incompatible with human dignity. This declaration was further ratified at the UN conferences in Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995). Also in 1994, the **World Health Organisation** (WHO) declared that, because of its magnitude and impact on health and development, violence against women and girls was a public health problem requiring priority attention from member states (Maira, 1999: 332).[11]

Central American women's organisations have also taken VAW from the private to the public arena, paving the way for further legislation on VAW by national governments and international organisations. In the wake of the adoption of the **Belém do Pará Convention**, national legislation against domestic violence in Central American countries made important progress, with laws against domestic violence passed in the later 1990s in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras (with amendments 2006), and Nicaragua.[12] More recently, there has been some success in achieving legislation against VAW outside the domestic sphere (see below, section 4.4). However, recent reports from the region state that much remains to be done in the domains of new legislation, law enforcement, and transformation of the social mindset. Also, more research is needed on the connection between existing conventions protecting women's rights and those concerning the specific rights of indigenous, afro-descendant and non-heterosexual women.

Here it is worth suggesting that the translation of key human rights legislation into languages other than Spanish can play an empowering role. In 2005, Honduras took a step in this direction when, for the first time in history, the government translated the existing (1997) ***Ley contra la violencia doméstica*** y la ***Ley de igualdad de oportunidades*** into Garifuna. Yet this is an issue which appears to have been overlooked in feminist debates on VAW. It should be an important aspect of programme development in the area of VAW, especially since so many of Latin American's female population are of indigenous and Afro-descendant origin.

1.4 The power of inclusive redefinition: Femicide and feminicide

The term 'femicide' was popularised by Jill Radford and Dianne Russell (1992) in Femicide: the Politics of Woman Killing. They argue that violence is part of all relations in society and is reinforced by cultures that legitimise violence against women.

The situation in Ciudad Juárez led the Mexican scholar Marcela Lagarde (2006) to introduce the term "feminicide" referring to government impunity and negligence in investigating the murder of women.

Central American women's organisations use the term femicidio as a legal and political term to refer to the murder of women. It is an extreme form of VAW linked to discrimination, povety and a backlash against women. Both feminicide and femicide indicate the killing of women because they are women, as opposed to homicide, which is gender neutral.
(CAWN 2008: 4)

Femicide, or **feminicide**, can be broatdly defined as the murder of women just because they are women, and stands at the extreme of a continuum of VAW that ranges from verbal threats, insults and

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11 A FAO Report on the status of rural women in Honduras notes that VAW is gradually becoming a problem of public heath, and growing social censorship has gradually surpassed social tolerance (FAO, 2008).

12 'Domestic violence laws of the world', http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/population/domesticviolence/ domesticviolence.htm. See also ISIS website www.isis.cl/temas/vi/balance/portadanew.htm for a list of existing legislation in the region up to 2003.

aggressive bodily gestures to physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence and rape (Muñoz 2008).

Two forms of the term are used, with different nuances. Recent studies from Latin America examine the political and legal adequacy of the terms in national contexts (Dignas 2008; Mélidas 2009; CLADEM 2007; Puentes Aguilar 2007). These redefinitions largely preserve the political adequacy of both notions, for they state compellingly that "femi(ni)cide" relates to the murder of women, just as homicide relates to the murder of men. In some countries, the term "femicide", introduced by Diana E. Russell and Jill Radford in the early 1990s,[13] has been adopted by State institutions; but many studies suggest that Central American feminists prefer the term "feminicide", coined by the Mexican feminist theorist Marcela Lagarde in 2005. Lagarde defines feminicides as "crimes of hatred against women because they are women" and because women have been defined as "expendable", "usable", "abusable" and "disposable" (Lagarde, quoted in Sánchez Martín 2007: 10; see also Kennedy, quoted in Prieto et al. 2007: 26). She equates feminicide with extreme sexual violence, adding that a feminist approach to feminicide makes it possible to link this form of extreme violence with the everyday forms of harassment, abuse and violence that shape the fabric of women's existence (Lagarde 2006: 23).[14] In general, this review uses the term "femicide(s)".

Importantly, Lagarde regards the State and judicial structures as agents that normalise misogyny. The State is accountable for feminicides in several ways: because it tolerates the murders, because it intervenes in the murders, and because it does nothing to solve the murders or protect its citizens. Feminicides occur, Lagarde argues, in a context of the "collapse of the rule of law" (2006; see also Mélidas 2009: 14-15). We discuss this further in section 4.4.

Sylvia Puentes Aguilar analyses femicides and feminicides in Mexico in the context of direct, structural and cultural violence (2007). Building upon Lagarde (2006), she distinguishes between femicides (murders of women) and feminicides (murders of women by men and because they are women). Her study rigorously analyses information on feminicides published in the written press and includes an analysis of homicides perpetrated by women against men (VAM), breaking new ground in its comparative analysis of VAW and VAM. She argues that Mexican legislation is shaped by a patriarchal tradition of gender discrimination which has institutionalised inequality and non-compliance with women's rights to such an extent that it "authorises feminicide" and rewards perpetrators with impunity (2007: 42). For Marta Torres Falcón, establishing "legal equality" (*igualdad jurídica*), as a crucial first step towards guaranteeing equal opportunities at several levels in Mexican society, remains an unachieved political project, an absence which hinders a proper analysis of violence (2004: 2).

13 But existing as a word signifying the murder of a woman since the early nineteenth century (Russell 2008). Russell has modified her definition over the years: in 2001, she and Roberta Harmes defined femicide as 'the killing of females by males because they are female' – a definition which covers all manifestations of male sexism, not just hatred, and also acknowledges that many girls and female babies are victims of femicide and many boys and male adolescents are perpetrators (ibid.).

14 Nancy Scheper-Hughes calls these the "grey zones" of everyday violence (2004: 22).

Chapter 2:
Neoliberalism, globalisation and the feminisation of poverty

The pandemic-like rise of VAW worldwide has gone hand in hand with the liberalisation of trade and investment. Liberalised trade has not only had distorting effects in developing countries; it has also led to the "marketization of gender differences" (Wichterich 2009), the devaluation of women's work resulting from the rapid growth of the "informal" economy (Sassens 2006: 66), and the dismantling of national agendas for human development in accordance with women's human rights, where these existed (Phalane 2002; ICA 2007). Women form most of the workforce in urban informal economies but remain marginalized in national economies (2004: 66). The dramatic transformation of national legislation in order to meet the demands of global trade has hindered States' capacity and political will to guarantee women's right to a life free from violence. The current context of interlocking crises has made this more evident than ever: economic, gender, sexual and racial inequalities combine and interact to create persistent, structural patterns of poverty impinging on women worldwide.

Latin America is no exception. Often referred to as one of the most unequal regions in the world (Abramo 2008: 87), it has developed in a context of structural vulnerability and pervasive social stratification. Policies imposed by the **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) and the **World Bank** (WB) have led governments into adopting an alienating development model largely shaped by external agendas and actors, in tandem with endogenous elites (Maldonado 2008; Cohen 2005). Systemic analyses have shown that the development model resulting from globalised trade in the region is an impoverishing one, because it relies on two interrelated principles: the exploitation of cheap labour for profit maximisation, and the economic precariousness of growing sectors of the Central American population. "Central America is a region where wealth coexists with misery", Carlos Aguilar notes, recalling Robinson's contention that in Central America, a "new transnational model" has created a "bifurcated society... one rich, one poor" (Aguilar 2007: 59-60; Robinson 2003: 244). Along with income polarisation, these authors note, the privatisation of basic social services means that those who can afford to pay get high-quality provision, while most people are denied access or can only afford poor-quality services. Silvio Ciappi (2006) uses the metaphor "scissors-like economic development" for this social bifurcation: the "scissors" ideology works in ways which sever class, sexual, racial and ethnic articulations, keeping marginalised sectors away from the centres of economic power and political decision-making, which are in the hands of powerful, mostly urban, elites.

A study published in 2006/7 by the **Central American Initiative** (ICA) monitoring the **Beijing Platform for Action** is one of many to identify neoliberalism as the main obstacle to democracy and to condemn governments for privileging economic growth over development policies directed towards ensuring an equitable distribution of resources and assets. In most countries of the region, official poverty reduction programmes (PRPs) are palliatives that only accentuate women's disempowerment and dependency, increase their workload, and take for granted the informality and non-remuneration of women's work (2007: 7). In fact, the connection between this situation and the rise of VAW in the region has already been succinctly made by the **Centro de Derechos de Mujeres in Honduras** (CDM). In a publication they note that the impoverished status of most Central American women is the consequence of the economic policies adopted by the region's governments and has exacerbated VAW in the region (CDM 2005: 10).

A report by the **Honduran Collective of University Women** (COFEMUN 2007) assesses governments' compliance with the agenda of women's rights in Central America. It stresses the underrepresentation of women in decision-making at all levels, the overexploitation of women, and the lack of recognition of their contribution to national economies. It highlights the inability of Central American and Mexican governments to ensure the rights of millions of women to development with equity and equality, arguing that "while women continue to service the needs of others, it is not possible to think in a democracy that recognizes them as full-fledged citizens. "The report criticises governments for unquestioningly and uncritically endorsing the neoliberal agenda, thereby hampering national economies and favouring the interests of transnational capital. COFEMUN summons Central American and Mexican governments to take concrete and verifiable actions in the short and medium terms to ensure effective implementation

of women's economic, social, cultural, political, sexual, reproductive and environmental rights" (2007: 5-6).

2.1 Feminisation of poverty: Revisiting the debate

"Poverty has a woman's face: of 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70 per cent are women and children". (UNDP 1995)

The concept of the feminisation of poverty originated from debates on the material conditions of single mothers in the USA, and the term entered the global feminist vocabulary during the 1995 Beijing Conference. Although it is a controversial concept in academic, policy and development arenas (BRIDGE 2001), many feminist scholars have embraced it as a useful analytical starting point for examining the gender-differentiated impact of the globalisation of trade and the economy. Sarah Bradshaw, for instance, recognises the political importance of the notion of the feminisation of poverty, for it has made it possible to "highlight how women's experiences of poverty are distinct from those of men and indeed how different women experience poverty differently from each other" (2002: 11). However, although there is broad consensus amongst feminist scholars that different aspects of poverty, deprivation, powerlessness and vulnerability have gender dimensions (Phalane and Lebakeng 2001), there is less agreement about the relation between the feminisation of poverty and the rise in female household headship (Bradshaw 2002; Chant 2009: 21).

Taking Costa Rica as a case study, Sylvia Chant (2009) disagrees with the claim that the feminisation of poverty has increased. She points out that the assertion that "poverty is 'feminising', especially in respect of female-headed households" can be disproved with empirical evidence from the field. In some parts of the country (e.g. Guanacaste province), women sometimes see "female headship" as a more viable – even a preferable – option. This unexpected shift is largely due to social and legal changes and to the government's expression of its concern with gender equality by directly allocating public resources to low-income households. As a result, women have become less inclined to tolerate gender inequalities at the domestic level (2009: 19-43). Sarah Bradshaw also warns against approaching the feminisation of poverty as a wholly negative phenomenon and suggests that it should be differentiated from female household headship, while acknowledging that there is political value in the way it has highlighted how women's experiences of poverty differ from men's, and indeed how different women experience poverty differently. For Bradshaw (2002: 11), as for Arriagada, poor women's experiential knowledge of poverty and its roots should not be reduced to easily digestible concepts that simply equate women's poverty with female household headship.

In Guatemala, on the other hand, Yakin Ertürk reports that the 30-year war intensified gender asymmetries, forcing poor women out of the their traditional roles to seek paid work but also exacerbating their structural vulnerability through widowhood, abandonment, displacement and the gender violence associated with conflict (2005).

A strong message emerging from the works reviewed here is that poverty should be viewed not only as a process informed by power relations but also as one being feminised. Women become impoverished through institutional, cultural and social arrangements which are sustained by hegemonic systems. Many studies suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that international institutions and national governments should re-examine the very notion of poverty and incorporate poor women's first-hand knowledge of their own situations into a new definition. This redefinition should reject the "one-size-fits-all" approach to poverty eradication and acknowledge the fact that concepts of poverty vary according to national and local contexts and power relations: who defines poverty and to what extent women's experiential knowledge of poverty and social mobility is included in this definition, remains a key issue in Latin America. If poverty really has a woman's face, these institutions and agents must ask themselves: what is the race, class, sexual and age identity of the women referred to, and what specific structures of inequality determine their impoverished status?

2.2 Reproducers of women's poverty: The role of public institutions in the continuum of VAW

> ***"Women are particularly vulnerable to VAW when they are poor".***
> (Julia Monárrez Fragoso 2002)

The studies reviewed in this section evince a productive tension between concepts of women's poverty and women's impoverishment. Several scholars privilege the notion of impoverishment, for it denotes a concern with a power dynamic (process) and outcome (poverty/inequities and inequalities). Others highlight the direct relationship between VAW and the determinant factors (institutions, discourses, policies and agents) that (re)produce poverty and inequalities. Exposing the agents and institutions responsible for this is a major concern for researchers such as Arriagada (2006), Bradshaw (2002), Milosavljević (2007) and Muñoz (2008). They insist that poverty, inequality and violence are not immutable conditions but are produced and reproduced by factors, actors and institutional arrangements such as macro-economic policies (Aldana 2008: 14-16), which not only privilege national and global economic elites but also contribute to forms of economic VAW which view poverty as "natural" and ensnare vulnerable women in a vicious circle of impoverishment (Cattani 2007; Murillo 2007; Zabala Arguelles 2007; Filgueira 2009).

Many studies also condemn the State and religious institutions for perpetuating devaluing ideologies and misperceptions of women. Symbolic constructions of women as subjugated subjects permeate the mindset of society, both shaping hierarchies of VAW and exacerbating the impoverishment of marginalised women. Thus, cases where victims of violence happen to be economically powerful are far more likely to receive immediate attention, media coverage and, possibly, justice than cases where the victims are female, poor, lesbian, transsexual, indigenous and/or Afro-descendant (Global Rights et al. 2006; ADEIM-Simbiosis et al. 2006). Multiple disempowerment is exacerbated still further by existing violence prevention campaigns which "blame the victim" through classist, misogynist and heterosexist discourses and religious ideologies which emphasise the symbolic subjugation of women (Monárrez Fragoso 2002: 4). The impunity surrounding femi(ni)cides in Ciudad Juárez, where most women are poor, corroborates feminist scholars' assertion that the intersections of class, gender, sexuality and race play a key role in the "superficiality" with which violence against women is treated by the media and others (Lagarde 2006: 24; Monárrez Fragoso 2002). This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Several of the studies reviewed criticise the rather static conceptualisation of poverty articulated in poverty reduction programmes (PRPs), insisting on the need to approach poverty as a process which is multidimensional and not merely income-based. To Else Øyen (2002), poverty is the end result of a power dynamics to which international institutions contribute through pro-poor or anti-poverty policies. Her assumption is that our social world is constitutively defined by relations of domination. In this paradigm, individuals, international institutions and nation-states therefore do not exist in isolation from relations of power and privilege. Re-examining the concept and processes of "poverty production", Øyen suggests that what is necessary is to expose the nature of these processes and make politicians, government officials, and policy-makers in **international financial institutions** (IFIs) and the international donor community recognise that any strategy to reduce poverty will be useless unless the processes and agents (re)producing impoverishment are halted. The pro-poor and anti-poverty programmes of recent decades treat the forces and agents producing impoverishment only marginally, because there is no "interest in creating a conflict where the agents producing poverty can be challenged. A harmonious model is more comfortable than a conflictive one" (2002: 7).

In line with Øyen, Antonio Cattani focuses on inequality, highlighting the need to approach socioeconomic inequalities in relation not only to poverty and "extreme poverty" but also to "extreme wealth". The imbalance between these is the result of multifaceted processes leading to the emergence of forms of appropriation and private enjoyment of socially produced wealth. In his view, sociology

needs to reappropriate the debate on social class and formulate new concepts for understanding the consequences of the current processes of wealth accumulation, the personification of wealth, and the unprecedented empowerment of affluent classes (2003: 1-2).

Sarah Bradshaw's analysis of poverty and VAW in Nicaraguan households reminds us that women's poverty is not only multidimensional but also multisectoral: women experience poverty in different ways at different times and in different spaces (2002: 11). Bradshaw foregrounds location and context in theorising women's poverty in connection with violence inside the household, pointing out that households are heterogeneous and that power relations operate within them. The gender and sexual politics shaping household relations interact with wider social relations to influence women's poverty (*ibid.*). Echoing Øyen, Bradshaw points out that women's well-being is determined not only by income and expenditure but also by social, environmental and organisational factors. Institutions perpetuate the nexus of VAW and women's poverty by, for instance, treating VAW as merely a gender issue, not a public health issue, in their poverty reduction strategies (*ibid.*).

Aura Aldana also distinguishes between poverty and impoverishment. Using Nicaragua as a case study and combining empirical data and theoretical analysis, she defines poverty as a dynamic process produced and reproduced by structures and agents of oligarchic and hegemonic power through a social continuum, and impoverishment as a dynamic embracing both the "consequences" (a social subject actually becomes poor) and the "determinant factors" in the (re)production of gender-based inequality (2008: 15).

Culture and empowerment in Nicaragua

Aldana (2008) sees empowerment as a crucial asset for Nicaraguan women. The women she interviewed saw the development of critical consciousness as a factor of empowerment and self-emancipation which enabled them to become aware of, and struggle against, the generalised perception that women are "gendered protective agents" – always willing to care for others rather than themselves – and that, even as they empower themselves, they do so with others in mind. In Nicaragua's male-centred society, culture plays an important role in women's struggle against poverty, but women on the road to empowerment: are caught between a "culturally transmitted concept" which defines them as selfless providers of care and the "will to achieve their emancipation" (2008: 11)**. This contradiction can be seen in women's attitudes towards their children and the men they feel close to: they tend to be protective while at the same time trying to exercise their right to a more emancipated status (*ibid.*).**

Maxine Molyneux's critical review of the effect of poverty relief programmes on women in Latin America (2007) contends that anti-poverty policies have focused primarily on investment in women rather than on a structural approach to the systemic inequalities which disenfranchise them. Molyneux argues that social policies designed to combat women's poverty hinge primarily upon women's role as mothers and daughters:

> *"The terms of women's incorporation into welfare systems in Latin America are, and always have been, strongly influenced by their symbolic and social roles as mothers. The recently developed antipoverty programmes are in the main, despite some adaptations to modern forms of citizenship, still premised on a gendered construction of social need and, indeed, have the effect of retraditionalizing gendered roles and responsibilities"* (2007: 10).

Molyneux criticises the child-centred approach of poverty relief programmes of Latin American governments, arguing that they have strengthened cultural constructions of femininity which take motherhood as the primary definer of women's social agency. In her view, social policy in Latin America has not been gender-blind, because anti-poverty policies show that governments are well aware of

gendered perceptions relating to social needs. These perceptions are both patriarchal and paternalistic, for they assume that the family is the locus of women's social agency (2007: 4) and public spaces are sites where women can exercise agency only as altruistic providers of care. Even though IFIs and Latin American governments have acknowledged that, historically, women have borne much of the burden of structural reforms, in the new social policy paradigm there has been insufficient policy focus and investment to reverse this situation, and women's specific social needs have not been taken into consideration in anti-poverty programmes. Molyneux convincingly exposes two important shortcomings of PRPs designed and implemented by Latin American governments and the WB. First, policy-makers have been unable to engage fully with the distinctiveness of women's poverty, even though it is well known that men and women have "differential access to resources and opportunities". Second, they persist in lumping women together "with other vulnerable and disempowered groups, notably children and the disabled" (19-20).

Irma Arriagada highlights the multidimensional and dynamic nature of poverty and the importance of the symbolic and conceptual levels in policy debates around poverty eradication. She contends that the way in which institutions like the WB define poverty determines the policies which will be designed to combat it. She rightly points out that, even when focus on income in anti-poverty public policies and PRPs makes it possible to "establish international comparisons" on the consumption power of households, it nevertheless fails to consider the fact that, within the household, unequal power relations result in an unequal distribution of resources, and that this micro-politics is determined by the age and gender of its members (2006: 3).

Arriagada does not suggest a causal link between World Bank poverty reduction policies and the VAW/poverty nexus but focuses instead on the mindset fuelling these policies. She criticises the one-size-fits-all approach the Bank has used hitherto in addressing poverty in developing countries, and its inability to engage in contextualised definitions of poverty that take account of the effect of national and local cultures on women's poverty. She argues that poverty reduction policies that privileges boosting consumption power in post-crisis economies over promoting a more rights-based notion of development risks exacerbating the already high levels of VAW in societies where structural inequalities have reached unprecedented levels. She suggests that the more policy-makers include indicators related to vulnerability, insecurity, social exclusion and self-esteem, the more able they will be to devise policies which are more sustainable from a human rights viewpoint (2006: 4).

Vivian Milosavljević (2007) stresses that poverty should not be perceived solely as unequal distribution of income but also as the result of women's subordinated status in a male-defined world. She argues that conventional methods of measuring poverty are influenced by a cultural myth that defines the household as a homogeneous unit of analysis and a harmonious or democratic entity whose members are per se willing to share household assets equitably. However this assumption ignores power dynamics within the household - a dangerous oversight given that recent surveys of intra-familial and conjugal violence report a high incidence of intra-household VAW (2007: 144). Milosavljević recognises that all forms of violence - physical, sexual or psychological - contribute to women's impoverishment, but insists that poverty analysis must include economic violence against women, which occurs when they are denied access to or control over resources, or the right to work and earn income. Ignoring these forms of violence out of an idealistic assumption that households are spaces where "harmonious power relations are never disturbed" makes an important aspect of VAW remain invisible (2007: 141-4).

Sonia Alvarez Leguizamón also contends that the instruments used by international lending and donor agencies measure poverty by means of statistical exercises which count, map and typify poverty but fail to analyse the processes through which economic inequality is perpetuated (2005). This is also the main argument of a 2005 study by the **COFEMUN**, which asserts that poverty does not exist by itself and calls for methodologies that assess women's poverty and gender inequality in line with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

2.3 Globalising markets, globalising women's poverty

"The tedious work of nimble-fingered women, the poverty of millions of working women and their families, and the raped and mutilated bodies of young women in Mexico and Central America can be read as twenty-first-century variants on the suffering of the slaves, the indentured laborers, and the raped women of the indigenous peoples [...] a tale of the fundamental immorality of neoliberal democratization". (Mendoza 2001)

The fulfilment of multiple and simultaneous social roles by women in low-income households makes them highly vulnerable with respect to the privatisation of services and liberalisation of trade and markets affecting the world (Phalane 2002: 1-2). Free trade agreements and association agreements are well known to have a disempowering impact on the already precarious status of most Latin American women workers.[15] In a region plagued by deep structural inequalities and entrenched use of institutionalised violence to resolve social conflicts, insistence by **IFIs** and governments on trade liberalisation, despite the collapse of the neoliberal model, only exacerbates VAW and violations of women's economic, social and cultural rights.

Maquilas are a classic instance of the way the neoliberal development paradigm both naturalises poverty and "genderises" inequalities. Trade and market liberalisation in Central America have depended heavily on the integration of women into "poorly paid, low-skilled jobs in export processing zone factories" (Mackenzie, 2007). A recent study of Salvadorean maquilas notes that the supposed added value they create in terms of job creation and economic growth is dwarfed by the precarious employment, very poor working conditions and violations of women's human rights occurring in them. The purchasing power of some men and women is sustained by violating the labour rights of many others (Dignas 2008: 12). The **Concertación por un Empleo Digno en la Maquila** (CEDM) in El Salvador states that for women workers, maquilas have become synonymous with long working hours, no freedom to claim labour rights or to organise, and sexual violence and harassment (Gutiérrez 2008: 4).

Overworked, underpaid and insulted: women workers in Central America

A study by the Washington Office on Latin America (2009) provides empirical evidence of the impunity with which the labour, gender and human rights of women workers in Central America are violated. The study found that forced and illegal pregnancy testing in maquilas and other industries has continued unabated; young women workers are forced to work extremely long hours; and women older than 35 are often not hired or forced out of employment because they are considered not physically able to meet the daily quotas demanded. Many women workers know their rights but do not dare to claim them for fear of losing their jobs; though, in many cases, exploitative working conditions force them to resign.

In Guatemalan banana and sugarcane plantations, women workers are subcontracted, must work twelve hours a day or more, are poorly fed and receive no safety gear to protect them from pesticides and chemicals. The study states that the climate of human rights violation is compounded by racist stereotypes portraying indigenous workers as lazy people (WOLA 2009: 16).

Many feminist scholars are reluctant to estimate the cost of VAW in economic terms (Terry 2004: 473), though it is certainly "considerable" (UNIFEM 2007:1). However, from the perspective of economic VAW, such analysis can lead to the development of important policy proposals on how to combat the factors determining women's poverty, in particular, how economic VAW cuts across gender, heterosexist and racist discrimination (*ibid.*).

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15 Among those who discuss this issue are Aguilar (2007); McKenzie (2007); Maldonado (2008); Espino at al. (2007); WOLA (2009); Concertación por un Empleo Digno en la Maquila (CEDM 2008); Dignas (2009).

Chapter 3:

VAW at the Crossroads of poverty, race, gender, age and heterosexual discrimination - An intersectional analysis

"Indigenous women suffer disproportionately from all forms of violence, including sexual violence [...] Indigenous women face the specific burdens of discrimination and violence directed against them because they are women, and because they are also [members of] Indigenous peoples". (Amnesty International)

Intersecting the analytical category "women" with other dimensions of women's identities (such as race, class, sexuality, and age) uncovers more complex readings of VAW (Monárrez Fragoso 2002). Intersectional analysis of VAW and its link with inequality enables us to unpack the catastrophic consequences of neoliberal economic policies for women in general, and in particular for women who are excluded by virtue of their skin colour, their sexual choice, their age, and/or their material poverty. Neoliberal policies have intensified overt and covert racist and sexist mechanisms which further disenfranchise those women who do not conform to normative ideologies of womanhood. This has resulted in the denial of their right to land and their access to bank loans, property, decent work or universal social services. In Latin America, the situation of black, lesbian, indigenous and poor women is particularly dismaying. Such women often find themselves ensnared in a complex web of VAW generated by the intersection of cultural and racial ideologies. Indigenous women in particular may escape the cultural myth defining indigenous peoples as inferior to *ladinos, mestizos* or other dominant racial elites, only to become ensnared in the myth portraying indigenous women as inferior to their *mestizo/ladino* female counterparts. If, as is usually the case, they are also poor, this double jeopardy is tripled.

3.1 Insecurity, invisibility and denial of rights

3.1.1 Indigenous women

Several indigenous organisations and feminist researchers in Central America have denounced the pervasiveness of cultural mythologies which sustain racial and gender discrimination and which, in a highly segmented labour market, confine indigenous women to the domestic sector in towns and the provision of cheap labour in rural areas (Bezarés Cóbar, 2007; FAO 2008; Iximuleu Chnab'jul 2008; Mujer Maya 2009). For these organisations and researchers, such mythologies, which have their roots in the destructive power of colonialism, cannot be dissociated from racial and ethnic violence (Davis 1971, 1983; Spillers 1987; Bezáres Cobar 2007; Mujer Maya 2009).

In her analysis of Guatemalan indigenous women and migration, Patricia Bezarés Cóbar notes that, ten years after the peace accords, most Guatemalans live in precarious economic and social conditions. Social insecurity in the country is high, a consequence of rampant corruption in government and the influence of organised crime on public institutions, in particular those responsible for law enforcement (2006: 116). "Ethnic bias" compounds the disenfranchising impact of the poverty/VAW nexus on indigenous women, producing a triple oppression: Guatemalan indigenous women are women in a society defined by patriarchy, indigenous in a society which praises Western-derived patterns of female physical appearance, and poor in a society which values wealth as a marker of social worth. Maya women experience this multiple jeopardy as a structural source of violence (Bezarés Cóbar 2006: 116).

Indigenous women and girls who migrate as a survival strategy become "intersectionally invisible" as subjects entitled to rights, and the violence they endure is unacknowledged and unaccounted for. Bezarés Cóbar contributes two case studies, concerning young girls in domestic service in Guatemala City, and women and their families employed as seasonal workers on coffee plantations.

- Many of the victims of domestic violence in Guatemala City are indigenous migrant girls, often as young as 15. Working as domestic servants in the capital, they are highly visible as providers of cheap labour and as sexual objects (many are harassed by their male employers), yet their entitlement to rights is completely ignored by the State in the public sphere and by their employers in the reality of their everyday life. Centres specialising in counselling and training exist, but not all girls are aware of it. In fact, lack of knowledge of laws and instruments

protecting the rights of women workers is a recurrent complaint in monitoring reports coming from the region, and women's organisations such as **Las Dignas** have made it a priority to develop programmes on legal literacy.

- Impoverishment forces indigenous women an their families to migrate to other rural areas of Guatemala or to the border zone with Mexico. On Guatemalan coffee plantations, women workers are invisible as women, as indigenous women and as women workers entitled to rights. Highly valued for their skill in handling delicate coffee beans and the productivity that this skill yields, they are nonetheless systematically exploited and abused with total impunity by employers and the state (Bezarés Cóbar 2007: 119).

In a later work Bezarés Cóbar and other scholars (2008) point out that the impunity surrounding genocide against indigenous people has perpetuated longstanding racist stereotypes which continue to disempower indigenous women in Guatemala (Bezarés Cóbar et al. 2008: 10). Catarina Chay, an indigenous Guatemalan scholar, shows how the intersection of gender and ethnic discrimination reveals prejudice in the language used by ladino people to refer to Maya people, such as the remark that "indigenous women are only good as servants." Chay's empirical data show how structural racism (naturalisation of the supposed inferiority of indigenous people), sexism and gender discrimination intersect to exacerbate the structural subjugation of indigenous women. She draws attention to the connection between racist stereotyping of women and verbal or symbolic violence against women who do not conform to hegemonic ideals of womanhood. A similar point is made by Susan Bordo's critique that symbolic violence, in the form of stereotypes, is conveyed not only through discourse but through "the concrete language of the body" (1993: 165).

3.1.2 Lesbian women

Lesbian women are disenfranchised both by their womanhood and their sexual orientation, and their organisations repeatedly stress the need to expose and dismantle the interlocking, multidimensional factors of discrimination that hamper the everyday lives and livelihoods of women who deviate from the heterosexual norm.[16] Two studies describe how Central American lesbian women are affected by VAW differently from heterosexual women. **Global Rights'** Shadow Report on violations of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in Honduras identifies the workplace as "an area of substantial discrimination" against lesbian women in particular (Global Rights 2006: 23), and criticises the government for failing to protect the human rights of lesbian women, despite abundant evidence of discrimination and extreme violence against lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual and bisexual (LGTTB) persons. Highlighting the government's obligation to enforce the prohibition of these violations under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** (ICCPR), the report documents how a 2002 law passed by the Honduran government, ostensibly to "grant substantial power and discretion to police forces [...] in the preservation of public morality and decency", was used to stigmatise LGTTB persons on the grounds that the human rights of "sexual minorities" are incompatible with "public decency and morals" (Elkyn Suárez 2006: 4). Similarly Yakin Ertürk condemns the fact that women in Guatemala whose sexual orientation deviates from heterosexual norms are often subjected to violence, rape and other forms of discrimination and harassment (2005:2).

In 2009, after much lobbying by organisations working for the enforcement of legislation protecting the human rights of LGTTB people, the **Organization of American States** (OAS) adopted a resolution on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Resolution 2504, as it is called, condemns violence and human rights violations against individuals based on their sexual and/or gender identity; urges states to ensure that such abuses are justly prosecuted; seeks protection for human rights defenders working on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity; and urges the **InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights** to maintain its commitment to addressing crimes against human rights, based on sexuality and gender. This is an important advance for women's human rights in the

16 Data collected from unpublished presentation by Indyra Mendoza and face-to-face conversation with author during the Annual Conference of Women in Development Europe (WIDE), Basle, June 2009.

continent, also helping to make visible the specific stigma endured by lesbian women and women living with HIV/AIDS.

3.1.3 Women living with HIV

Some research findings on how women affected by HIV/AIDS experience VAW are in the social audit conducted in 2007 by **Cattrachas** and **COFEMUN** in Honduras (Red Lésbica Cattrachas et al., 2007). The audit concluded, among other things, that:

1. Dehumanisation of the virus in the healthcare system has generated systematic violation of the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, leading to the ghettoisation of infected patients.
2. These violations of their human rights induce feelings of hopelessness, frustration and loss of trust in the healthcare system among people living with HIV/AIDS.

COFEMUN has also published a book specifically about HIV-positive women in Honduras, which explicitly links HIV with sexual violence against women as an expression of male power, on the basis of empirical data.

> This diagnostic not only shows the direct relationship between HIV and sexual violence, but also reveals dramatically the relationship between women, HIV and femicide [*femicidios*]. Our question is: *how to imagine the life of a woman who is poor, illiterate, pregnant without choice, a woman who was raped as a child, and is now infected with HIV and struggling against stigma, discrimination and in fear of death itself?* (2008: 5)

3.2 Subjects at risk: A life-cycle approach to VAW

Intersecting structures of oppression in Latin America also include ageism. It has been amply demonstrated that, irrespective of economic affluence or a privileged social location, ageism, as a discriminatory mechanism, can intensify the social vulnerability of women who have multiple subordinated identities (Hill Collins, 2000; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). The studies analysing the disenfranchised status of Latin American girls (Chiarotti 2003; Bezarés Cóbar 2007; Casa Alianza 2008) and ageing women (Acevedo 2005) understand that women's age intersects with other dimensions of their identities in ways which intensify their isolation, exclusion and exposure to violence.

Margaret Arilha and colleagues argue that women's material, psychological and affective conditions throughout the life-cycle are related to their access to adequate social services and the recognition by the State and society of their status as subjects entitled to rights. Linking women's ageing and increasing impoverishment with their right to adequate social services, these authors suggest that the vulnerability of ageing women is related to individual ways of life and experiences throughout the life-cycle and to factors which reproduce poverty, such as the absence of the State in a specific region or the lack of an integrated approach linking gender and other forms of discrimination in public policies related to health, education, and sexual and reproductive rights (Arilha et al. 2003: 28). They propose a framework which can be used for policy and conceptual analysis of the role played by different forms of violence as they affect women throughout the life-cycle, suggesting indicators such as socio-economic situation, women's role as substitute for the state in the care economy (unpaid to a large extent), affective and sexual life, danger of falling into depression, loneliness, immobility and poverty (2003: 16–17).

The strategies for shared and self-empowerment used by ageing, women with multiple subordinated identities who have been exposed to VAW are the main focus of a study by Saría Acevedo (2003). Acevedo explores how the women survivors of the Rabinal massacre, which occurred during the Guatemalan civil war, survived genocide, reconstructed their selves and their communities, and claimed their rights. Her analytical framework expands the meanings of poverty beyond economic determinants to incorporate social (unemployment, denial of access to land rights), political (violence, intolerance, denial of access to public institutions) and cultural variables (inequity and unequal opportunity

between different ethnic groups) (2003: 142). She concludes that the indigenous widows of Rabinal face a multiple jeopardy which has constructed them as subjects without rights. Implicit in Acevedo's analysis is the fact that the intersectional vulnerability of these women is determined by their multiple subordinated identities: they are women in a patriarchal society, indigenous in a racist society, poor in one of the most unequal countries of the continent, rural subjects in a world which privileges urbanites, and direct victims of armed conflict (2003: 226).

The same processes of structural intersectional vulnerability also affect girls as they grow into adolescence and adult womanhood, as scholars including Ana Silvia Monzón (2005) and Susana Chiarotti (2003) argue. They underline the connection between the symbolic and discursive subjugation of young women and girls, poverty and VAW. Monzón shows how the objectification of women, engrained in the ideology of consumerist capitalism, facilitates the forced labour and sexual exploitation of trafficked girls and young women who are recruited in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador and end up in bars and nightclubs in Guatemala. Economically driven migration intensifies the commodification of these girls and young women, who leave their home territories only to land in a world where they become simultaneously hyper-visible as sexual objects and invisible as subjects entitled to rights. The process of objectification is consolidated the moment they become the object of a transaction: "they are exchanged for some sort of material or monetary remuneration". The goal of these transactions is sexual exploitation or forced labour, and the transactions are often made by members of the family or a partner (2006: 28). Bezarés Cóbar makes a similar point about displaced Guatemalan indigenous girls who migrate to the capital (2007: 118).

Chiarotti (2003) shows how the trafficking of girls and women causes disempowerment through stigmatisation and isolation. She contends that, even though poverty, insecurity and violence push women to migrate in conditions of acute vulnerability, the root cause of their migration or being trafficked is their objectified status (2003: 14). Because of their youth, girls are gendered and sexualised in ways that exacerbate their status as commodities. Class – as well as gender, poverty and youth – is also determinant in perpetuating the systems of stratification and patriarchal domination in which trafficking can flourish. Chiarotti's analysis echoes the important debate on the relationship between State power and poor young girls and women. In this respect, she evokes Vivian Adair's emphasis on the interconnection between systems of power, material conditions of poverty, and the bodily experiences that allow for the perpetuation – and justification – of these systems (2001: 452).[17]

The studies discussed in this chapter suggest that for many women, VAW results from the complex intersections of ageism, heterosexism, racism, gender and cultural discrimination. This important issue should be considered in any study on VAW in Latin America. Moreover, there is no monolithic perception of VAW among the scholars reviewed: on the contrary, because of the social hierarchies informing the emergence and historical development of nation-states and social relations within them, women scholars tend to conceptualise VAW diversely, in ways closely connected with one or another of the several ideologies (patriarchy, racial supremacy, heterosexual normativity and others) underlying the historical subjugation of women. As noted above in §1.2.1, women scholars tend to define VAW depending on their own social location, and these definitions may challenge other women's conceptualisations of it: hence the recurrent claim by non-heterosexual, indigenous, black and poor women for recognition of the empowering role of conceptualising multiple social identities in their complex social interactions with their peers, the environment and institutions (including the Church). Any conceptualisation of VAW in its interconnection with poverty and inequalities requires an analysis of racial, ethnic and sexual difference within VAW. This approach will prevent feminist analysis from falling into the trap of reductionist paradigms of otherness and it will be useful in the construction of emancipatory thinking on the VAW/poverty nexus.

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17 Chiarotti's analysis invites caution on "conceptual distortions" and "political manipulations" of the link between migration, VAW and the trafficking of girls. This, she notes, is already having serious implications for migrant women's human rights. She warns against conflating migration with the trafficking of girls, for it could lead to justifying migratory restrictions with the supposed goal of protecting victims (2003: 14).

Chapter 4:

Entangled ideologies: Patriarchy, masculinity, religious fundamentalisms and the perpetuation of VAW

Although it enables an in-depth analysis of the intersecting structures of oppression affecting women according to their multiple social identities and the prevailing power relations, intersectionality alone does not furnish a theoretical canvas from which patriarchy and masculinities can be problematised. Carcedo and Sagot (2000) point out that the structural subjugation of women can also appear through "subtle forms" such as ideological or moral statements designed to ensure male authority over women and underpinning a process of "gender socialisation" which establishes gender hierarchies and confines social subjects to fixed sexual identities (2000: 10). This process does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it hinges upon a dominant ideology which materialises in "cultural ideals of the feminine and the masculine". Although these ideals may "vary according to the historical and social context from which they originate, every society establishes precise mechanisms to ensure that human beings learn the conduct, attitude and expectations appropriate to each sex". However this process imposes upon both men and women social norms founded on gender inequality and oppression, making gender socialisation a repressive and violent process (2000:10-11).

Line Bareiro, a well-known Paraguayan feminist scholar, reminds us that patriarchy, as a system of domination, still concentrates wealth, power, and culture in the hands of men and that the most traditional dimension of our system of patriarchy still regards the warrior as the "natural" model of legitimate power. Gwen Hunnicutt reflects upon the need to revive the seminal debates around patriarchy of the 1970s and 1980s. Recalling Brownmiller's classic study of rape (1975), she proposes a theory of varieties of patriarchy to explain the systems of male domination and female subordination constituting the core of patriarchal ideology (2009: 553). She distinguishes five key elements:

1. Any theory of VAW must consider contextualised, rather than universal, varieties of patriarchy (patriarchy as defined by cultures, caste, etc.).
2. Male-based VAW results from "social structural conditions"; thus, in order to "understand male behaviour, it is necessary to reveal how men are situated in their own scheme of domination", in particular with respect to other men.
3. Divergences between structure and ideology should be considered: varieties of patriarchal ideology may exist apart from structural conditions, even after gains in gender equality have been achieved.
4. Patriarchy, as a concept, must be probed alongside other forms of domination "in which it is inextricably embedded".
5. VAW "cannot be understood as a mere binarity of domination (oppressor/ oppressed, victim/ victimiser)". The existence of "labyrinths of power dynamics" make it crucial to address patriarchal systems as "terrains of power" in which men and women "yield varying types and amounts of power" (2009: 555-6).[18]

Referring specifically to rural contexts, Johanna Brenner (2004) contends that the penetration of capitalist globalisation into rural areas has dismantled the "old forms of patriarchy" which led rural men and women to believe that men's privileged economic and political power came through entitlement to property and household headship. This transformation of "classical" varieties of patriarchy into new patterns of patriarchal rural authority have trapped women in a fresh triangle of power relations created by oppressive nation-states, religious fundamentalisms, and global centres of economic power (2004: 1-2). Clearly, the transformation of gender relations in rural areas brought forth by globalisation calls for further research.

4.1 Masculinities analysed in context

> ***"Men quickly learn that they not only have to possess power, they must also use it".***
> (Welsh 2001: 19)

18 See also Dobash et al 1992; Mooney 2000; Yllo 1993.

The notion of contextualised varieties of patriarchy makes it essential to analyse social constructions of masculinity and their relationship to VAW. For Roberta Castro and Florinda Riquer, theorising patriarchy as the ultimate root cause of VAW does not necessarily explain it fully (2003: 140), and the analysis of patriarchy - a structural phenomenon - should not be reduced to individual socio-demographic (age, education, occupation) and behavioural (alcohol and drug consumption, etc.) variables applicable to men. These scholars recognise the importance of focusing less on the individual behaviour of both female victims and male perpetrators and more on the family as the site of mediation between individual conduct and structural phenomena.[19] They recommend a sociological approach which considers how VAW results from the interaction of social subjects in relationship with each other, whose cognitive and social development will be affected by dominant social practices within a specific temporal and spatial context (2003: 137-8).

Similarly, Concepción Fernández Villanueva argues that male-based violence must be understood not merely as a set of attitudes and harmful actions but in terms of interaction between individual aggressors and victims. The physical, psychological and social harm done to the victim of VAW is the consequence of the unequal distribution of power between the female victim and the male victimiser. VAW in the household presents the same patterns and has the same origins and social function as the violences produced in other structural contexts. These are all strategies designed to maintain patriarchal power as a means of preventing women from escaping the subjugated status imposed upon them. This explains why, when compared to violence against men, VAW is more legitimised. This process of social legitimation manifests itself in civil and penal codes which, in Fernández Villanueva's view, are a sign of the social values within which they are formulated (2004: 155-164).

Important questions also reverberate in the works of male scholars who have engaged with contextualised notions of masculinities. For instance, Luis Botello Lonngi (2005) affirms that men's perception of their own masculinity and its connection to VAW varies according to the class position of the women they relate to. In his analysis of social constructions of masculinity amongst Mexican youth, he argues that when gender and social class intersect in the mindset of young Mexican men of 15-24 years, new angles of masculinity appear which allow then to define themselves as being on equal terms with women from affluent neighbourhoods or from abroad, and superior to women who are poor or too close to them.

Among those male scholars who have written on GBV and VAW, Enrique Gomáriz approaches gender violence in relation to violence against men: an analysis intersecting gender and age variables shows that in Latin America "the real massacre is being committed against male youth between 15 to 29 years of age" (2007: 132). Andrés Montero (2004) explodes the myth of the irrational crime of passion, noting that in Spain, 95% of perpetrators of VAW are in full possession of their mental faculties and can therefore be held accountable for their crimes. Reinsertion programmes, he notes, should include psychotherapy with an appropriate component of gender education, aiming to "deconstruct and unlearn the mental patterns" sustaining the individual's inclination towards the violent subjugation of women.

Patrick Welsh (2001) has studied the concept of *machismo* and the processes through which a group of Nicaraguan men incorporate and unlearn hegemonic discourses and practices of masculinity. He explains that, in the Nicaraguan context, *"machismo"* denotes a "socio-cultural model of masculinity" which permeates the public and private spheres, embracing interactions between men and women, men and children, and men and men, is transmitted from generation to generation, and "dictates the attitudes, values and behaviours that men should adopt to be considered men and to feel that they are men". Welsh shows convincingly how *machismo* is socially constructed and discusses the difficulties encountered by both men and women in the process of unlearning the cultural privileges attached to

19 Castro and Riquer point out that one of the major gains of this conceptual shift, which occurred in the late 1990s, was that it enabled redefinition of VAW as the consequence of "power imbalances" between individuals (2003: 138).

being a man in a social order which grants rights and privileges to men because they are men (2001: 15). He notes that in Nicaragua the family is the primary site for the reproduction of gender inequalities and that the "power to conquer and dominate" is perceived as "a male attribute". To ensure men's freedom of movement, individual and professional development and the associated rewards (money, prestige, social status) women must be subordinated (18-19).[20]

Welsh does make it clear that not all men in Nicaragua are equally empowered by the ideology of *machismo* and that social categories such as class, race, or geographical location play a key role. Although he does not explore these intersections, especially those related to identity formation and class, Welsh's analysis does unearth the cultural mechanisms which instil into men a feeling of sexual and gender superiority over women. The ideology of *machismo*, he notes, leads men into believing that they have "a right" to abuse women psychologically, physically and sexually, for it is "natural male behaviour". Importantly, Welsh's study shows how the cultural myth of *macho* masculinity also takes its toll of men, by associating the repression of emotions such as tenderness and sensitivity with a socially valued idea of masculinity. This, he contends, dehumanises men and can even cause "physical illness, mental disorder and premature death" (2001: 19-21). Similarly, Margaret Beale Spencer and colleagues use the term "hypermasculinity" – the "exhibition of stereotypic gendered displays of [male] power and consequent suppression of signs of vulnerability"– to describe the complex processes of identity formation amongst socially excluded young men in the United States who, by virtue of their race and class, have been marginalized in societies where "masculine norms tend to discourage the display of vulnerability" (2004: 234).[21]

Further research on contextualised varieties of patriarchy is needed – in particular, studies of the relationship between patriarchal ideologies of manhood and processes through which men construct their sense of individual identity and social worth. Obviously, not all men are perpetrators of VAW; yet the fact that patriarchal domination still permeates societies everywhere suggests that, at the symbolic and conceptual level, many men continue to see women as subordinated to an archetypal male figure.

4.2 *"A government as God commands"*[22]: The heterosexist patriarchal state and the return of religious fundamentalisms

Many women scholars are concerned with intertwined patriarchal and religious ideologies about womanhood and the significant role these have played in the perpetuation of VAW, State impunity and social tolerance, and the role of State and Church in combating both VAW and poverty (Dignas 2008; Mélidas 2008; CLADEM 2007, 2008). In a recent analysis of Honduras in the aftermath of the June 2009 coup d'état, Leticia Salomón speaks of political power holders' return to violence and "arbitrary powers" (*poderes arbitrales*) to resolve conflicts. Illustration of this, she argues, is the intervention of the armed forces and, more recently, of the Catholic and Protestant Evangelical churches as political mediators and arbiters, in contradiction with the secular nature of the Honduran State (2009: 7).

As several scholars point out, Latin American women have had a paradoxical relationship historically with the Catholic Church and, more recently, with US evangelical churches (Farias 2000; Vuola 2004). Ary Farias refers to the "double consciousness" shaping the mindset of women who practice Marianism a cult deriving from the worship of the Virgin Mary and which Evelyn P. Stevens (1997) defines as the cult of feminine spiritual superiority which constructs an idea of woman as a "semi-divine" subject,

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20 For further discussion on masculinities in Central America see Luis Bonino Méndez who refers to "micromachismos" – the many everyday practices of male power which are not very visible but which nevertheless systematically undermine the autonomy, dignity and psychic balance of women (1996: 2). Bonino Mendez also provides a useful bibliography on masculinities.

21 For a discussion of non-heterosexual masculinities see De Keijser 2004.

22 I have borrowed these words from a speech by the Secretaría de Comunicación del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional in Nicaragua: "Estamos haciendo una revolución espiritual! Foro Debate con líderes de las iglesias evangélicas, 12 de septiembre del 2006".

someone who possesses an "infinite capacity for humbleness and sacrifice" (quoted in Farias 2000: 72). Farias sees Marianism as another expression of machismo in Latin America, for it has created and fuelled the Virgin/Eve dichotomy which has imprisoned women symbolically and conceptually. This ideology permeates the Latin American mindset, affecting the construction of masculinities and femininities in ways that have determined an immutable primacy of one gender over the other.

In a more economic analysis, Stephanie Seguino and colleagues affirm that religion and religiosity continue to play a role in determining gender inequalities in income distribution. According to these scholars, religious beliefs and religiosity are shaped by hierarchically structured institutions, resistant to change, which help the "inculcation of gender-inequitable norms" and sustain "social norms that perpetuate structures of power that preserve their control". These embedded norms and stereotypes shape everyday social behaviour and decision-making, influencing "choices about whether to lay off a woman or a man during economic downturns; whether to educate daughters or sons when money is scarce; and whether to promote a man or a woman into a managerial position" (2009: 6-7). Seguino et al. also suggest that there is a complicit relationship between economic elites and religious institutions, for elite groups tend to capture power in institutions. Thus, patriarchal dominance in the economic sphere is likely to be replicated in religious organisations. Citing Phillips (2009), they affirm that religious attachment has increased in many countries and that there is evidence of the power of religious intuitions to influence political debate on issues such as abortion and homosexuality (2009: 5).

This interweaving of religious and political power has preoccupied Latin American scholars and activists examining the relationship between the secular State and religious fundamentalisms. In Central America, feminists and progressive women condemn interference by religious institutions into matters related to the State, in particular the incursions of religious institutions into policy and political space in order to hamper legislation guaranteeing the protection of the sexual and reproductive rights of women and the LGTTB community. Honduras and Nicaragua are two cases in point. In Honduras, an important battle for the full enjoyment of women's sexual and reproductive rights was lost in 2007, when the government passed a law against the use of the "morning-after" pill. A similar battle was lost in Nicaragua, where campaigning by the evangelical and conservative Catholic churches against the law allowing therapeutic abortion influenced the judicial and executive powers at a momentous period for the country, a presidential election campaign. This political crusade against women's sexual and reproductive rights was triggered by feminist campaigning in support of Rosita, a girl who had fallen pregnant after being raped by her stepfather and who had an abortion, in violation of Nicaraguan law. As a result of the religious lobby, nine human rights feminists of the **Network of Women against Violence** (Red de Mujeres Contra la Violencia) were accused by the **Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights** (Asociación Nicaragüense Pro Derechos Humanos), a body closely linked with the Catholic Church hierarchy in the north of the country, of interfering with justice and promoting abortion. (RED 2008: chs. 3 and 4).

Nicaraguan clergy against women's rights

The extent of the political influence of religious institutions in Nicaragua is tellingly illustrated in a letter sent to the National Assembly by the Bishops' Conference on 7 July 2003. The bishops expressed their opposition to legislative changes which could promote women's right to abortion and freedom of sexual orientation and thus transgress against the Church's traditional view of women's sexual roles. Among other points, the bishops refused to distinguish between human rights and women's human rights, arguing that universal human rights are enough to guarantee the rights of "the human race" – an idea fiercely contested by women scholars and activists across Latin America (CLADEM 2007). In their letter, the Bishops insist on the need to preserve "traditional rights", questions the distinction between "sex" and "gender", demonise feminists and women's rights activists as promoters of "women's right to abortion", "homosexuality" and "supposed rights" which go against "woman's nature", and call the **Vienna Action Plan**, the **Beijing Platform** and **CEDAW** the products of a "radical feminist ideology".

The political victory of the Nicaraguan and Honduran churches reinforced the hegemony of the religious over the secular, destabilising the boundaries between the private and the public sphere, between the legal and the moral, between the family and the State. The cases also reveal the extent of the moral panic triggered by the emancipation of women in societies where religion intervenes in State matters. Honduras and Nicaragua are, of course, not isolated cases. As several scholars have pointed out, a generalised sense of fear, social polarisation, rising crime rates, impunity and loss of trust in public institutions and the judiciary have paved the way for the return of an intensified religious fundamentalism (Deneulin et al. 2009; Correa et al. 2008; Seguino et al. 2009). Coca Trillini, coordinator of the Argentinean chapter of **Catholic Women for the Right to Decide** (CDD), sees the presence of "religious violence" in women's everyday lives in myths about women's sexuality, in the belief in motherhood as women's only option in life, and in women's submission to men (2009).

It must be acknowledged, however, that the theology of liberation has played an empowering role in women's struggle against poverty and social exclusion in Latin America. Carlos Castro reminds us that during the 1970s and the 1980s, two decades marked by widespread dictatorship and human rights abuses in Latin America, liberation theology contributed to more gender-equal relations in working class communities through the promotion of solidarity and the creation of human rights networks. Castro also notes, however, that liberation theology, being born of an ecclesiastical concern with combating social injustice, did not dismantle the androcentric worldview encompassed in the symbolic and epistemological connection established between God and Men's World – a world defined by men and for men (2008: 24).

Other scholars have noted that the work done by liberation theology to combat poverty and promote human rights in general and women's rights in particular has not been exempt from contradictions (Nugent et al. 2005; Vuola 2000). Marta Torres Falcón notes that the issue is not so much whether religious institutions have played a role in improving women's livelihoods but, rather, whether religion has promoted women's status as subjects entitled to cultural, social, sexual and economic rights on equal terms with men (2004). Following Héctor Gómez Peralta (2007), Ana Castillo contends that the Vatican has not ratified "conventions on the elimination of discrimination based on sexuality" nor has it endorsed those relating to women's rights (quoted in Castro 2008: 45).

More radically, Elina Vuola criticises the charity-driven attitude of the Catholic Church, arguing that poverty is an issue of structural injustice and that the changes required to eradicate it cannot be achieved through charity (2000: 43). Vuola analyses in depth the contradictions in the conceptual and epistemological premises of liberation theology. In particular, she argues that the term "the poor" has worked as a homogenising concept that excludes the distinctive subjectivities of women and black and indigenous people (2000: 7). Challenging the power of the Catholic Church to "define the boundaries and limits of the ethical-sexual debate in Latin America" remains an important challenge for secular feminists or feminists who do not speak from within the Church (2000: 219).

4.3 *"Over her dead body"*: Femicides as the material consequence of the symbolic subjugation of women

> ***"They kill us for being women".*** (Graciela Atencio, Ciudad Juárez)[23]

Women's bodies are the site where the bodily injuries inflicted by hegemonic male power are most palpable. This violence continues to escalate alarmingly in Latin America, unchecked and usually unpunished (Drysdale 2008: 48). Recent reports on VAW produced by Central American women's organisations corroborate this. From the violence encountered in public spaces, many women enter their homes only to face other forms of violence which are taken seriously by public authorities only

23 http://www.mujeresenred.net/spip.php?article8

when they reach extreme levels, if at all, and are treated, in fact, with indifference or complicity by government officials. Meanwhile, widespread tolerance or indifference on the part of public opinion, and relentless sensationalist media coverage of crimes against women, contribute to an atmosphere of generalised impunity which intensifies women's fear, anxiety and vulnerability (Puentes Aguilar 2007; CLADEM 2007; RED 2007).[24]

4.3.1 Facts and figures

Like other forms of VAW, femicide – the killing of women because they are women – has assumed greater proportions daily in Latin America since the first reports of brutal murders of women in Ciudad Juárez. Data retrieved from the website of the **Centre of the Rights of Women** (Centro de Derechos de Mujeres CDM) in Honduras, for example, paint an alarming scenario: "during the period January-March 2009, 46 women were murdered in Honduras: young women (15-24), middle-aged women, women murdered at home (17%), some even murdered in front of their children, others brutally murdered on the street (20%) or in deserted areas (15%). In more than 70 per cent of cases (35 femicides) the perpetrator has not been identified, and in the rest, the perpetrator was known to the victim." CDM speaks of a recurrent pattern in femicides: victims are often sexually abused and killed by their partners, or by men they know, while the State turns a blind eye (CDM, accessed November 2009).

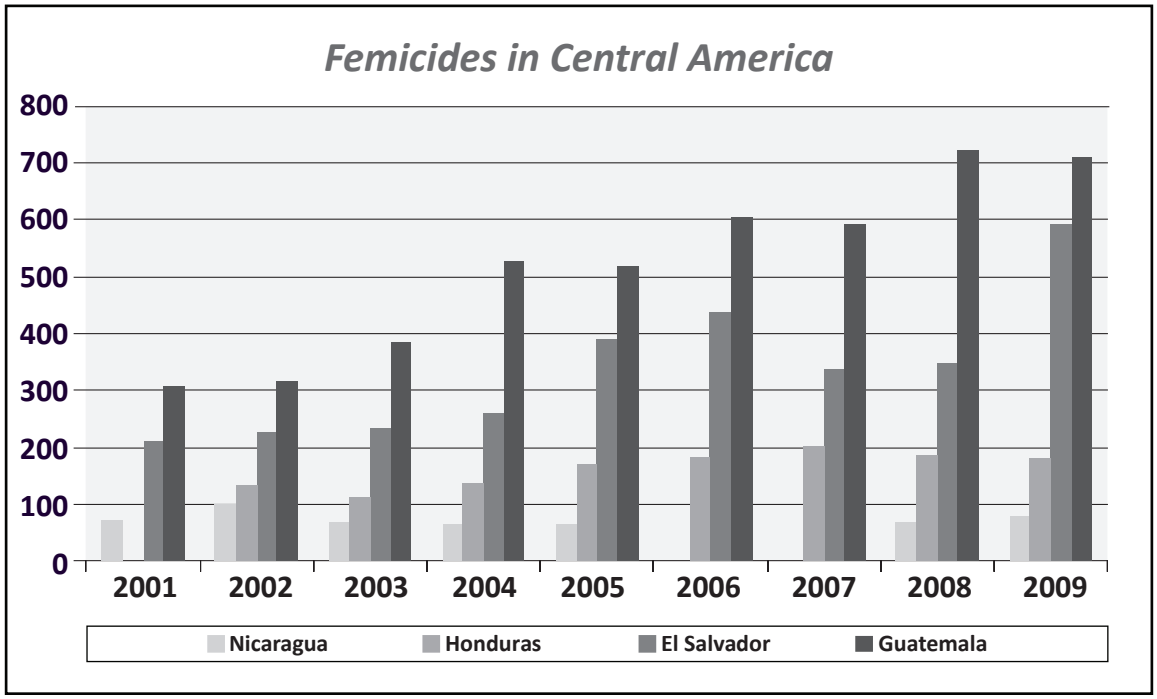
The tragic story of Elda Veraliz Ramos shows that the situation is not confined to Honduras. A committed worker of **ANDRYSAS** (Asociación Nacional de Regidoras y Alcaldesas Salvadoreñas) and young feminist militant in El Salvador, Veraliz (29) was brutally murdered on 15 May 2009 by her former partner in front of her nine-year-old son. To date, the perpetrator has not yet been brought to justice. Her case is by no means unique.

The table and graph below show clearly how VAW in its extreme form continues unabated in Central America, and in some countries is even on the rise. Two important issues emerged during the process of data collection. First, in cases where there has been state violence, VAW has risen exponentially. For instance, in Honduras, during the first days following the coup d'état, femicides increased in 60 per cent (Banco datos feminicidios, online posting). Second, clear discrepancies in available data were found as indicated in the source notes below. State institutions have started to use the category of femicide, but when collecting official data, any homicide of women, in particular all types of violent killings, are registered without differentiating the causes as being directly related to gender (femicide). The differences in data collection methodologies and the lack of information and investigation of these crimes, are the main obstacles to unifying statistics in the region.

Femicides in four countries of Central America, 2001–09

Year	Nicaragua	Honduras	El Salvador	Guatemala
2001	73	n.a.	211	307
2002	99	133	227	317
2003	70	111	232	383
2004	67	138	260	527
2005	66	171	390	517
2006	n.a.	185	437	603
2007	64	203	337	590
2008	69	186	348	722
2009	79	181	592	708
Total	**587**	**1308**	**3034**	**4674**

24 More positively, María Rosa Berganza Conde (2001) tells how, in Spain in the late 1990s, the feminicide of Ana Orantes by her husband caused a paradigm shift in Spanish journalism, forcing the media to redefine VAW as a social problem. This has had a positive impact both on how the media cover VAW and how the public perceive it.



Sources: Constructed by author and staff of **CAWN**, London, 11 June 2010, based on data retrieved from the following sources:

- **Nicaragua:** For years 2001, 2002 cf. RED 2006: 8. For 2003, 2004, 2005 cf. CLADEM 2007:119. A slight discrepancy for 2005 can be noted between CLADEM's report and the one drafted by the **Consejo Centroamericano de Procuradores de Derechos Humanos** (CCPDH 2006: 26). Figures for 2007 and 2008 were retrieved from documents posted in the website of **La RED**. Here again, discrepancies can be noted. For 2007 and 2008, La RED reports 64 and 69 cases respectively (RED 2008: 20). For 2009, figures were taken from www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni/Documentacion/IETF2010.pdf.

- **Honduras:** Figures for 2002 were retrieved from a regional report prepared by the **CCPDH** (2006: 104), based upon data compiled by the **Centro de Derechos de Mujeres** (CDM). For the period 2003-2006, figures were presented by the **Centro de Estudios de la Mujer en Honduras** (CEM-H), (2006: 103-4). In its regional report on femicides, **CLADEM** reports 111 femicides for 2003, 138 for 2004 and 181 for 2005. Statistics for 2007, 2008 and 2009 were presented by CEMH at the regional seminar on femicide "Analysis and legal contributions on the penalisation of femicide in Meso America", Tegucigalpa, January 2010. As the CCPDH report notes, there are important discrepancies in the number of femicides reported by social and public actors in Honduras. The Governmental Department for Criminal Investigation (DGIC) estimates the cases of femicides for 2003, 2004 and 2005 as: 68, 412 and 188 respectively.

- **El Salvador:** Cf. **Mélidas** 2009 for 2001-2008. Figures for 2009 are to December and were retrieved from "Observatorio de violencia de género" http://observatoriodeviolencia.ormusa.org/feminicidios.php

- **Guatemala:** Cf. **CALDH-Guatemala** for 2001-2004, www.caldh.org and **GHRC/USA** for 2005-2008. According to statistics from the Ministerio de Gobernación (the interior ministry), 773 feminicides occurred in 2008 and 708 in 2009: www.prensalibre.com/pl/2010/enero/02/366181.html> Figures for 2009 are to December and were retrieved from **Comunicación e Información de la Mujer** (Cimac) http://laestelianisima.blogspot.com/2010/04/arranca-campana-regional-por-el-acceso.html and http://noticias.com.gt/nacionales/20100427-guatemala-mayor-cantidad-femicidios.html For the same period, the number of femicides reported by the Ministerio de Gobernación is 708. cf. Banco datos feminicidios, www.feminicidio.cl/map/map1.php?id=16

4.3.2 *"It's only natural"*: Legitimising and tolerating violence

Central American feminist scholars have always warned against the pandemic proportions of VAW. However, more research is needed to expose how the process of naturalisation of VAW occurs at the symbolic level and its links with Latin America's historical legacy of dispossession and violence. What lies at the heart of the social tolerance of VAW and femicide, a tolerance that appears to spring from a construction of VAW and women's inferiority as "natural"?

The arguments of Marcela Lagarde (2006) and Ana de Miguel Alvarez (2005) are important here. Lagarde considers that patriarchal ideology plays a crucial role in the appalling impunity that surrounds feminicides, because it is founded on a conception of women as 'naturally' inferior, as expendable social subjects (see above, section 1.4). Alvarez observes that hegemonic ideologies such as patriarchy are so deeply anchored in people's mindset, and their social narratives so perfect, that they can lead even women to believe that violence is a socially desired behaviour. Worse still, patriarchal ideologies legitimate the punishment of those who resist violence, blaming them as the inciters of male violence (Lagarde 2006: 23). For de Miguel Alvarez, it is important for women to delegitimise this system, which is founded upon women's assumed inferiority and their subordination to men (2005: 234). Even in a context of structural violence, VAW presents specific forms of legitimisation which are based on the fact that they are women (235). At the heart of this index of legitimisation is the definition of women as inferior and as the property of men to whom they must show respect and obedience. Marta Torres Falcón suggests that because of this, the violence enacted against women does not have the same weight as the violence occurring between two equals (n.d., 3). This ideology has been reinforced by religious discourse portraying women as "evil" and "dangerous" (De Miguel Alvarez 2005: 235). Along the lines of de Miguel Alvarez, Castillo emphasises the idea of submissiveness, suffering, heroism and sacrifice through which the Judeo-Christian tradition has defined women (1995: 129).

Another study, conducted by a Guatemalan organisation, the **National Commission for the Prevention of Interfamily Violence** (CONAPREVI), found that people view abuse as something natural and believe it is caused by alcoholism, drug addiction and unemployment. This study found that the most serious abuses against women take place in rural areas where women do not know their rights and are perceived – by themselves and by the community – as the property of their spouses.

At the political level, several studies on femicide insist upon the need to consider the history of structural violence from which Central America has evolved. For example, in El Salvador, **Las Dignas** (2008: 12, 16) reminds us that the VAW ravaging today's El Salvador has its roots in the armed conflict of the 1980s and has been stimulated by power politics based on patriarchal dominance, gender exclusion and impunity.

The Nicaraguan chapter of the **Network of Women against Violence** (Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia) argues that the perception of violence as a natural phenomenon underpins a political project legitimising violence as a key element of male identity (RED 2008). This is consonant with Marta Torres' view that, because women have been defined as inferior to a superior agent (men), the violence enacted against them is not seen to have the same weight as the violence occurring between two equals. Because of women's constructed subjugation, VAW ceases to be perceived as violence against human beings and becomes naturalised as "inoffensive cultural expressions", thus rendering legal equality (*igualdad jurídica*) in Mexico an unaccomplished project (Torres Falcón n.d.: 2-3). Lagarde, meanwhile, notes that the fact that most of members of the judiciary are men and that the media is controlled by men plays a role in the perpetuation of impunity in femi(ni)cide (2006: 23).

Ultimately, in attempting to explain the killing of women because they are women, we may be thrown back on Hélène Cixous' view that, at the symbolic level, femininity and masculinity are notions engaged in warfare, "for meaning only becomes constituted in a movement in which one of the terms of the couple is destroyed in favour of the other" (1981: 45). In line with Cixous, Elizabeth Bronfen refers to

the conjunction of femininity and death which determines the symbolic, structural and rhetorical levels of gender relations in the social imaginary. At the symbolic level, the horrifying form and content of femicides in Central America corroborates Bronfen's thesis that the relationship between masculinity and femininity is a "conflict-ridden opposition" where the fear of death "translates into a fear of Woman, who, for man, is death" (1992: 205). An important issue these scholars do not explore, and which begs for further research, is that of who controls the process of meaning-making and by what mechanisms these devaluing symbolic meanings become anchored in the social mindset.

4.3.3 What State are we in? Impunity and official inaction

> ***"This model [of feminicide] obliterates women with certain attributes considered deviant according to a normative idea of womanhood, and works according to a surreptitious, premeditated pattern. This pattern has the shape of a pyramid: at the summit, businessmen and dealers, helped by murderers and hired serial killers revel on rites of pleasure during which fraternity pacts are sealed".*** (Atencio 2004)

Evidence of states' inability and lack of political will to address feminicide is abundant. Julia Monárrez Fragoso, who applies the term "serial sexual feminicides" to the now-famous feminicides in Ciudad Juarez, quotes two startling remarks, made by institutional power holders, which reveal the depth of prejudice against women that permeates the Latin American male mind:

> ***"It is important to note that the behaviour of some of the victims does not comply with moral guidelines. They have transgressed norms by going to leisure/entertainment places which are not appropriate for their age, by staying out until late at night".***
> (Governor of Chihuahua on victims of feminicides, quoted in Monárrez Fragoso 2002: 3)

> ***"The best thing is for women not to go out alone and not to go out at night, so as not to expose themselves".***
> (Oscar Berger, former president of Guatemala, quoted in CLADEM 2007: 2)

These devaluing narratives of womanhood corroborate the assertion of many feminist scholars in the region that at the heart of VAW and femi(ni)cide is the patriarchal belief that women are inferior because they are women and must, therefore, be subordinated to men, controlled by the State, and contained in heterosexist and racially supremacist ideologies.

In the studies reviewed, State impunity emerges as an area of profound concern for women scholars and activists. Prieto, Thomson and Macdonald report that "across Mexico and Central America, public institutions from social services to the courts ignore, discount, belittle, cover up, and collude with the perpetrators of femicide, creating an enabling environment for its growth" (Prieto et al. 2007: 31). They add that the police and judicial systems lack not only interest and political will but the resources necessary to investigate these crimes, and that the authorities dismiss claims that the murders of women have anything to do with unequal gender relations. Service providers compound the "normalisation" of VAW by insensitive and prejudiced responses to victims and their families, and secondary victimisation discourages victims and relatives from reporting the crimes or pursuing legitimate legal procedures enquiring into them (2007: 32-3).

At country level, a study published in June 2009 by the Salvadorean women's organisation **Las Mélidas** identifies two major factors reproducing VAW and femicides: the climate of impunity generated and reinforced by the State's inability to administer justice, as evidenced by the weakness in public policies and law enforcement; and society's tolerance of feminicides despite their horrific nature. These two factors have contributed to the naturalisation of feminicides in the Salvadorean mindset. **Las Mélidas** define State impunity as "an asymmetry in the legal contract" between the State (through its institutions)

and citizens. Impunity occurs when the State "acts, omits, disguises evidence or creates bureaucratic obstacles for handling it, or when it prolongs trials in the name of its mandate. When these procedures coerce, annul and hinder the individual and collective capacity to act in defence of human rights we speak of impunity" (2009). A study by **Las Dignas** (2008) also exposes the disenfranchising impact of institutionalised impunity and social tolerance surrounding VAW in El Salvador.

In line with **Las Dignas**, feminist scholars in Honduras note that "multiple forms of violence have become the paradigm informing social relations in Honduras" (CDM 2005: 9); while in its regional study on domestic violence, **CLADEM** notes that in Latin America, there is a "patriarchal culture which overvalues men and undervalues women". As a result, a structural hierarchy between men and women is established wherein men exert control over assets, resources as well as on women. This power imbalance perpetuates women's subjugation, generating "everyday practices of VAW which not only cause irreversible harm but can often end in death" (CLADEM 2008: 8).

According to Marta Torres Falcón, power asymmetries permeate the way VAW has been defined, the way concrete acts of VAW are analysed, and the way victims and perpetrators of VAW are treated (n.d.: 3). She suggests that the symbolic subjugation of women is at the heart of states' inability to ensure the enforcement of women's right to a life free of violence. From a legal perspective, Torres identifies two major obstacles: the adaptation of international legislation into national legislation, and the application of laws to actual cases in practice.

4.3.4 A few advances, a continuing challenge

While there is a flurry of legislation on domestic violence in various Central American countries produced in the late 1990s (see section 1.3 above), there has been much less on femicide. There have been a few advances, however: in Mexico, for example, the **General law on access for women to a life free of violence** (*Ley General de acceso para las mujeres a una vida libre de violencia) of 2007* recognises feminicidal violence (*violencia feminicida*) and defines it as "the extreme form of gender violence against women, produced by [...] the ensemble of misogynistic behaviours which can lead to social and State impunity and can culminate in homicide [sic] and other forms of violent death of women" (Jiménez and Ronderos (eds.) 2010: 9).

In Guatemala, intense lobbying from women's groups and human rights organisations finally forced Congress to approve (by 112 out of 158 votes) **the law against feminicide and other forms of violence against women** (Decreto 22-2008) on April 9, 2008 (Jiménez and Ronderos (eds.) 2010: 12). The new law establishes prison sentences of 25-50 years for gender-based crimes, 3-10 years for physical and psychological abuse, and 2-8 years for economic violence, which includes denying women the right to work or access to property.

Lack of knowledge amongst - women of the new law on femicides led Guatemalan women's organisations and NGOs to hold a symposium in April 2009, with the participation of legal experts and judges. As one of the organisers, Gloria Currichich (quoted in Cerigua 2009: 7), explained, many women did not even know that the law existed. Cerigua's report states that becoming knowledgeable on the content of the law was empowering for women in Sololá, Quiché, Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango and Totonicapán - regions where much of the indigenous rural population is concentrated.

Nonetheless, there is clearly a long way to go. Only 2 per cent of the femicides registered in Guatemala between 2005 and 2007 have been solved, and, according to Carlos Castresana, then director of the **International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala** (CICIG), feminicides have increased in the country and that the State has reacted poorly or not at all.[25] There is great incoherence between

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25 This remark was made at a press conference in Guatemala in 2008, see http://www.rel-uita.org/mujer/incapaces_erradicar_femicidio.htm, online unauthored posting entitled "Estados latinoamericanos son incapaces de erradicar el femicidio". Accessed July

legislation in different countries: for instance, in Costa Rica, the law defines femicide only as intrafamily or between-partners violence, whereas in Guatemala, the killing of a woman is called femicide not only if it is committed by a stranger.[26] And the struggle for legislation against femicide and other forms of VAW in all countries of the region is not yet over: in El Salvador, for instance, the **Feminist Network against Violence against Women** (Red Feminista Frente a la Violencia contra las Mujeres) presented in 2009 a draft Integral Law for the access of women to a life free of violence (*Ley Integral para el acceso de las mujeres a una vida libre de violencia*), addressing prevention, care of victims, prosecution, sanctions and compensation, but the relevant authorities have not yet even accepted the need for such a measure (Jiménez and Ronderos (eds.) 2010: 15).

Shannon Drysdale (2008: 57) emphasises the urgency of "engendering justice" in order to emphasise how urgent it is for states to improve their institutional responsiveness, legal enforcement and allocation of resources to the eradication of VAW. However, the opposite seems to be true at present. State impunity and social tolerance have not only galvanised the culture of machismo originating from the patriarchal ideology; they have also contributed to the social construction of VAW as a "natural" phenomenon. As a result, femicide, rape, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation are part of the architecture of everyday life (CLADEM 2008: 9; Dignas 2008; Carcedo and Sagot 2000; CALDH 2006).

Thus, another important challenge emerging from the literature reviewed is how to deepen public awareness on the need to eradicate not just feminicide but all forms of VAW. Recent research shows, that despite achievements in putting VAW in the public and legal spheres, there is prevailing tension between traditional values promoting the idea of women as confined to the private sphere and more secular views on women's right to make decisions affecting their lives free from coercion or punitive mechanisms. Although there has been progress in gender awareness and law enforcement, a radical shift in mindset is needed.

2009.

26 Information given at regional seminar on femicide "Analysis and legal contributions to the penalisation of femicide in Meso America", Tegucigalpa, January 2010, hosted by CEM-H, attended by representatives of CAWN.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the course of this research, I found valuable material, in the form of monitoring reports, scholarly articles, press releases, proceedings from conferences, fact sheets, impact assessments and whole books, devoted to the issue of VAW. Many of these works establish connections with poverty, inequality, human rights and migration, amongst others. The rich material reviewed shows awareness by feminists and women's organisations of the fact that there is a long road ahead, in particular, in terms of reshaping the patriarchal and racially supremacist nature of Latin American states, religious institutions and society as a whole.

On the whole, this wealth of material underlines the significance of the paradigm which has energised women's organisations and committed feminists to the point of risking their own lives (Prieto et al. 2007). For many Latin American women "the right to a life free of violence for all women" has indeed become a symbolic, conceptual, political and legal space for new configurations and redefinition of power and empowerment. As Ana de Miguel Alvarez writes, feminist movements and networks are laboratories of innovation and transformation where new concepts are forged and meanings reinterpreted. Undoubtedly, going against the grain of established normative parameters on women and womanly conduct, feminists, human rights activists and women's organisations in Latin America have succeeded in forcing governments, institutions, and public opinion to consider VAW as a violation of human rights and a public social phenomenon, rather than an issue confined to the private sphere. They have, as CLADEM's report (2008: 9) reminds us, allied around the shared political project of eradicating the pandemic of VAW affecting the region, even when contextual, historical, political and cultural differences have played against them.

At the political level, several studies stress the fact that the struggle to prevent the needless loss of women's lives resulting from VAW and the fight against impunity has delineated new spaces for action and reflection (CLADEM 2007: 3). Others note how the struggle against the structural subjugation of women by patriarchy and the contextualised forms of *machismo* and sexism it generates, will remain a major problem of the twenty-first century. Many scholars pertinently point out the need to move beyond and approach the issue of VAW and women's poverty through the lens of complex intersectionality (the struggle for gender, racial/ethnic, sexual, economic and social equality). Whatever their approach, the studies agree on the fact that the struggle towards women's right to a life free of violence will be fought out in a continent weakened by an interlocking systemic crisis and in a world in which the vast majority of women live in conditions of poverty and discrimination.

This paper took on the ambitious task of engaging in an intersectional analysis of extant research on VAW, poverty and inequality in Latin America. As I demonstrate above, several studies insist upon the fact that the inequalities fuelling VAW in the region are larger than gender-based; they are produced and perpetuated by economic, racial and heterosexist ideologies and policies. Conceptually speaking, few studies expand the notion of "woman" so as to probe exactly how VAW intersects with social privilege and therefore affects underprivileged women in ways which should not be overlooked by privileged women. This is of special significance in any analysis of VAW in Latin America, all the more if one considers that, in societies marked by structural inequalities, feminist analysis of VAW should move beyond homogenising theorising.

Identity categories (e.g. being female, black, white, privileged, underprivileged, urban, rural, young or ageing) emerge as another important area of analysis in some of the studies reviewed. This is of particular significance to scholars engaged in analysis of the root causes and impact of violence as perceived by women who are discriminated against by virtue of their race, sexual choice, age or social location. See Annex 2: Interchanging poverty and multiple violences: practical examples of an Intersectional approach to VAW.

The few works engaging with VAW from an intersectional perspective invite consideration of the fact that identities are the product of complex conceptual constructs which will ultimately determine who makes decisions to privilege whom, whose access and control over resources will be ensured, and what policies relating to poverty and inequality will be defended or dismantled. One should bear in mind that identities are constructed and they result from a power dynamics. The studies reviewed, in particular those engaging with analysis of VAW as conceptualised by indigenous, black and/or lesbian women, pose a particular challenge to feminist scholars: the struggle to eradicate VAW will depend upon the extent to which women and feminist scholars take issue with multiple social identities through engagement with - not transcendence of - geopolitical, social, and cultural differences. These studies summon feminist scholars to re-examine difference, identities and power differentials amongst women in view of consolidating a women's agenda towards changing social structures and mindsets.

The question of how women organise to produce transformative knowledge in order to eradicate VAW remains a crucial challenge. A major recommendation in this respect is that any analysis of VAW and its link with poverty and inequalities should seek to maintain epistemic balance, not conferring epistemic privilege on one category of women over another. As Monárrez Fragoso puts it in her study on feminicides in Ciudad Juárez, the purpose of exploding the notion of "woman" is to make it possible for women to be able to "identify and challenge the very basis of the inequity they are confronted with" and establish theoretical and political connections with categories of exclusion and forms of violence affecting other women as well (2002: 5).

A. CONCEPTUAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

The paradigm of intersectionality proposed by African American thinkers is extremely useful for an approach to VAW and female poverty in Latin America. Arguments that justify this recommendation are:

1. The studies reviewed confirm the necessity to rethink the oppression of women from a perspective of intersectionality and to rethink poverty with a focus on the life-cycle (not as a static process) and as an 'unnatural' condition: both can be provoked and perpetuated by policies, people and hegemonic power structures.

2. The use of this theoretical framework of structural intersectionality allows for contextualised readings of power. It stems from the idea that the systems of oppression are multiple and simultaneous (patriarchal, consumer capitalism, racial supremacy, heterosexual supremacy). As a result, these factors affect women in different ways and often divide them.

3. In addition to this, the concept of intersectionality in policies allows for in-depth study of those discriminations which occur within subordinated and oppressed groups who define themselves as non-hegemonic.

4. In contextualised analyses of poverty and violence against women it would be useful to combine the intersectional model with an analysis of the type of power that accompanies the structures of oppression that affect women. This would allow a revamp of the theoretical reflections on types of power and power practices (exercised by institutions and politicians) and their link with the multiple and simultaneous forms of violence that women suffer.

5. The Paulo Freire paradigm of powers and subjective dialogues would be a useful tool to return to, allowing for improvements in the construction of non-hegemonic powers or 'good powers,' as some Latin American leaders call them.

6. A significant advantage of this combined framework of analysis (intersectionality and analysis of

power) is that it allows for the improved visibility of the relationship between unequal structures and the social privileges that result from them. In addition, this sheds new light onto the privileged position of some women (including the researchers themselves, who see themselves forced to examine their own position with respect to the aim of the research).

7. The necessity to rethink poverty and VAW continues as a result of the legacy of the violence of slavery, the fallout from the Conquest and the framework of hetero-patriarchal colonialist power.

8. It is important to continue clarifying the conceptual framework and linguistic heritage with which to approach the subjects of poverty and VAW. The concepts and terminologies have a key political value. 'Reducing' poverty does not mean the same as 'eradicating' poverty. In the same way, and as the studies suggest, there are distinctions between the concept of poverty defined by institutions such as the World Bank and those adopted by researchers, activists and women who have experienced poverty. This last type of knowledge constitutes an important source for theories of poverty and VAW in Latin America.

B. METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Governments of the region should rethink which development model they would like: a sovereign model or a continuing dependency on the agendas of international financial institutions?

2. Governments and international financial institutions: should take into account the impact of 'poverty reduction programmes' (PRPs) in the struggle against the multiple structures of discrimination that affect Latin American societies. The studies analysed suggest that poverty and VAW do not exist in isolation, rather they are (re)produced by structures, policies, practices and agents of hegemonic power.

3. Challenge the hegemonic or paternalistic language of development policies: for example, 'strategy of poverty alleviation or reduction': poverty is not alleviated, it is eradicated. Furthermore, it should be treated as a fundamental violation of the rights of the women, villages, communities and groups which it affects.

4. To approach poverty with a life-cycle focus: impoverishment as a gradual and reversible process

5. To approach poverty in relation to the mechanisms of intersectional inequality which generate and intensify it (racism, classism, heterosexism, age, geographical location).

6. Abandon the cultural myth of the woman as the altruistic provider of services and as an agent of reproduction confined to the private sphere.

7. On a research level: increase the visibility of the impact of symbolic violence (the construction of the woman as a subject without rights, disposable, violable, abusable). This is of special importance for the fight against all forms of VAW, particularly to challenge cultural mentality and imagery.

8. To increase visibility of the forms of economic violence that lower class women suffer (especially LGBTTI women, indigenous women and afro-descendants). Actions such as dispossession of land by multinational companies, or of ancestral learnings on medicine and biodiversity, are forms of violence that require a geopolitical approach to the poverty and violence that affects women in Latin America.

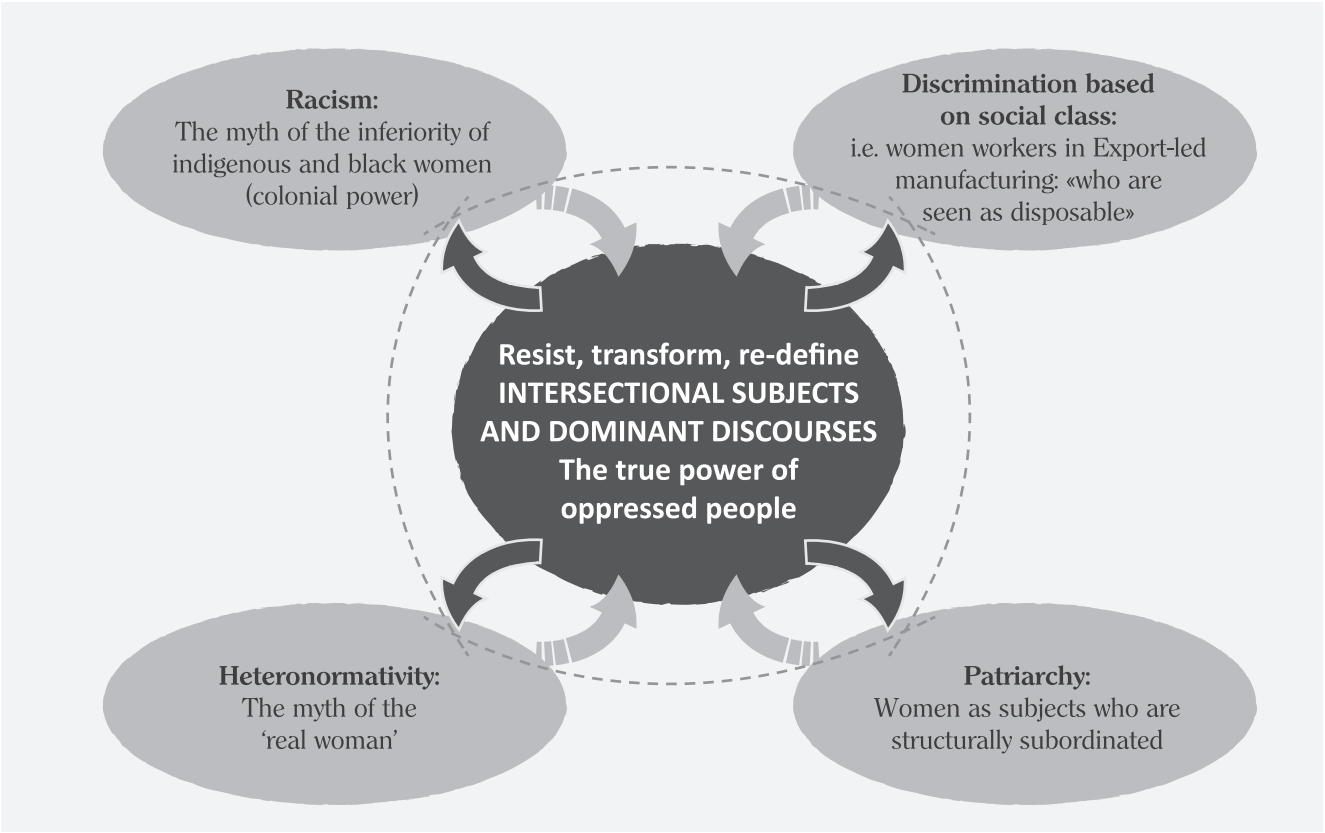
Annex 1:

Intersectionality and power analysis: The domination matrix

The structures of power:

Heterosexist patriarchy, racial supremacy, consumerist capitalism.

The agents of power and policies that create and perpetuate ideologies, myths and stereotypes that devalue women (international level). Institutions and public actors (national and local level).



Source: developed by author from the works of Audre Lorde (2007 [1984]); Mae G. Henderson (1989); Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1995); Patricia Hill Collins (2000); Paulo Freire (1993 [1970]; 1982).

Annex 2:

Interchanging poverty and multiple violences: Practical examples of an Intersectional approach to VAW

"They kill us because we are women" (Atencio 2004). *"We are disposable"* (Lagarde 2005).	An example of analysing violence and discrimination against women from a gendered perspective.
'They kill them because they are 'poor women' and have a low level of formal education" (Monárrez Fragoso 2002).	An example of intersectional analysis (the dimensions of social exclusion) which interlinks gender and social class.
'They exploit them, they sell them and they abuse them because they are young, female migrants from rural areas" (Bezáres Cóbar 2008).	An example of intersectional analysis (the dimensions of social exclusion which interlinks gender / class / ethnicity / geographic location/ migrant status). See also ***Invisible Travellers*** (Monzón 2007).
"They exploit them and violate their rights because they are poor, lesbian women of the working classes" (Global Rights 2006; ADEIM-Simbiosis 2006; Cattrachas, Cofemun 2007).	An example of an intersectional analysis (the dimensions of social exclusion) which interlinks gender / social class / sexuality / geographic location (urban).
"They are 'people without rights': their lives are characterised by poverty and exclusion because they are elderly Mayan widows who live in rural areas" (Acevedo, 2001).	An example of intersectional analysis (the dimensions of social exclusion) which interlinks gender/social class/geographic location (rural)/ age (elderly women)/state violence (the women were 'widowed' as a result of state violence and terror).
"The inclusion of women into work in the free trade factories has occurred in 'highly exploitative conditions' and has fuelled a violent cultural climate and social reaction which is destructive and lethal for the women and children of Central America" (B. Mendoza n/d).	An example of intersectional analysis on a regional level. The dimensions of social exclusion which interlink are: gender / social class / rural geographic location / social class (elderly people and children)/economic violence (they are objectified by neoliberal capitalism).
"The trafficking of women and children from Latin America to Europe is motivated by poverty and extreme vulnerability, but the root cause of their migration or their becoming a victim of people trafficking is their status as an object. In other words, they are viewed as the 'exclusive property of those who own them' (2003: 11, 14). As a result of their youth or the fact that they are children, the subjectivity of these young migrants is sexualised in such a way that it exacerbates their social status as 'property for sale'" (Chiarotti 2003: 11, 14).	An interesting attempt to analyse from an intersectional perspective but it only tackles the dimension of social class in the trafficking of children. The addition of race (people of African descent), ethnicity (indigenous people) and sexuality (LGBTTI), would improve Chiarotti's analysis and it could then be used to influence European policy.

Annotated Bibliography

Arriagada, Irma. *Dimensiones de la pobreza y políticas desde una perspectiva de género,* Revista Futuros 14. IV (2006).
www.revistafuturos.info

In this article, it is argued that poverty is a multidimensional condition which varies from one context to another and whose complexity has often been overlooked by Latin American governments and international financial institutions. Arriagada's main contention is that there is a causal relationship between the way in which poverty is defined and the policies designed to combat it. Reviewing several definitions of poverty, the author debunks the assumption that poverty can be defined by income solely, even if it makes assessment or measurement more complex. She argues that other dimensions of poverty than income alone must be considered, such as unequal power relations in the household and non-economic factors such as self-esteem, sense of well-being, and use of leisure time. The author particularly highlights the link between poverty and the denial of the right to productive assets, labour opportunities, and the social and political participation of women. She argues that, from a gender perspective, poverty is informed by processes which are inextricably related to development models and strategies and which have affected men and women in very different ways.

Bezarés Cóbar, Patricia. *Aproximaciones para el análisis y estudio sobre la situación de las mujeres indígenas y migración en Guatemala,* in *"Migraciones indígenas en las Américas"* (San José, Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos [IIDH], 2007), 115-27.
www.cebem.org/publicaciones.php? seccion=65&ID= 161

The focus of this article is the relationship between migration and indigenous women's poverty. Taking the case of migration of poor Mayan women within Guatemala and towards Mexico and the United States, its main argument is that the high migratory levels of poor indigenous women are the consequences of structural inequities. The author draws connections between class discrimination, racism and gender asymmetries, arguing that from the perspective of social, cultural and economic rights, migrant Mayan women are invisible subjects whereas, as a cheap labour force, they are extremely visible. The author regrets the lack of intersectionality disaggregated data (race/class/gender) on migration in Guatemala and stresses the condition of structural vulnerability informing Guatemalan female indigenous migration. Two types of migration are distinguished: internal and international. The first category further distinguishes between migration from one rural area to another (seasonal agricultural workers) and migration from rural to urban areas (mainly for domestic work). In both cases, migration is a survival strategy for women and their families, and in both cases migrant women, a majority of whom are adolescents, are abused and exploited. In the second category, international migration, the study takes the cases of Mayan women migrating to Chiapas, Mexico and the United States. The article concludes with four recommendations:

1. More studies probing the conceptual links between migration, gender and indigenous women are needed;
2. It is important to generate more knowledge on the working conditions of indigenous women as domestic workers and seasonal agricultural workers so as to strengthen demands related to their labour rights;
3. The inner universe of indigenous women is constituted by cultural patterns and structures of feeling which may differ from those of non-indigenous women. This issue calls for further research in the domain of anthropological and psychosocial studies;
4. More studies are needed which enhance the interrelationship of different mechanisms and international conventions protecting the human rights of women as migrants.

Bradshaw, Sarah. *Gendered poverties and power relations: Looking inside communities and households* (Managua: Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2002), 1-47.
www.cisas.org.ni/prsp/PDF/wpov_en.pdf

This paper is the result of a field study conducted by the author amongst Nicaraguan poor households. It examines women's poverty in Nicaragua through a critique of WB-defined poverty reduction programmes (PRSP). It is argued that a focus on income and consumption measures has led to static and descriptive definitions of poverty, which the Nicaraguan state has adopted. The paper is in three sections: Section 1 reviews some conceptualisations of poverty and well-being and their relation to the Nicaraguan context. Especially noteworthy in this section is the author's reflection on the notions of "social capital" and the "rights-based" approach to development. It is argued that the latter furnishes a useful analytical grid from which an analysis of women's poverty, violence against women, and women's right to development can be undertaken. Section 2 describes the communities studied and explains how households in these communities perceive and define poverty, deprivation and violence in very distinct ways. Section 3 discusses the survival strategies of poor households for overcoming poverty and deprivation, focusing on women's strategies to improve their livelihoods. Section 4 discusses the heterogeneity of women's poverty in the Nicaraguan context. It distinguishes three sites where women's poverty is produced and reproduced: the labour market, education and households. The contention made here is that these sites interact to reproduce gender roles and relations in a way that impacts on women's relative well-being.

Carneiro, Sueli. *"Ennegrecer al feminismo"*. Paper presented at International Seminar on Racism, Xenophobia and Gender organised by Lolapress, Durban, Southafrica, August 27-28, 2001. Translated from Portuguese into Spanish by Lilián Abracinskas.
www.penelopes.org/Espagnol/xarticle.php3?id_article=24

As its title indicates, this paper engages in a critique of racism and feminism's inability to engage fully with the consequences of racism on Brazilian black women. Revisiting the notion of racial democracy in the Brazilian context, the author reminds us of the history of institutionalised exploitation and objectification of black women's bodies and subjectivities. She criticises Brazilian feminist scholars for failing to acknowledge the distinctiveness of black women's history, arguing that in the process of rewriting Brazilian history from a woman's perspective, feminists failed to incorporate the voices of black women. Evoking intersectional theorising, Carneiro proposes to broaden analysis of women's oppressions so as to include axes of oppression other than those which are gender-derived. She explains that Brazilian black women are systematically exposed to everyday racist mechanisms and practices. These violences range from being denied access to quality health care, discrimination at the workplace, or having practices of good appearance imposed on them which assume them to be deviant form a white-defined notion of femininity. The author identifies the interconnection between feminist and anti-racist studies as an innovative area for feminist politics and activism, noting that this strategic coalition would enrich both feminist and anti-racist debates and movements. Carneiro proposes to incorporate racial violence as a defining element of VAW.

Chant, Sylvia. *The 'feminisation of poverty' in Costa Rica: To what extent a conundrum?*, Bulletin of Latin American Research 28.1 (2009): 19-43.

Taking Costa Rica as a case study, Chant teases out assumptions based upon quantitative analysis which argue that the feminisation of poverty has actually increased. She contends that the assertion that poverty is 'feminising,' especially with regard to female-headed households is, to certain extent, a conundrum and that it can be debunked with empirical evidence from the field. She explains that in some parts of the country (the Guanacaste province, for instance), "female headship" is perceived as a more viable and even preferred option by women who feel that it enhances their sense of well-being, and that this social phenomenon is largely due to social and legal changes and to some concern, on the part of the Costa Rican state, with gender equality through direct allocation of public resources to low-income households. As a result, women have become less inclined to tolerate gender inequalities at the domestic level.

Chinkin, Christine, and Charlesworth, Hilary. "The gender of *jus cogens*", in H. Steiner et al. (eds.), *International human rights in context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. First published in Human Rights Quarterly 15.63 (1993).

This article makes a critical examination of the assumed universality and normativity of the category of human rights referred to as *jus cogens*. Using the method of structural critique, the authors emphasise that this category of universal human rights is biased against women and that the very notion of universal human rights has hinged upon the implied assumption that men are superior to women. They criticise international lawyers and institutions for overlooking the salience of women's human rights as they are violated both in the public and private sphere. They regret that sexual equality has not yet been allocated the status of a fundamental tenet of human rights and call for a critical re-examination of the catalogues of *jus cogens* norms enshrined in international treaties (such as genocide, slavery, murder and disappearances). In particular, they call for feminist rethinking of *jus cogens* in order to expose the wide range of human rights which are inextricably and distinctively related to women and which are often missing from *jus cogens* inventories.

Colectivo Feminista de Mujeres Universitarias en Honduras (COFEMUN). *Pobreza y género: Mujeres hondureñas definiendo la pobreza y el desarrollo, Honduras, 2003-2004*. Managua: Z y Z Impresiones, S.A., June 2005.

www.cofemun.org

Between November 2003 and May 2004, the Honduran organisation COFEMUN, in alliance with member organisations of the Honduran Women Converge (Convergencia de Mujeres Honduras), undertook a process of interlocution with Honduran women of urban and rural areas. The aim of this project was to create a space for reflection and redefinition of poverty and social exclusion from the perspective of Honduran women themselves. One national and six regional events were organised which gathered peasant women, women workers of the maquilas, domestic workers, community leaders and members of women's organisations. This report is a compilation of this collective process of critical reflection and a proposal for the reorientation of poverty reduction policies and strategies by the Honduran government. In addition, it reflects on the meanings of development as defined and desired by Honduran women workers. The report criticises neoliberal capitalism and its neglect of the structural causes informing women's poverty. It establishes conceptual links between the economy, poverty and gender discrimination, stressing the role played by hegemonic socio-cultural structures which legitimise discrimination against women, indigenous and Afro-descendant women and girls in particular. A main contention is that gender equity, respect for cultural diversity, the promotion of a non-violent culture and respect for human rights are effective means towards poverty reduction. What development Honduras women want is the closing question of this report. It is argued that the model of development embraced by women is one which should protect women's right to productive assets, freedom and a life free of violence, among other things.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color*, in Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (eds.), Critical race theory (New York: New Press, 1995), 357-83.

This ground-breaking study has become a landmark in contemporary feminist studies. Crenshaw's article builds upon previous theorising on multiple and interlocking factors of oppression developed by US black feminist scholars. The introduction defines the term and engages in a critical re-examination of identity politics in the US context. Crenshaw defines intersectional subordination as "the consequence of one burden interacting with existing vulnerabilities to create new dimensions of disempowerment". This complexity, she notes, has often been overlooked by feminist and anti-racist theorists. Crenshaw goes on to argue that in the domain of identity politics, the issue at stake has not so much been scholars' concern with the epistemic salience of difference but, rather, the fact that they have often overlooked differences within supposedly homogeneous cultural groups. In the context of VAW, this poses important problems in relation to the everyday violence affecting women. This form of routinised VAW is shaped by dimensions that are based not only on gender but also on race, class and

sexuality. Focusing on race/gender intersectionality as applied to violence against US women of colour, Crenshaw proposes two modalities of intersectionality, namely structural and political intersectionality. The former is developed in Part 1, and is defined as the process by which systems of race, gender and class domination converge to oppress or discriminate women in distinctive ways. The notion of political intersectionality is developed in Part 2. This notion refers to the double subordination of women of colour, who are situated at the crossroads of two groups usually pursuing conflicting political agendas, namely white women and black men. The author contends that this conflict of agendas creates intersectional disempowerment amongst multiply-oppressed women and has played a role in the politicisation of domestic violence against women. Part 3, the conclusion to the paper, proposes to reconsider how processes of socio-cultural subordination occur and how they affect those who are subordinated. It also calls for reconsideration of the social value ascribed to certain identities and the extent to which these assigned values produce and perpetuate social hierarchies. It draws readers' attention to two different expressions of power: the power to categorise and the power to mainstream this categorisation into the social and material dimensions. The paper closes with a call not to limit analysis to gender inequality and to re-examine identity categories as concepts informed by the intersection of multiple dimensions. Finally, it highlights the appropriateness of intersectional analysis of VAW for a critique of hegemonic practices within supposedly non-hegemonic subordinated groups.

De Miguel Álvarez, Ana. *"La construcción de un marco feminista de interpretación: La violencia de género", Cuadernos de Trabajo Social* 18 (2005): 231–48.

This theoretical paper traces the history of the social and symbolic subordination of women in Europe while at the same time exploring feminism's contribution to the construction of a new conceptual paradigm concerning violence against women. It begins with a short review of feminism as a social movement. It explains how, in the European context, feminist thought and praxis have become sites of theoretical innovation and meaning-making. For instance, it is argued that feminist thought has successfully reconfigured the meanings of patriarchal violence against women. Challenges to feminist thought are also evoked. Amongst these, the article mentions the co-opting power of patriarchal ideology, which leads some women into acquiescing with the patterns of domination naturalised by patriarchal social orders. Along with changing the cultural mindset, achieving women's rejection of a system based upon their subordination to men represents a major challenge for feminist theory and praxis. According to the author, "cognitive liberation" – the questioning of values and attitudes interiorised since childhood – could be one possible strategy towards this. The second part of the paper takes issue with patriarchal interpretations of VAW and proposes some ideas for a new feminist framework of analysis of VAW. It argues that patriarchal interpretative frameworks have legitimised VAW by conceptualising women as inferior and gendered rather than as equal human beings. As a result, women have been constructed as the property of men. Religious discourses have contributed to this. One recommendation in the area of new interpretative frameworks of VAW is to engage in analytical journeys so as to re-examine violent acts against women which have already been catalogued by science, criminology and society at a given point in history. Significantly, the paper outlines developments in feminist conceptualisation of VAW and perpetrators of VAW from the 1970s onwards. It notes how these changes led to the improvement of legislation and the social understanding of the need to condemn and punish perpetrators of VAW. These developments are not exempt from an important paradox: while the enforcement of legislation on VAW and the punishment of perpetrators have improved, the capacity of the penal and prison system for rehabilitation and social reinsertion of perpetrators of VAW is still deficient.

Hunnicutt, Gwen. *"Varieties of patriarchy and violence against women: Resurrecting 'patriarchy' as a theoretical tool". Violence Against Women*15.5 (2009): 553–73.

Thanks to women's movements and feminist scholars, violence against women has made its way into the public political and policy arena. However, gender-centred theorising on VAW has lagged behind. This is one of the major contentions put forward by this article, where the author revisits patriarchy as a theoretical concept and proposes a theory of patriarchy – understood as systems of male domination

and female subordination – to probe violence against women as a structural problem related to the social rather than the individual realm. This theoretical paper situates gender as the primary shaper of social relations, insisting that, as empirical observations demonstrate, VAW results from unequal gender arrangements and women are targeted precisely because of their gender. The author defines patriarchy as hierarchical "social arrangements that privilege males where men dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically" and which "manifest in varieties across history and social space". Moreover, a distinction is made between patriarchal systems acting at the macro-level and those at work at the micro-level. According to the author, both exist in symbiosis with each other. The article stresses the complexity of patriarchy, as a theoretical tool, and recognises the fact that its supposed universality has obfuscated a critical reading of its multiple forms and shapes. The author proposes instead to rethink patriarchy as a non-static notion: there are degrees of patriarchy and patriarchal systems are "varieties in movement". The theory of patriarchy proposed accounts for variations across histories, time and space and incorporates the idea that structures and patterns of domination are shifting in nature. A first step in this direction, it is argued, would be a mapping of varieties of patriarchy so as to document their characteristics and complex dimensions and capture their structural and ideological dimensions. Concurrently, the victimisation of women should be tracked, exploring changes in shape across different patriarchal systems.

Molyneux, Maxine. *"Change and continuity in social protection in Latin America: Mothers at the service of the state?"*. UNRISD Programme Papers on Gender and Development no. 1. Geneva: UNRISD, 2007.
www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/search/BF80E0A84BE41896C12573240033C541?OpenDocument

This long article traces the history of social policy in some countries of Latin America. The first part identifies major trends in social policy adopted by Latin American governments before and after the structural reforms of the 1980s and discusses their impact in the domain of poverty eradication. A major argument made by the author is that despite the reduction of the welfare state and of public expenditure due to structural adjustment policies (SAPs), the state has not only recovered its capacity to regulate social relations, but continues to be a crucial actor in ensuring the welfare of low-income social groups. The second argument put forward is that although poverty-reduction programmes began to be owned and managed by Latin American governments during the post-adjustment period of the 1990s, they have nonetheless accentuated the disenfranchisement of women by placing policy emphasis on women's roles as mothers and wives. Part 2 focuses on the interrelationship between gender and poverty. In this section, the author challenges the thesis that social policy in Latin America has been gender blind, arguing that, on the contrary, it has been contingent upon a deep awareness of gendered perceptions relating to social needs. These gendered perceptions, she notes, are patriarchal and paternalistic, and assume the family realm as the locus of women's social agency. A second critique made by the author is that even though international financial institutions and Latin American governments have acknowledged that, historically, women have borne a considerable amount of the burden of structural reforms, in the new social policy paradigm there has been neither sufficient policy focus and investment to reverse this situation nor sufficient consideration of women's specific social needs in anti-poverty programmes. Taking the cases of two poverty relief programmes in Mexico and Argentina respectively, the article points out the strengths and weaknesses of programmes which focus solely on poverty alleviation while failing to consider the structural causes of poverty itself and the gender divide which sustains it. It also shows the paradox arising from programmes which attempt to empower women as daughters and mothers. These programmes create a tension between women's struggle to access development with equity and the maternalist policies which define their social agency as providers of care in the household or altruist caregivers in the public space. A major critique in this second section is that, while poverty relief programmes owned and managed by Latin American governments have attempted to empower women, they have nevertheless done so through a child-centred idea of development, failing to question the social divisions sustaining gender asymmetries.

Monárrez Fragoso, Julia. "Feminicidio sexual serial en Ciudad Juárez: 1993-2001" Debate Feminista 13. 25 (2002): 1-15.

Through the theoretical construct of "serial sexual feminicide" this paper problematises feminicides in Ciudad de Juárez, México during the period 1993-2001. According to the author, these murders bear witness to the structural vulnerability of poor women workers and expose the lack of an integral strategy, on the part of public authorities, to enforce the law and punish the murderers. The paper reviews theoretical contributions to the issue of feminicides from the late 1970s onwards, stressing the pioneering role of scholars such as Diana E. H. Russell, Jane Caputi, Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer. The focus is on the conceptual links between sexual VAW and feminicide, a crime which the author perceives as inextricably linked to patriarchal domination and which predisposes women to being killed either because they are women or because they transgress normative conventions of womanly conduct. The paper describes the continuum of violence informing feminicide, arguing that it is tolerated by the state and religious institutions. Especially noteworthy is the connection established between feminicidal violence (violencia feminicida) and the social location of the victims themselves. A critique is made of feminist theorising on feminicide for the epistemic privilege accorded to gender to the detriment of social class and other important structures of power. The author recognises that gender is a constitutive element of unequal social relations. However, she urges feminist scholars not to overlook the gender/class intersection in the analysis of feminicides of women and girls in Ciudad Juárez.

Monzón, Ana Silvia. "*Las viajeras invisibles: Mujeres migrantes en la región centroamericana y el sur de México*". Online publication. Guatemala: PCS-CAMEX, July 2007.
www.pcslatin.org /public/viajeras_invisibles.pdf

One of the major problems in the area of migration studies in Central America and Mexico is the scarcity of studies which take stock of the structural causes pushing poor people to migrate. This is particularly striking if one considers the most vulnerable segments of the migrant population, namely women, girls and ageing women. This study aims to fill this significant lacuna. It explores the impact of migration on the lives and livelihoods of Central American and Mexican women, providing useful gender-disaggregated data. The study points out that, in the context of migration, VAW travels along with the cultural perceptions and practices of migrants, crossing geographical borders and taking new shapes in the material reality of recipient countries. The author highlights the defining role played by poverty in women's migration, at both the national and transnational levels. On the road towards better living conditions, migrant women and girls are confronted with different forms of violence which are determined by their gendered and sexual identity: sexual violence, death, and violation of their sexual and reproductive rights. It is argued that migrant women can also play a proactive role in recipient countries. This is manifest in their capacity to redefine social relations by connecting cultures, people and knowledges.

Phalane, Manthiba. *Globalisation, the feminisation of poverty and the masculine workplace.* Paper presented at the 10th General Assembly at the Nile International Conference Centre, Kampala, Uganda, 8-12 December 2002.
www.codesria.org/Links/conferences/gen_assembly10/panels12_20/phalane.pdf

Globalisation of the economy has brought forth crucial challenges to women's struggle against poverty and social disempowerment in Africa. Despite the wealth of debates on the benefits or disadvantages of globalisation, the gendered impact of globalisation has remained a marginal issue amongst African scholars. This paper starts out from the premise that the transformations resulting from globalisation (privatisation, deregulation, trade and financial liberalisation, amongst others) have weakened the state's capacity to guarantee universal access to services, assets and resources and have exacerbated the feminisation of poverty. This is evidenced by the growing numbers of women made to bear the burden of impoverishment and marginalisation. Poorly paid jobs, the informalisation of women's work, growing demands within the household and diminished access to formal education and training are some of the threats hovering over women. With South Africa as a case study, the paper underlines the role

played by governments and international financial institutions in increasing women's disempowerment. It states that women have become casualties in the process of adjusting to globalisation, and proposes to re-examine the globalisation of the economy in the light of deep-rooted differences in gender and sexual roles and the cultural expectations impinging on women. The paper concludes with a call to governments to re-examine their roles and responsibilities, in particular, to ensure the protection and enforcement of women's socio-economic rights, which are enshrined in the constitution.

Puentes Aguilar, Sylvia G. *Femicidios y feminicidios en Nuevo León 2005–2007*. Monterrey, Mexico: Instituto Estatal de las Mujeres de Nuevo León, 2007.
www.scribd.com/doc/5314304/Femicidios-y-feminicidios-en-Nuevo-Leon-20052007

This book is part of a programme developed jointly by two public institutions of the Mexican state of Nuevo León. The study fills an important lacuna in policy research on femicides conducted by a public body. As its introduction explains, the book aims to update a study conducted in 2004 in order to generate information which can enhance public policy-making around gender-based violence in Nuevo León. The study differentiates between femicides and feminicides, defining the former as the killing of women and the latter as the killing of women by men because they are women. Chapter 1 introduces the background and main goals of the study. Chapter 2 reviews different concepts and definitions of VAW. Chapter 3 examines the existing legal framework in the area of feminicides, focusing on penal legislation and administrative norms related to VAW. Chapter 4 analyses newspaper reports on women who died as a result of gender-based violence in the period 2005–2007, and chapter 5 analyses newspaper-based data on men killed by women in the same period in Nuevo León. The study makes several important concluding remarks, including the conclusion that gender plays a role in both femicides and feminicides. This is reflected in the male supremacy of the aggressors, in the level of discrimination and social exclusion affecting the victims, and the high levels of legal and social impunity. Many perpetrators of VAW are still in hiding and many have not even been identified. Also highlighted is the fact that even though some femicides are connected with drug trafficking, a large majority result from structural and cultural causes. A third point is the urgency of enhancing awareness among legal and judicial officers and among personnel working in centres for the support and accompaniment of victims of VAW. A major recommendation to the government is to comply with its responsibility to promote and guide a change in cultural mindset. It is through a culture of non-discrimination and non-violence that VAW can most effectively be prevented. This work requires integrated approaches and practices from different relevant public bodies (legislative, judiciary, educational, heath and social services) and political will. The study concludes, is a *sine qua non* in the eradication of VAW. Governmental bodies should make this issue a priority. Some policy options advanced are: improve legislation on VAW and its enforcement; allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of legislation; stop impunity; provide sustained support to opinion makers who are committed to eradicating and punishing VAW; and include civil society organisations in policy discussions and collaborate with them in fighting VAW.

Purdie-Vaughns, Valerie, and Eibach, Richard P. *"Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities", Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 377–91.

This theoretical essay probes intersectionality from the analytical canvas of subordinated identities. Contrasting with scholarship on the notions of single-subordinated and multiply-subordinated identities, it proposes to rethink multiply oppressed subject-positions through the paradigm of "intersecting subordinate identities". A main argument put forward by the authors is that androcentrism, ethnocentrism and heterosexism have a disempowering effect on subjects with intersecting subordinated identities who are part of larger subordinate groups (for instance, black women compared to black people and to women as larger categories).

Terry, Geraldine. *"Poverty reduction and violence against women: exploring links, assessing impact", Development in Practice*14.4 (2004): 469–80.

This paper outlines conceptual links between VAW, poverty and sustainable human development and problematises the difficulties encountered by development organisations and practitioners in assessing the impact of their programmes on VAW. A major contention is that VAW diminishes "women's agency and hampers social progress". It is argued that VAW and poverty are linked in a causal relationship and that gender and development experts have been sceptical about establishing links between poverty and domestic VAW. Their reluctance is explained by the danger of demonising poor men and the awareness that not all poor women are abused and that violence does not only affect poor women, even though poverty does increase women's social, affective and sexual vulnerability. Three levels of analysis are distinguished from which the link between VAW and women's material poverty is explored: the individual, the household, and society. These dimensions are discussed in connection with women's economic empowerment and health, both identified as key factors in women's access to sustainable human development. The paper also highlights, albeit in passing, the traumatising impact of VAW in the form of sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and sexually transmitted diseases, amongst others. Importantly, the paper invites re-examination of the economic cost of VAW for society as a whole. Although this is a contested issue, it nevertheless opens up useful analytical avenues from which to discredit the pervasive belief that VAW is an issue of private concern. As regards assessing the impact on development work on levels of VAW, the paper recognises the need for other approaches and tools than the ones traditionally used by development practitioners and agencies. It also mentions the reluctance of victims to denounce their victimisers and the fact that in some cultures certain forms of VAW (such as sexual harassment on the street and wife-beating) have been naturalised.

Torres Falcón, Marta. *"Violencia contra las mujeres y derechos humanos: Aspectos teóricos y jurídicos"*. Undated online paper.

www.fesmex.org/Documentos%20y%20Programas/Ponencia%20Marta%20Torres.Doc

What does it mean to speak of women as subjects entitled to rights? Do appropriate mechanisms exist which ensure the exercise of their rights? Can women's rights be actually claimed in practice? This paper approaches these seminal questions through a theoretical discussion of VAW and its relationship to power asymmetries and women's human rights in Mexico. The discussion is organised in three parts. Section 1 explores conceptual links between VAW and systemic power asymmetries. It is argued that these asymmetries shape the process of defining VAW and permeate the use of concepts related to VAW, the analysis of acts of VAW as well as the treatment of victims and perpetrators of VAW. Section 2 explores the notion of the "subject entitled to rights", which emerged in Western modern philosophy and social sciences, and its relationship to women's human rights. A major critique in this section is the assumption, by canonical European male thinkers such as Rousseau, of the subordination of women to men. Defined as emotional rather than rational subjects, women came to be constructed as lacking will. In conceptual terms, it is argued, it is not possible to conceive of violence against a gendered and will-less subject as a social transgression. As a result, VAW becomes an act which is not perceived as a violation of universal human rights. Section 3 maps international human rights declarations and conventions and examines the difficulties encountered by the Mexican government in enlarging its vision of human rights and adjusting its legislation to international commitments made in the area of women's human rights.

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CAWN

The Central America Women's Network (CAWN) is a network of women united by a commitment to Women's Rights worldwide. Set up in 1991, CAWN works in solidarity with women's organisations in Central America, supporting them to defend their rights; fostering links, exchanges and capacity building between women's organisations in the United Kingdom and Central America; and raising awareness of the concerns of Central American women among the public, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and policy makers, especially in relation to women's economic rights and gender-based violence. CAWN continues to contribute to uphold the political, social and economic rights of Central America women by working with others to:

Raise-awareness
Among the public of the situation of women in Central America, the possible impacts of international, regional or national policies on women's rights and the ways in which these threats are being exposed and resisted by women's organisations throughout the region.

Strengthen advocacy and campaigning efforts
In order to advance the specific demands of women's organisations in the region and to support campaigning to protect and promote the rights of women in Central America.

Promote solidarity links
To develop CAWN's capacity to respond to requests for support and solidarity from women in the region so that they can oppose unjust policies and respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.

"Poverty is an issue for women's organizations but we must change the technical discussion of poverty into a political discourse. It is essential to empower women for them to come out of poverty"

Mirta Kennedy
CEMH – Honduras

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