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Understanding Their Immigration

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Voices of Guatemalan Women in Los Angeles

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) statistics reported that 50 percent of all undocumented immigrants detained at the U.S./Mexican border are women (Golden 1992). Women from Central America and Mexico are entering the United States in increasing numbers. National statistics show that Guatemalan immigration to the United States is female dominated (Donato 1992:161). Guatemalan immigration is part of a trend where more women in an increasing number of countries than men participate in transnational migration (Donato 1992). This research attempts to clarify the causes for this phenomenon. First, it evaluates which Guatemalan women initiators and pioneers in the decision to migrate. Second, it looks at women's diverse reasons for leaving Guatemala, and third, what are the conditions particular to women left behind?

This study will also contribute to an understanding of the increasing diversification of the Latin American immigrant population in the United States (Lopez et al. 1996, Totti 1987). According to the 1990 census, over 65 percent of Los Angeles County's population are immigrants from Latin America. Although the majority of all Latin American immigrants in Los Angeles are from Mexico, there are other large Latin American immigrant communities in the city. Guatemalans are the third largest Latin American immigrant community in Southern California (Brownstein-Santiago 1992, Ramos 1997), but have received very limited attention from social scientists.

The massive influx of Central Americans into Los Angeles occurred only very recently, during the early eighties, due to increased political violence combined with the economic decline of the region. Due to the Central American political and economic crisis Los Angeles

has the largest concentration of Central Americans outside Central America (Ramos 1997). As a largely undocumented refugee population, Central Americans belong to the most disenfranchised and politically least influential sections of the population in Southern California (Ward 1987, Ramos 1997). While the Mexican community has produced its own scholarly research and is fighting heavily for a share of power in Los Angeles, Central American voices remain largely silent. Therefore, there is little knowledge about the identity and origin of this section of the population.

WOMEN'S COMPLEX AND DIVERSE MOTIVATIONS FOR IMMIGRATION

This study compares selected case studies of Guatemalan immigrant women who decided to immigrate with cases where the women did not make their own decision to immigrate to the United States. It contributes an understanding of the conditions in Guatemala that prompted their migration. Chant and Radcliffe (1992) pointed out that there is a lack of understanding about the diversity of women's causes for immigration and participation in the decision process for migration within one nationality.

Therefore, this study focuses on a range of conditions that perpetuate Guatemalan women's immigration to the United States such as their personal, marital and familial relationships; gender-role constraints; the socioeconomic and political situations in Guatemala. It especially focuses on how women's marital status affect their opportunity to decide to emigrate and how this intersects with socioeconomic and political causes. Case vignettes demonstrate how different causes are represented differently in each woman's lives.

Feminist immigration theory proposes three components for the analysis of female migration: (1) socioeconomic reasons, (2) familial reasons and (3) gender role constraints (Crummett 1987, Morokvašic 1984, Safa 1987). This feminist framework has been modified for this study. Hamilton and Chinchilla (1991) demonstrated how socioeconomic and political reasons for immigration are intrinsically inseparable for Central Americans. The ongoing civil war in Guatemala demanded a high toll of lives; many Guatemalans left as political exiles. Therefore for the Guatemalan case, political causes for immigration need to be considered as well.

ORGANIZATION

The aim of this introductory chapter is to present the research problem and questions.

Chapter 2 reviews major theoretical approaches in immigration literature and summarizes the main issues concerning female immigration.

Chapter 3 summarizes research methodology and presents the research setting. It discusses accessing and conducting research with an undocumented refugee population.

Chapter 4 provides background information for understanding the context of Guatemalan women's immigration stories. It introduces economic, marital and political situations of women in Guatemala.

Chapter 5 interprets and presents the case studies of Guatemalan women who made their own decision to immigrate to the United States. It analyzes the conditions that allow women to make their own decision to immigrate and how this fact conforms with the traditional perception of gender roles in Guatemala. Individual case vignettes demonstrate how causes for immigration are differently represented in each woman's life.

Chapter 6 evaluates the cases of Guatemalan women who did not make their own decision to immigrate to the United States. It analyzes the conditions of women who did not come on their own initiative and how this affects women's power to make decisions about their own lives. Furthermore, it examines whether women who migrate as dependents match common notions of immigrant women's passivity in the process of transnational immigration. Case vignettes illustrate the general findings.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, brings together the principal findings of this book. It evaluates their significance in terms of current debates. It discusses how the findings have implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Women and Immigration

To understand the conditions that perpetuate Guatemalan women's immigration to the United States, it is necessary to know the theoretical foundations of migration research and how it applies to women. First, a history is provided of migration/immigration theory and how it has been applied to the study of female migration processes. Second, the feminist critique of traditional migration research is summarized. Finally, a synopsis of the literature on women's migration provides an overview of what other researchers identified as the conditions and causes for female transnational migration. This summary of other studies will furnish approximate gender ratios in transnational migration, which circumstances hinder women and which conditions expedite women's transnational migration. Because this study concentrates on the women's living circumstances in Guatemala before immigrating, it will specifically focus on what other authors identified as conditions in women's home-communities or home-countries that allowed women to leave.

IMMIGRATION THEORY

Generally speaking, there are two theoretical perspectives that explain population movements: the **micro-analytical** and the **macro-analytical** approach. Recently, both approaches have been combined in the study of migrant households (Crummett 1987, Pessar 1982). All these approaches, developed by economists (Chant 1992), are based on economic explanations for migration and ignore political, environmental or individual reasons.

The earliest model explaining population movement is the **equilibrium model of labor migration**, also referred to as the **microeconomic study of labor migration.** The **microeconomic orientation** is rooted in neoclassical theory which assumes that the economy is ruled by an individual's active choices (Wood 1982:299). Early microeconomic studies of immigration were demographic analysis of such parameters as immigration rates, levels of migrants' formal education, sex and age ratios of migrants (Castro, Gearing and Gill 1984, Crummett 1987:243). Early demographic models described only the phenomenon of immigration, but did not explain what causes migration. The microeconomic approach has been criticized for its neglect of the historical context of migration and the fact that it emphasizes the positive effects of migration. The first theoretical model that sought to explain migration was the microeconomic "**push-pull model**" (Crummett 1987:243, Spengler and Myers 1977:11). It names labor markets as the cause for population movements. The push-factor points to the lack of economic opportunities and the stagnation of the local economy at the place of origin. For example, restricted land resources, low wages and high unemployment in rural areas force people to leave their communities (Georges 1990). The pull-factor is the demand for labor in the city or country of immigration. The relatively high wages in cities or a highly industrialized country attract migrants. The "push-pull model" describes migration as a process that equalizes the supply and demand in a free labor market. Migrants provide the necessary work force for the receiving country or city and migrants send remittances home and provide for the economic development of their home communities (Georges 1990:3). It ignores the costs of migration, for example, migrants often work in underpaid, dead-end jobs and are more vulnerable to economic exploitation.

In contrast to the microeconomic orientation, the **macroeconomic or historical-structural model of labor migration** considers broader trends of "social, political and economic change and conflict" (Crummett 1987:244) as main reasons for migration. As the historical-structural model is ideologically rooted in Marxism, broader socioeconomic forces determine migration and not the individual's free choice (Bach and Schraml 1982:324). The historical-structural approach has had diverse proponents and includes a variety of explanatory models such as dependency theory, the center-periphery model and global accumulation (Wood 1982:301). However, it focuses entirely on economic factors and excludes non-economic factors that

influence migration patterns. For example, dependency theory emphasizes the dependency of poorer nations' development on wealthier countries. The center-periphery model assumes migration proceeds from societies on the economic periphery, such as Guatemala, to societies in the core with advanced industries and more capital, such as the United States (Meillassoux 1981, Pessar 1982:342). The global accumulation theory is based on the fact that richer countries accumulate capital which allows them to control world labor markets (Sassen-Koob 1984:1144).

During the eighties, advocates of contemporary immigration theory recognized that both of the existing models of labor migration that focus on economic forces had disadvantages. Whereas the microeconomic model stressed the individual migrant's free choice in the migration process (Portes 1978), the macroeconomic model ignored the microanalytical perspective completely. The latter failed to take into account individual decision making processes (Crummett 1987:304-306) and denied the fact that migrants may be active in attempting to determine their own lives (Bach and Schraml 1982:324).

Recently, **household economics** or **household strategy approach** (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:22) has been perceived to be the ideal link (Pessar 1988:195) between the microeconomic and macroeconomic models of labor migration. The household and its members are influenced by both micro and macroeconomic conditions. Internal and transnational migration is perceived as a strategy for household survival. Typically, for representatives of household economics, decisions for migration are seen as made not by individuals but by a collective, the household. The household has an internal structure of microeconomic and social relations and is connected to the outside macroeconomic, historical and social context. For example, the internal power relations in a household determines who migrates and who stays. However, the need to migrate in general depends on the larger socioeconomic situation and changing external structures are accommodated by migration of household members (Pessar 1988:197).

Immigration Theory and Women

The **neoclassical, microanalytical** approach has not been used to conduct research on female immigration, but it has been utilized as a theoretical framework to understand women's immigration processes. It assumes that there are no differences between male and female

migration and that higher wages in cities or industrialized countries attract both women and men. Furthermore, it considers the migration of women exclusively as marriage partners. The neoclassical, microanalytical approach has been criticized for addressing female migration processes inadequately because it does not recognize that women's migration processes are different from those of men. It fails to consider gender and class related causes for women's migration and regards women as disconnected from macroeconomic conditions (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:20).

Early studies using **historical-structural approach** failed to consider addressing gender differences in the migratory process (Crummett 1987:244). Later studies used a historical-structural perspective describing female migration as a result of changes in the global economy (Saasen-Koob 1983,1984). Female migration is seen as the result of unequal development in the worldwide capitalist system. Capitalism draws specialized labor from specific areas (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:21). For example, women from poorer nations are incorporated into the United States manufacturing industries, such as garment industry in the United States, an industry that would not exist in the industrialized countries if it did not use a supply of underpaid immigrant women to compete with low-cost producers in other countries (Sassen-Koob 1983, 1984). Similarly, young women have been migrating to "Free Trade Zones" in Mexico, Puerto Rico and South East Asia to provide cheap labor for manufacturing industries (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:21). The **historical-structural** approach has been criticized for emphasizing women's role in production and neglecting women's reproductive roles. Productive roles consist of women's participation in wage labor. Reproductive roles include childbearing, child care and domestic chores (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:22, Brydon and Chant 1989:10-11). Those responsibilities often limit women's participation in migration processes.

Household economics has especially been used to understand women's migration processes. Among the different theoretical approaches, **household economics** appealed to researchers who are concerned with female migration such as Patricia Pessar (1982,1988), Sarah Radcliffe (1986, 1992) and Sylvia Chant (1992). Using the household as the unit of analysis, they were able to include gender relations as a variable to analyze migration processes. Household economy brought attention to how power relations in the household shape decision making processes and division of labor in the household

(Chant and Radcliffe 1992:23). Those gender role expectations, might for instance, make women solely responsible for raising children and absolving men from involvement in household activities. Therefore, those men might be more likely to participate in migration than women (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:23). Although, household economics presents a breakthrough in the study of female migration it has some major drawbacks. The problem with theoretical models in general, such as household economics, is that there is a tendency to homogenize women's situations within a nationality and not to consider the variety of cases. Furthermore, household economics portrays women only acting as part of a group, the household. It ignores the fact that women, besides pursuing collective interests, might have individual, non-economic reasons for migration, like the desire to escape from oppressive, violent situations. In addition, household economics heavily emphasizes economic motivations as a counter-reaction to traditional immigration research that postulated that women do not have any economic reasons for migration.

FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL MIGRATION RESEARCH

Early immigration research used a neo-classical or a historical-structural perspective primarily on men's migration (Morokvašic 1984:899) and then generalized those findings for all migrants, men and women. It regarded men as pioneers and risk-takers in the migration process (Brettell and Simon 1986:3, Lamphere 1986:274). Those studies denied that women could be pioneers in the migration process and could have gender specific reasons of their own to participate in the migratory process. These traditional research approaches studied female migration only in terms of sex ratios and not of gender roles (Castro, Gearing and Gill 1984:4). The prototypes of sex ratio oriented studies are demographic analyses based on census material which are not concerned with the women's own reasons for migration because they were presumed not to have any reasons of their own. Reasons for female emigration were considered to be private and linked to men's migration because supposedly, they always followed male authority figures in their process of migration. Female migration was considered uninfluenced by macroeconomic conditions (Crummett 1987:242, Morokvašic 1984:898). This ideology is still reflected in

how scholars and governments define women's migrant status as dependents of spouses or relatives (Morokvašic 1984).

Feminist research opposed these traditional approaches. For instance, the title of Morokvašic's (1984) review-article on female migration "Birds of Passage are also Women . . . " was a reaction to Michael Piore's (1979) important and widely cited book "Birds of Passage" which was mainly concerned with male migration. Feminist migration research first drew attention to the importance of gender in the migration process and how it might be related to factors associated with class, race and socioeconomics while embracing the macroanalytic reasons as well (Castro, Gearing and Gill 1984, Crummett 1987:247, Morokvašic 1984). It focussed on the meaning of being female in the migration process (Castro and Gill 1984:8) and included sex roles, sexual division of labor, ideological constructions and self-perceptions of women in the study of migration. Furthermore, feminist migration research demonstrated that female migration processes differed from male's and that women could take the initiative to migrate (Boyd 1986, Caspari and Giles 1986, Morokvašic 1984).

However, there are three major limitations in the new feminist literature on migration. Feminist migration researchers were so concerned in proving that women have their own economic reasons to migrate that they placed a heavy emphasis on how economic reasons specific to women facilitated their migration. Political causes and economic causes for migration are regarded as separate categories. Additionally, feminist migration researchers only superficially investigated social power structures that inhibit or facilitate women's migration. Immigrant women's own voices are very rarely heard (Gonzalez 1986, Foner 1986). Feminist research failed to document women's macro and microeconomic reasons in their home-communities and home-countries that perpetuated their participation in the migration process (Momsen 1992:81). Instead, it examined which economic conditions in the host-country favored women's immigration (Momsen 1992), how immigrant women were incorporated in the host-country's economy (Sassen-Koob 1983, 1984), and how immigration affected their gender roles (Andezian and Streiff 1982, Castro 1982, Kudat 1982, Pessar 1982, 1988, Yang 1984).

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATIONS IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS

A decade has passed since Mirjana Morokvašic stated that "Birds of Passage are also Women". During this time, feminist scholarship transformed the understanding of women's migration processes. Contrary to traditional migration theories, they proved that migration is not a "gender-neutral" process (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:19). Almost every migration process has an imbalance of men and women (Chant 1992). Women worldwide take active part in the decision to migrate and many immigrate autonomously (Chaney 1982), while others follow family or spouses. Single women or married women without spouses comprise a considerable percentage of all immigrants (Morokvašic 1982). However, if women migrate, they still participate mostly in internal migration which is normally from a rural to an urban area (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:8). In Latin America, women have been very active in internal migration (Thadani and Todaro 1984:39). This has been explained by the demand for female domestic labor in Latin American cities (Youssef and Hetler 1983). Therefore, there are more women in Latin American cities than men (Butterworth and Chance 1981). The reason for this ratio is that single, young women migrated to the urban centers to find domestic work (Boserup 1970). Data from Guatemala validate these findings; more women then men migrated to Guatemala City (Micklin 1990).

Worldwide, men still outrank women in transnational migration. Nevertheless, women are major participants in transnational migration (Chant and Radcliffe 1992, Thadani and Todari 1984). In some cases women even predominate in transnational migration. Donato (1992:159) found that there is a recent increase in countries where women outrank men among transnational migrants. For instance, women predominate among documented immigrants to the United States (Tyree and Donato 1986). Documented immigration from Central and South America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and Europe to the United States is clearly female dominated. Guatemala is among those countries which sent more documented women to the United States than men (Vlach 1992, Wallace 1986). However, census based studies can only hypothesize about why women participate to a larger extent in immigration to the United States than man. Therefore, in-depth, microanalytical research like the study presented can explain the

circumstances that facilitate women's participation in transnational migration.

Generally, most immigration researchers assume that numerous gender role and economic restrictions deny women from participating freely in migration, even if there is a substantial demand for female labor. Chant (1992:202) identified power structures of the household as the reason why women migrate less than men. Age and marital status are important components in female migration. Young migrant women seem to be more influenced by power structures associated with age and gender than their young male counterparts (Chant 1992:202). Their movements tend to be more controlled by their families than the movements of young, single men. Child care and sociocultural restrictions, such as gender roles, are often considered barriers for women in internal and transnational migration (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:16). In patriarchal extended families, women are not free to migrate even if they traditionally generate part of the income for household expenditures (Hugo 1992). Furthermore, marriage and childrearing restrain women from participating freely in the migratory process. For example, Radcliffe (1986) discovered that rural Peruvian wives with children tended not to migrate to the city. In the words of Radcliffe's interviewees' (1986:41), "Married women have to wash clothes; single women don't have babies." In addition, women and men have different access to paid labor. Usually women migrants are confined to low paying jobs and earn less than men at the destination of migration. Therefore, it might be economically more beneficial for a family to have their son migrate than their daughter (Chant 1992:204).

However, migration is an extremely dynamic process and gender ratios can change over time (Chant 1992:200). Despite the mentioned gender role and economic restrictions, women participate in transnational migration. Among the many factors that facilitate women's participation in transnational migration, research has also focused on conditions in the host-country. Demands for low-wage female labor in industrialized countries (Sassen-Koob 1983, 1984) and government policies of immigrant receiving countries have been held responsible for perpetuating female immigration. In the case of Portuguese women in Britain, hostility towards male immigrants was described as the reason why Portuguese women arrived prior to their spouses (Caspari and Giles 1986). In Indonesian cases, women predominate in transnational migration to the Middle East, as a result of

Indonesian government policy that promoted the emigration of Indonesian women as domestic workers (Hugo 1992).

Only a few researchers looked at women's conditions in their home-countries that perpetuated their emigration. For example, despite gender role restrictions, daughters might be more reliable sending home money once they left. Momsem (1993:90) found that in the case of Caribbean migrants, women were more reliable in sending money home because daughters understood themselves as part of their family network at home. Sons were more likely to work for their own personal benefit. Patricia Pessar's work (1982,1988) on Dominican immigrant women in the United States demonstrated how lack of income possibilities for women forced Dominican women to migrate to the United States. Pessar (1982,1988) focused primarily on the economic aspects of female migration using the theoretical orientation of household economy. She did not explain what social conditions in the Dominican Republic allowed Dominican women to leave and if women were able to leave independently or came as dependents of spouses and families.

Like Pessar, Radcliffe using the theoretical orientation of household economics (1986, 1992), focused on the economic reasons for women's migration. Contrary to Pessar, Radcliffe considered non-economic factors such as marital status that contribute to women's migration. Radcliffe found that the migration of rural women to the city of Cuzco in Peru is pre-dominated by young, single women because the domestic labor market is restricted to them. As soon as women married or they had a child, they left their employer's house. However, Peruvian migrant women in Radcliffe's article also identified migration to the city as a liberation from abusive, oppressive domestic situations. Nevertheless, Radcliffe did not explore those non-economic, individual causes because she restricted herself to the topic of labor migration.

Blondet (1990) who studied, like Radcliffe (1086, 1992) rural to urban migration in Peru concentrated not only on questions in power relations of the household and economics of migration, but also on women's individual reasons for migration. She portrayed migration for those women as an act of individual empowerment rather than just an issue of household survival. Her study of a poor Lima neighborhood described a combination of economic and social causes for Peruvian women migrating from the countryside to Lima: "uprootedness and the impossibility of surviving". She defined uprootedness as the "rupture of individual relationships". The quotes by women illustrate this rupture:

beatings in the family, avoiding marriage with an unwanted man, arguments between parents. Blondet (1990:17) described migration as a liberating process that allowed women to escape oppressive and/or violent living conditions in their home-communities. Other authors stressed an escape from restrictive gender roles as the cause for women's migration (Castro 1982, Kudat, 1982, Yang 1984). However, migration does not always liberate women from traditional gender roles. In some cases, immigration strengthens traditional roles and women were under more control of male authorities than in their home country (Morokvašic 1984:892). For example, Algerian women in France did not participate in the labor force after their arrival and were confined to their homes. In the case of Puerto Rican women in New York, women carried the burden of the double day. They were overburdened by underpaid work, household chores and childbearing (Foner 1986:141). In those cases, immigration was not a desirable process for women.

As previously stated, marriage and child-care are usually reasons to restricting women from participating independently in transnational migration (Radcliffe 1986). Nevertheless, many Caribbean and Central American mothers (Sontag 1994) leave their children with relatives in their home-countries and participate independently abroad. Recent research demonstrates that marital disruption and instability made those women into female heads of households. In the those cases, women were the only ones who could migrate because the spouse was absent or was an unreliable economic provider (Radcliffe and Chant 1992:16). Therefore, in countries with high marital instability women are more likely to cross transnational borders (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990).

Among most Latin Americanists, marital instability has not yet been considered as a reason why Latin American women migrate although high rates of female headed households have been reported all over Latin America (Youssef and Hetler 1983). Pessar (1988:198) noted that 37 percent of all Dominican households she surveyed in New York were headed by women. In her study, she did not analyze if female heads of households were more likely to take their own decision to immigrate to the United States than women who are part of male headed households. In a more current article, Radcliffe (1992) found that internal migration in Peru has recently been affected by marital instability. However, Radcliffe did not explain how this marital instability effected migration. An exception is found in Arguëlles' and Rivero's (1993) study on Mexican and Central American immigrant

women in Los Angeles. According to their findings, Mexican and Central American women came to the United States not only to find work, but also to escape abusive marriages.

How marital instability forced mothers and married women to migrate independently from spouses has been demonstrated by research on the migration processes of African women or women of the African diaspora. Moore (1988:95) emphasized that conflicts between men and women are central to understanding women's migration. African women migrated independently from men because they wanted to escape unsatisfactory marriages; and/or marital instability forced them to migrate to gain financial independence. Buijis (1993:185) and Stichter (1985:151) found that South African women migrated because of marital disruption. Her interviewees stressed that women could not rely for their families on their spouse's income and therefore women had become economically independent from men. After marital disputes or if husbands did not support their wives sufficiently, women migrated to other South African regions to find work to support themselves.

Ho's (1993) research on the immigration of Caribbean women to the United States is another illustration of how marital instability expedites women's migration. She found that the majority of female Caribbean immigrant women in Los Angeles were heads of households who were fully responsible for the economic survival of their families. They were not able to fulfill those roles in Trinidad because of limited economic opportunities for women in the Caribbean. Ho (1993) pointed out that Caribbean women dominate the immigration to the United States because most of them cannot rely on male spouses to migrate to the United States. Immigration to the United States is an option for Caribbean women to secure the economic survival of their families. Although child care is often regarded as a barrier for women to migrate, Caribbean female heads of households might leave their children behind with relatives because they do not have any other option (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:16, Ho 1993). However, Ho's analysis did not explain why Caribbean men could not immigrate separately from women to the United States.

CONCLUSION

Feminist immigration research focused on the importance of gender roles in the immigration process. Feminist scholars demonstrated that

women do participate in immigration and that they are active in the actual decision making process to immigrate. They proved that women do not exclusively migrate as dependents of men and that they have their own reasons for participating in migration. Women, like men, have their own economic, and not only private, reasons for migration.

Research on female immigration has favored two theoretical approaches the historical structural approach and household economics. The historical structural approach demonstrated how the macroeconomic situation fostered female immigration but neglected microeconomic factors. Recently, researchers favored household economics as a theoretical approach to evaluate female migration because it evaluates both, micro and macroeconomic motivations for migration. Household economics enhanced the understanding of women's immigration processes and demonstrated how power relations in the household limit or perpetuate women's migration. It illustrated that women have their own economic motivations to immigrate and how this depends on power structures in the household as well as gender role perceptions. However, household economics is inclined to focus on women's economic reasons for migration and has a tendency to homogenize women's motivations for migration. Furthermore, household economics tends to see women's immigration as a part of a collective household decision and neglects women's individual reasons for migration.

Studies on women's immigration provide a diverse picture. The majority of transnational migrants are still men. However, in some countries women outrank men in transnational migration flows. Generally, women are restricted in their movement through gender role restrictions that differ depending on age and marital status. Usually young women are more controlled in their movements than older women. However, being married and responsible for child-care can prevent women from migration.

Nevertheless, some women take their own initiative to migrate and migrate independently from men. Sometimes it is more beneficial for a household to send women. In the case of marital disruption, women might be the only ones who can migrate; however, they and must leave their children behind. Present studies indicate that beyond economic reasons, relationships between women and men can impel women to migrate independently from men. In cases of marital disruption, disputes and abuse, women choose migration to gain financial independence from men and also to leave their marriages.

CHAPTER 3

Specific Characteristics of the Research Population and Research Methodology

The following chapter is a synopsis of the research methodology and experiences of conducting research with mostly undocumented Guatemalan refugee women in Los Angeles. A description of the interview process and a profile of the women interviewed are provided. Specific problems in conducting research with Guatemalan refugee/immigrant women are also discussed.

Often researchers present the results of their research without discussing how they accessed the populations they were working with and how the research conditions influenced their findings and their methodologies. This description of some of my research experiences will provide an example of what is entailed when an urban anthropologist attempts to collect data from a hidden population. Cornelius (1982) has pointed out that data on undocumented populations like Guatemalans are often sparse. The primary reason for this are the extreme research conditions in working with a population that is trying to make itself invisible (Chavez 1985, Cornelius 1982).

The following issues, related to the methodology used in conducting research with undocumented Guatemalan refugee women are addressed: (1) combining an undocumented status with a refugee experience; (2) locating, accessing, and entering the research community; and (3) maintaining contact with a transient population.

INTERVIEWS AND SAMPLE SELECTION

The research is based on field work in the Westlake, Pico-Union and South Central districts of Los Angeles, which began in June 1992 and continued over a one year period. **Open-ended, in-depth interviews** were conducted to allow the women to express their own points of view on the issues of immigration. As a form of interaction, conversation is more familiar to them than scales or questionnaires (Cornelius 1982). I chose to work with a convenience sample because it was essential to my research to establish the trust of the interviewed women as will be described in later parts of this chapter. The number of interviews ranged from one to four interviews per interviewee. Word-by-word transcripts were produced from each interview.

Twenty-eight Guatemalan women were interviewed. Fifteen women were Ladina (non-Mayan) and thirteen were Mayan women. The interviews ranged from half an hour to five hours and depended on the availability of the individual women. Most interviews were conducted in women's homes, but also in coffee-shops, a church auditorium, and at one occasion, during a group meeting in a garage. Most non-Mayan women were part of employment related organizations and most Mayan women were part of church groups.

Table 1: Number of Interviews

	Number of Interviewees		Number of Interviews
Individual Interviews	14	non-Mayan women	19
	5	Mayan women	7
Group Interviews			
	8	Mayan women	4
Other Interviews	1 1	social worker administrator of a job cooperative	2
Total	1	non-Mayan women	30
	13	Mayan women	
	2	other	

I wrote daily field-notes on my participant observations in women's homes and at social gatherings. These notes document the

women's daily routines and provide a tapestry upon which to judge their descriptions of themselves. Notes of conversations with friends and relatives are also recorded to obtain their points of view on what circumstances contribute to Guatemalan women's decisions to immigrate to the United States.

COMBINING AN UNDOCUMENTED STATUS WITH A REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

Conducting research with mostly undocumented refugee women is sensitive research because the information obtained is potentially threatening in at least two ways. First, many of the Guatemalan women I interviewed did not have the necessary work permits to obtain employment in the United States, because the U. S. government has not accepted the refugee status of Guatemalans (Rodriguez and Urrutia-Rojas 1990:265). Second, information collected about the women's lives in Guatemala could have potentially threatened the lives of friends and family left behind or would have made it difficult for them to return to Guatemala. Therefore, research with this population was extremely difficult.

Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Haitians are unique immigrant populations in the United States because their refugee experience is combined with an undocumented status (Carrillo 1990). Normally, immigrant populations in the United States are either largely undocumented and not politically persecuted in their home country, like Mexicans; or there are a documented refugee population, like Cambodians.

The United Nations defines a refugee as a person who has been persecuted in his or her country of origin for belonging to a specific ethnic, religious or national group or who has participated in a certain social or political organization (United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951). Furthermore, refugees must have left their home country as victims, or relatives of victims, of political persecution such as disappearances, political killings, and torture (Carrillo 1990:143). Although, Guatemalans have been suffering for over three decades from a violent civil war where thousands of people have been killed by the military, police, and death squads, only 3 percent of Central Americans in the United States applying for asylum have received it (Carrillo 1990:144). Consequently, many Guatemalans in the United States cope not only with the aftermath of the political

violence they experienced in Guatemala, but also with their undocumented status in the United States. Therefore, those conducting research with Guatemalan immigrants confront constraints that are different from those confronting researchers working with other undocumented immigrants.

Immigration to the United States for undocumented Guatemalans is both more costly and more dangerous than, for example, for Mexicans. Deportation is also more of a threat for Guatemalans than it is for Mexicans, and Guatemalans pay more money than Mexicans do to reach the United States. Money for a *coyote*[1] is often borrowed from other family members, or the *coyote* can be paid in installments after the refugees arrive in the United States. Deportation to Guatemala means that the family investment for helping them migrate to the United States is lost; and it will be very difficult to obtain the same amount of money again. Moreover, most women emphasized that the trip through Mexico was especially dangerous for them because of physical and sexual abuse by Mexican immigration officials. A Guatemalan woman in Los Angeles summarized her experience of crossing Mexico in the following way:

But we who come from Guatemala, we need to pass through Mexico. When a Guatemalan or a Salvadoran crosses Mexico, they have to return. They need to return because when they don't have money to give to the Mexican police they can't cross. [. . .] People get attacked [. . .] and the women are raped by the police. When you come by surface road [*tierra*] to the US, they attack cars with license plates from here [United States]. They steal all the things you carry and take away your money. The same is happening with the buses. When you need to change buses they ask who is from the border [with Guatemala] and they have to get out of the bus and if you don't have money they rape the women.

Some Guatemalans fear for their lives should they be deported to Guatemala. One interviewee only survived the massacre of her family by sheer accident. Years later, when she returned to her village for a visit, she was arrested by the same military unit that killed her family. She was released only because she pretended to agree to work as a spy for the military. Instead of returning to work, she escaped immediately to Mexico. She told me that she will probably never be able to return to her village because her life would be threatened. Although she has applied for political asylum in the United States, her case has been pending for three years.

The political situation in Guatemala makes Guatemalans fear for their lives and personal safety, hence they are very cautious about whom they share information with. Bossen (1984) has pointed out that it was not difficult to conduct field research in Guatemala if she avoided asking about politics. She conducted her study during the 1970s before the major atrocities of violence began in the early 1980s. Manz (1988:33), in her book on Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, quotes a government employee who, in order to survive admits never saying what she thinks. Therefore, I expected that victims of political violence would be more cautious in sharing information than other Guatemalan women would be.

Excerpts of interviews with two Mayan women demonstrate this fear. The first woman, whose husband was tortured almost to death by the military, described her motivation for coming to the United States:

> I don't want to tell you everything that happened to me because my husband told me I should not tell you anything, but I will tell you a little bit. I came here not out of joy. I came here out of necessity. We did not come here because of the guerrillas[2]. My husband came here to have a better life and to not suffer.

Then, she went on to describe how her husband was detained and tortured by the Guatemalan military and how she feared for his life, but she concluded her interview, "I am not here because of the guerrillas, I am here with my husband to earn a little bit of money if God wants."

The second Mayan woman similarly denied political motivations for migration. She felt initially very uncomfortable in the interview situation even though she had given me her telephone number.

> Yes, there are no problems here. We are here only, only to live here for a while and to return again to Guatemala. There in Guatemala, there in my village there are no problems, there is nothing to be scared about. We are here only, only voluntarily to get to know this country like my father and my son who have been in this country for eight years.

Then, later on in the interview she revised her story after I told her what happened to my parents and grandparents during World-War II in Germany; their experience of war and everything associated with it, such as death, hunger, and losing their homes. However, in her

narrative, she only identified the horrors but did not talk about who committed the killings. This was typical for all interviews conducted with Guatemalan survivors of political violence.

> There in [my village] [. . .] what they do, yes, they burn houses [. . .] There, they killed, yes, they killed all the children and they set the people on fire and burned them, there all the women were burned in their houses with their children with their parents.

These few examples demonstrate how difficult it is to obtain reliable information from Guatemalans because many are not only undocumented in the United States but were also victims of political violence in Guatemala.

LOCATING, ACCESSING, AND ENTERING THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

One of the biggest challenges in conducting research with undocumented populations is locating and gaining access to them (Cornelius 1982:385; DeSantis 1990:361). Undocumented women are under-represented in studies on undocumented immigrants, which can be attributed to their invisibility as they work primarily in factories and private homes (Cornelius 1982). Additionally, little research has been conducted in the Guatemalan community in Los Angeles. According to the last census in 1990, however, Guatemalans are the third largest group of Latin American immigrants in Southern California (Brownstein-Santiago 1992). Because there is so little information available, I used a very broad approach to locate Guatemalan women. I started with trying to get familiar with the community and its important leaders. The Guatemalan refugee community is full of friction due to numerous ethnic, religious, and political factions. Knowing this and having important contact people was a necessity for steering clear of problems (cf. MacDonald 1993:2). I began to locate Guatemalan women by contacting churches, employment related organizations refugee organizations, and neighborhood organizations in predominantly Central American neighborhoods.

Gatekeepers

To overcome the distrust of prospective interviewees, I approached them through intermediaries who had already gained the trust of the

Guatemalan immigrant women. To overcome distrust was essential in order to obtain reliable information (Lipson and Meleis 1989:107). One group of intermediaries were Guatemalans who worked as social workers and were involved in solidarity work. Another group of intermediaries were progressive nuns who were interested in solidarity work or who ministered to Central Americans in Los Angeles. Cross-referrals were used to find more interviewees.

Since the research was concerned with a sensitive issue, the intermediaries also acted as gatekeepers to the community, opening or denying my access to potential interviewees (cf. Burgess 1991:47). Other researchers working on sensitive research, such as Bergen (1993:204), whose topic was marital rape, reported the same phenomenon. Bergen's gender and her experience as a rape crisis counselor gave her credibility in the eyes of the gatekeepers. Stepick and Stepick's (1990:66) involvement in community activism and their previous research in South Florida with Haitians facilitated a study in the same community. Shaffer (1991:79), during his research with orthodox Jews, found that personal credentials helped him to enter the community, not his academic affiliation.

I was most successful when contacting church-related organizations. The trust, credibility, and support received was based on my previous employment as a lecturer at a local Catholic women's college. The religious order who operates the college is very active in providing social services to the Los Angeles Latino community. Other gatekeepers had heard of me because I had volunteered for a Guatemalan solidarity group in Los Angeles. A third approach to the Guatemalan community was through an administrator who had graduated from UCLA; we had one Ph.D. committee member in common. These three sources opened my way to potential interviewees. I was relatively unsuccessful with gatekeepers with whom I had not had previous contact. This was especially true for the Central American refugee service organizations. Those organizations were mainly operated by Salvadorans. Few Guatemalans used their services.

This initial research step was very time-consuming and stressful. It was essential, however, for completing the study successfully. All intermediaries were familiar with my research goals. Guatemalan women agreed to be interviewed because they trusted these contact people. Having good intermediaries is essential for conducting this kind of research. They are invaluable in helping solve problems that arise in the research process, for example, dispelling interviewee

misconceptions and resolving conflict situations. Intermediaries also make it easier to locate interviewees again.

Choosing a Research Location

It was important for the research design to find locations where I could regularly meet interviewees. In order to maintain continued contact with the refugee women, I was searching for a situation where the women were already active in an organization and attending meetings regularly. This would allow me to observe the women's interactions and to have informal conversations with them. I was ideally looking for organizations where the members themselves were in charge, meaning they had "the power". This meant I would have to operate in the women's own territory, rather than interacting with them in an environment where they were not in control and might feel the need to hide something, for example when applying for asylum. As the research project was concerned with sensitive issues, I expected that it would be easier to interact with the women on their own terms. It proved to be a successful strategy for initiating contacts with interviewees.

I interviewed members of four different churches and two employment related organizations. These were the only types of organizations I found where Guatemalan women participated actively in public. Many other Guatemalan organizations could be located, but they were mostly frequented by men.

Women who were willing to interview with me gave me their home phone numbers, and I called them to set up times for interviews. I conducted most of the interviews in their homes. This gave me the opportunity to discuss sensitive topics, such as their immigration to the United States in a comfortable and familiar atmosphere. Bergen (1993), who chose a similar approach, emphasizes that the role of the hostess was familiar to her interviewees and made the interview situation easier. Meleis and Lipson (1989:112) note that sharing food with their Middle Eastern interviewees was a symbol of trust. The same was true for my research. Women offered me drinks and food. Most of them got so caught up in their stories that after a while they forgot my tape recorder. Looking back, the actual interviewing was the easiest and personally most rewarding aspect of my research (cf. Stepick and Stepick 1990:67).

Non-Mayan Women

I had very different field work experiences with the Mayan and non-Mayan ethnic groups. In general, it was much easier to work with the non-Mayan women. The non-Mayan refugee women were almost all members of two employment-related organizations. One organization gave small business loans to low-income women, and the other was a job cooperative for Latinos with an 80 percent female membership. The small business loans were available to low-income women in Los Angeles who had maintained a microbusiness for a while and wanted to expand. All Guatemalan members were non-Mayan. Unfortunately, I did not receive permission to attend the women's weekly meetings to get to know how they interacted.

The job cooperative had a Guatemalan, Mexican, Salvadoran, and Peruvian membership. Many members had experience in their home countries with organizing themselves, for example, as active union members. However, with the exception of one Guatemalan Mayan woman, all Guatemalan members were non-Mayan. During their weekly membership meetings, jobs for the coming week were distributed. The type of work available for women was domestic services such as housecleaning, child care, and elder care. The membership decided about important issues concerning the organization such as the annual budget and fund-raising. The closest contact was maintained with the job cooperative because of the opportunity to volunteer there regularly.

Most of the non-Mayan Guatemalan women in both organizations were literate and from urban centers. Many were born in the capital, Guatemala City, or had migrated from the Guatemalan countryside. Some women spoke English. Most interacted privately with other Spanish speaking people in Los Angeles having only limited interaction with the non-Latino world. The domestic workers of the cooperative knew their way around the city, many of them even had driver's licenses. The women who had businesses also knew their neighborhoods and where to buy materials for their shops. All interviewed members of employment related organizations were economically active women. Therefore, my sample might over-represent female heads of households. Women who are solely responsible for the economic survival of their families might be more likely to participate in those organizations. In addition, female heads of households were more outspoken about their motivations to come to the

United States. They had to manage all aspects of their households and were used to dealing with non-Latinos. Some married women had to receive their husbands' permission to interview with me. Sometimes the husbands were present during interviews and it might have influenced what women would tell me about their reasons for coming to the United States.

Most Guatemalan job cooperative members did not live in the lowest income Central American neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Two of the non-Mayan interviewees told me they have been to these very impoverished areas only to access services provided for Guatemalans, and they were happy they did not have to live there. They did not like the poorly maintained living quarters, overcrowded apartments, and high crime rates.

The non-Mayan women appeared to be more self-confident then the Mayan women when interviewing with me. Because I was introduced by people whom they trusted, their undocumented status was almost never an issue in the interview process. Women freely told me about their trips to the United States. When I brought up the issue of "trust" (*confianza*), one interviewee told me not to worry, that they all knew me because I confirmed jobs for them every Friday, or, in the case of the organization giving business loans, the administrator had recommended me to them. However, everybody, regardless of ethnicity, was hesitant to discuss personal experiences of political violence.

With the non-Mayan women, it was easier to find a way to reciprocate for the interviews than in the case of the Mayan women. In both cases there was always a reciprocation for the interviews (cf. Lipson and Meleis 1989:108; Shaffir and Stebbins 1991:145; Stepick and Stepick 1990:70). In the case of the job cooperative, it was possible to reciprocate the group as a whole because I was confirming jobs with employers for them during their weekly meetings. The women who had received small business loans took part in the interviews as a personal favor to the administrator of the organization. The participation in the interviews was reciprocation for help they had received from the administrator. Therefore, affiliation to an institutional intermediary made it easier for me to reciprocate for the interviews. In addition, lacking funds to pay the women for the interviews I took small gifts for them or their children, as a sign of courtesy and respect. Another form of reciprocation was to give them rides because most women did not own cars. Frequently, Guatemalan women used me as a resource person

for discussing and resolving personal problems. Examples include translating letters from government agencies into Spanish and interpreting for a woman's asylum interview at the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Mayan Women

From the beginning my links to the Mayan community were much weaker than those to the non-Mayan group. In contrast to non-Mayan Guatemalans, there were very few Mayan professionals in Los Angeles making it difficult to find intermediaries. The local clergy was not involved with the Mayas as a specific group. Contact with non-Mayan Guatemalans rarely helped me to gain access to the Mayan community primarily because the two groups live relatively separate from each other. It seems in fact that the separation between non-Mayas and Mayas existing in Guatemala continues in Los Angeles.

I was searching for a similar research situation with the Mayan women as I had found for the non-Mayan women. Therefore, I started attending the weekly meetings of a Mayan cultural organization in Los Angeles. Sometimes one or two women would come to the meetings, but were there only as sisters or girl-friends of the men. They would shyly stand in one corner of the room and not participate in the discussion. This was not the research environment wanted because it was male-dominated, and women's participation in the meetings was almost nonexistent.

The only place where I found Mayan women actively participating in an institution was church. I met Mayan women through churches in two predominantly Central American neighborhoods, the Westlake and Pico-Union areas. They lived in those neighborhoods because of the proximity to the downtown garment industry. The women and/or their spouses worked as machine operators in the garment factories.

My first church contact was with a Protestant Mayan congregation. A non-Mayan interviewee referred me to the pastor of the church where the congregation had their services. He provided a referral for me to the president of the Mayan church. I called the president, and he made an announcement for me in church regarding my wish to interview some of the women. Fortunately, the church had its own female leadership. I met with some of the women leaders and arranged to meet them a week later at a women's meeting, after they had discussed the interview

request with their husbands. These are my first impressions of the meeting with the church's female leadership:

> The women met in a half dark garage because the door was almost closed. There was no other lighting in the garage. I sat in a circle of ten Mayan women looking at me. They asked me to tell them what I wanted to do. I pulled my two tape recorders out of my bag and I felt a tension going through the room. I told them what my intentions were. [A bilingual member] translated for me into K'anjobal because she said that many of the *hermanas* ["sisters"] would not speak Spanish very well[. . .]After my initial introduction three women spoke[. . .]They all gave very brief interviews, and everybody was watching what I was doing. Then all of a sudden they said they would have to close the meeting because some would need to catch their buses. After that, three women gave me their home phone numbers.

This example illustrates some of the issues in conducting interviews with Mayan women in Los Angeles. Many Mayan women were embarrassed because they did not feel that they spoke Spanish well enough for me to understand (cf. Hernandez 1984). Therefore, the Mayan women who agreed to participate in the interviews were the more acculturated. Additionally, in contrast to non-Mayan women most Mayan women, had personally witnessed or suffered political violence in their home country. Women had a need to talk about political violence, but were also reluctant to do so. Most Mayan women who were interviewed were illiterate, rural women (cf. Hernandez 1984), who were less familiar with the role of a researcher and who were more isolated from the rest of the city than the non-Mayan women. Furthermore, in contrast to the non-Mayan members of the employment related organization Mayan church members who were homemakers were more likely to agree to be interviewed because they had more time than women who worked for wages and were responsible for domestic chores. Therefore, the sample of Mayan women reflects to a larger extent married women with children who are not economically active.

The church's female leaders knew each other from Guatemala and met regularly to discuss issues pertaining to the women of their church. Therefore, they were very comfortable with one another. Their previous contacts with other outsiders of their ethnic community might also had contributed to their willingness to consider my request for interviews. They congregated in a church that offered services to the Central

American, Swedish and Korean community in Los Angeles. The congregation had received some attention in the local press and a church member proudly reported that a well-known Latina talk-show hostess had asked their previous pastor to participate in her show on Spanish-speaking T.V..

The women were extremely outspoken about their concerns. They asked me if I was a journalist. One member was uncomfortable about how a local reporter had written about the congregation. They also asked detailed questions about my research objectives, how the interviews would be used in the dissertation, and who would read it. Looking back, I realized the women agreed to participate in the study because I had attended their meeting. I behaved according to their rules. They decided where I would sit, and they were in charge of the discussion. Furthermore, I was able to dispel the misperception that I was a journalist, early on.

An example of how easy it can be, without the help of a cultural broker, to be misperceived was my experience with a Catholic prayer group of primarily Mayan membership. The leader of the group introduced me publicly after the prayer meeting and asked members to approach me so I could introduce the project. None of the Mayan women agreed to interview individually with me. Therefore, we met as a group in the assembly hall after the prayer meetings which meant that other congregation members were walking around the room and listening to our conversations. It was very difficult to discuss the women's private issues in such a public setting. Further, most women were relatively unfamiliar with each other, contrary to the Protestant women, and therefore were less comfortable together. Their Catholic church served only the Central American community and it seemed that members were less familiar with people outside their own community.

During the fourth group interview, the women of the Catholic prayer group got angry about the course of the interviews. The leader of the prayer group had told them I was there to help them. I was not aware that I had been presented as a social worker, and I could not address the problem early on as in the case of the Protestant women who thought I was a journalist. The problem was that every woman had decided individually how I could help her. One wanted to have residency in the United States, one wanted to learn English and another wanted a job. I tried to explain more clearly the purpose of the research project and that I would be willing to reciprocate for the interviews, but that they had overestimated my abilities. Because the women presented

their demands so unexpectedly, it was difficult to calm down the group of angry women. Another church member explained in a later conversation that some members of the prayer group were upset because I wanted to help only the Guatemalans. After the next prayer meeting, I returned and was able to calm the situation with the help of a Mayan friend who did not belong to the same ethnic group. She explained to the women the interview process and research goals. All of a sudden, the women were very interested in my friend because they found out that she was earning much more money doing elder care than they were earning in the factories. She gave them advice on how to get domestic work, and they were very pleased. However, I felt so distressed that I called them, apologized, and told them I did not want to bother them anymore.

Suddenly three months later, the women called and invited me to a special event of the prayer group. They were happy that I was back and that I had brought my Mayan friend with me. They, again, were mostly interested in my friend, but invited us both to their homes. My Mayan friend suggested that the women probably were not used to coping with people who were so different from them, as I was, and at least she looked like them. Further, I realized that the women had lower expectations about me reciprocating for the interviews than I expected. This demonstrates the importance of negotiating forms of reciprocation early on in the interview process. In the case of the Catholic prayer group, a good cultural broker had not been available who could give advice on how to reciprocate for interviews and how to cope with the envy of other group members who did not receive my attention.

MAINTAINING CONTACT AND CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS WITH A TRANSIENT POPULATION

Another aspect of the research design was to maintain contact with interviewees over the research period in order to have the opportunity to establish trust over a longer period of time and to conduct multiple interviews with each woman. Guatemalan refugee women in Los Angeles belong to a transient group of people who move frequently (cf. Ward 1987:6) or have their telephones disconnected. This mobility makes it difficult to maintain prolonged contact with a poor, undocumented refugee population (cf. DeSantis 1990:365). One way of coping with this problem was to find a research site where Guatemalan women assembled regularly, such as an organization. The

organization's informal member networks could be used to locate Guatemalans when they changed apartments. Even if a woman did not attend those meetings anymore, her family members and friends would have her new address. This approach proved valuable over the course of the research because, in fact, the interviewed women moved frequently and knowing their networks was the only way of finding them again. Similarly, the friends of job cooperative members also used the cooperative in this way. One refugee woman described how one of her friends could not locate her because she had changed her address three times in three months. Finally, her friend went to the cooperative to find her new phone number and address. Likewise, one interviewee who had become a close friend came looking for me at a cooperative meeting, after we had not spoken with another for a few weeks. However, this approach did not work if interviewees returned to Guatemala. Three interviewees left the country while the research was being conducted. This approach also did not work with women who were not involved with organizations or who otherwise fell outside the networks I knew. For example, I lost contact with a Mayan woman to whom I was referred by a church social worker. I interviewed her in November 1992 and after I returned from a trip to Germany I learned her phone was disconnected. I knew she had been in a very difficult living situation. She received welfare for her American-born child but also tried to send money home to her sister, who took care of the three children she had left behind. She traveled daily to the Los Angeles beaches to collect aluminum cans and glass bottles to earn some additional money. She was fully responsible for her apartment expenses because her roommate had left.

Even if interviewees could be located again, it was difficult to schedule new interviews because the women's employment or family situations had usually changed. These women's lives were so unstable, and they fought so much for their own economic survival and that of their families, that some women were not able to re-interview because they had too much work to do or had to cope with family emergencies. For instance, I interviewed a garment worker during a slow time in the industry. A few months later she was working seven days a week while continuing to arrange silk flowers for her small business during the evenings. It was not possible to schedule a second interview. In another case, a domestic worker participated in the study shortly after she arrived in Los Angeles. A few months later she found a regular job taking care of two children. She commuted to her job two hours by bus

each way and was not willing to interview on her free weekends. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reimburse women financially for their time. This might have made it easier for them and increased their motivation to cooperate in the project.

In addition to problems associated with transience and changing job and family situations, there was the problem of scheduling interview appointments. As the research project was not a community-based study, the interviews were conducted in different parts of Los Angeles, and the commutes to women's homes, one way, were between half an hour and one hour. Some women had a different sense of time for pre-arranged interviews. Frequently, women were not at home for the interviews (cf. Ward 1987:6), and I could not just stay and wait indefinitely. One useful strategy to cope with this problem was to call women the night before the scheduled interview to remind them and to check if their plans for the next day had been changed, especially, if the arrangements had been made one or two weeks in advance. However, other women took my request for interviews very seriously and even sent a child to the entrance to receive me and make sure I found the apartment.

CONCLUSION

Research with undocumented Guatemalan refugee women in Los Angeles presents an unusual challenge for the researcher. The combination of an undocumented status with a refugee experience makes interviewees distrustful to share information with outsiders because it could be potentially dangerous to them. The restricted participation of Guatemalan women in public life creates problems locating them. Entering the Guatemalan refugee community, locating and accessing interviewees was a long, slow process, but was crucial for establishing trust relationships with interviewees that yielded reliable information on interviewees' immigration to the United States.

There are no easy answers on how to overcome the obstacles described in this chapter. Long-term involvement with a community and becoming part of its personal networks of women might have alleviated some of the problems that arose. Familiarity with the community would have increased the number of community members who could have supported the researcher in problematic situations and provided advice on how to cope with questions of reciprocity for interviews. Volunteering for an organization provided an ideal

condition to establish contacts with refugee women and to dispel distrust and misperceptions. It has been demonstrated that the researcher needs to be especially alert while establishing contacts with potential interviewees without the assistance of an intermediary. S/he should be prepared to be misperceived in her/his role and intentions. Taking time and effort to explain and to discuss research objectives in detail, before starting the actual interviews, prevented many misunderstandings. Furthermore, conducting interviews in women's homes provided a very comfortable interview setting for both, the interviewee and the researcher. It has been shown that interviews in public locations and unfamiliar group settings, especially with others listening, were problematic in discussing sensitive issues.

The mobility of interviewees presented another research challenge. Locating interviewees who had moved could be achieved by becoming a part of the women's organizational networks. However, those networks were insufficient in maintaining contacts with interviewees, if members left the organizational network or returned to their home country.

The women's different interpretations of time for pre-arranged interviews, combined with long commutes to their homes, were another obstacle. Reminding women a day ahead of the interviews was a useful way to reduce the possibility that the women would not keep appointments for interviews.

However, even if a researchers is very careful in following the above discussed strategies, research with undocumented refugees in a transient setting and on a sensitive research topic is destined to be problematic.

NOTES

1. A *coyote* is a paid guide for the purpose of transporting undocumented immigrants to the United States.

2. *Por la guerrilla* ("because of the guerrillas") is a euphemism for the process of political violence in rural Guatemala. The interviewees described how the appearances of the guerrillas in their villages provoked violent retaliations by the Guatemalan military. The military accused Mayas of supporting the guerrillas and used this as a reason to kill or detain them. This is the reason that Mayas in Los Angeles refer to the origin of their problems as *por la guerrilla.*

CHAPTER 4

Guatemalan Women in Context

The previous chapters focused on theoretical and methodological issues of conducting research with undocumented refugee women in Los Angeles. This chapter reviews how other authors have portrayed women's socioeconomic, familial and marital situation in Guatemala and how the civil war impacted on women's their lives. Guatemalan women in Los Angeles identified those three areas as crucial for their decision to migrate to the United States. This chapter will facilitate an understanding of women's living conditions in Guatemala that ultimately promote their immigration to the United States and helps to place the case stories presented in chapter 5 and chapter 6 in context with women's life circumstances in Guatemala.

ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN GUATEMALA: INDIANS AND LADINOS

Guatemalan people are subdivided in two ethnic categories, Indians and Ladinos. Indians claim indigenous, non-European ancestry while Ladinos claim Spanish, Western ancestry (Hawkins 1986:19). Sixty percent of Guatemala's population are Indian. Most Indians live in *el occidente* (the Western Highlands) while the majority of the population is in *el oriente* (the eastern region) and the capital, Guatemala City, is Ladino. The Ladino and Indian ethnic subdivisions are associated with social status, occupation, education and cultural markers (Hawkins 1986:9).

The category Ladino refers to a person who practices a Western lifestyle, speaks Spanish and is more likely living in a town or city. Ladinos are generally not marked for social status; they can be rich or

poor. Contrary to Indians, however, Ladinos hold influential positions in politics and the military. Ladinos own most of the land and industries in the country.

To be Indian means to speak one of the 22 Mayan languages, to wear traditional Indian clothes, to live in a village, to work as a peasant or farm-worker (Hawkins 1986:9). Mayas have, in general, limited access to formal education and services and are more likely to belong to the low-income strata of the country. Unlike Ladinos, to be Indian was mostly associated with lacking access to socio-economic power. Therefore, Smith (1990) postulated that the difference between Mayas and Ladinos is a class difference not an ethnic difference. Many Mayan Indians belong to the least influential sections of Guatemalan society.

GUATEMALA'S ECONOMIC SITUATION

> Many people forget that in Guatemala we are killed in two ways. One is direct repression, which has taken the life of thousands of our brothers and sisters, and continues to do so. The other is hunger and poverty. These too are killing Guatemalans every day (Menchú 1987:ix).

Modern Guatemala is still a largely agrarian society. Most of the population is concentrated in the agricultural sector (Bossen 1984:25). Most industries and services like health care are located in the capital, Guatemala City. That means that the rural population has very limited access to those services.

In Guatemala, two types of farming can be found (Barry 1992:101). Originally, many farmers relied on subsistence farming. But this type of farming has been progressively reduced through export cash-crops such as coffee, cotton and bananas (Bossen 1984:25). Guatemala is very dependent on foreign markets because of the dependance on cash-crops. Those crops are grown on the coastal plantations which are the second type of agriculture and could be best described as agro-businesses (Barry 1992:101). The coastal plantations are owned by large land owners who operate their plantations with seasonal migrant laborers from the Mayan Western Highlands. Those Mayan farmers need to migrate to the coast for seasonal labor because of population growth, land erosion, land parceling and appropriation.

They are no longer able to rely only on subsistence farming (Bossen 1984:29).

The long ongoing armed conflict in Guatemala partially is founded on this extreme unequal distribution of wealth. Large parts of the populations do not have any access to sources of income, health care and education. The largest segment of Guatemalan poor are landless Mayan peasants.

An example for the uneven distribution of wealth is the ownership of farmland. Less than 2 percent of all land owners in Guatemala own 65 percent of all farmland (Barry 1992:102). As the result of this class disparity, 71 percent of the rural Guatemalan populations and 36 percent of all urban Guatemalans live in extreme poverty. In general, 80-87 percent of all Guatemalans live below the poverty line. This means that they cannot afford basic material necessities such as housing, medicine, transportation and do not have sufficient food (Barry 1992:95). The Mayan majority is affected by economic hardships more than the non-Mayan Ladinos. The majority of Mayas in Guatemala live in the countryside and depend on farming for survival. However, scarce land resources created landless poor Mayas.

The general economic situation in Guatemala declined during the eighties. The country was hit by an economic crisis (Painter 1987:20). By 1985 approximately 45 percent of the population did not have full-time employment. The cost of food and gasoline increased drastically. In 1985 alone, the price for corn tripled. The poorest strata of the population was most affected by the sharp price increase on basic food items. Guatemalans earned, by the end of the eighties, less than in the seventies (Barry 1992:97) but had to spend much more for their daily survival.

At the same time Guatemala experienced one of the hardest economic crises, the country also faced one of the most violent counterinsurgency campaigns. While the political violence in the urban areas was selectively directed against political and social activists, the civil war hit Mayan communities in the Western Highlands indiscriminately.

The war affected the economic situation insofar that large numbers of migrant workers from the Mayan Western Highlands could not leave their villages. They were forced to stay in their villages and could not earn extra income through seasonal labor. Mayan men were forced to serve in the government organized civil patrols[1]. The service of Mayan men in the civil patrols even affected Mayan areas that were

traditionally in a better economic situation, such as the tourist town of Panajachel and the area around Totonicapan (Hinshaw 1988, Smith 1988). The forced service in the civil patrol did not allow men to earn enough money because they were not reimbursed for time spent with the civil patrols. Furthermore, the massacres in the Western Highlands had a tremendous impact on the infrastructure of this area. Many communities were eradicated from Guatemala's map (Anderson and Garlock 1988). Mayan peasants left their land and escaped to Guatemala City where they were incorporated into the low-income neighborhoods of the cities. Others escaped to the tropical rain forest of Northern Guatemala, across the border to Mexico or to the United States (Stoll 1993). The remaining Indian farmers were not able to harvest their crops because of the civil war. Therefore, the rural Mayan population was dependent on food supplies distributed by the army (Painter 1987:25) and the highlands were hit by a famine.

ECONOMIC ROLES OF GUATEMALAN WOMEN

Although agriculture is the largest economic sector in Guatemala, statistical data report a low participation of women in agriculture. However, those results might be faulty because those statistics did not consider Guatemalan women's unpaid economic contributions in agriculture and domestic activities (Bossen 1984:32). Therefore, it was very difficult to assess women's employment situations in agriculture.

Most urban women who worked for wages were employed in the manufacturing and service sector. In the service sector, the majority of women worked as domestic workers. According to Youssef (1978:20), 33 percent of women outside the agricultural work force worked as domestics. Guatemalan women were largely confined to the lowest paid employment because they are not formally well prepared to compete in the non-agricultural job-market.

Unfortunately, there are no available current statistics on the employment situation in Guatemala. However, almost all Guatemalan women interviewed in Los Angeles had worked in Guatemala as domestic workers, or in the manufacturing or service sector. García and Gomáriz (1989a:208) confirmed that there were very few opportunities for women in Guatemala to receive further professional training to enhance opportunities in the job-market.

In general, women have restricted access to formal education and job training. According to data by *Encuesta Nacional Demográfica*

(National Sociodemografic Survey) in 1986/87, 43.3 percent of all women had some primary schooling (grade 1-6), 10.3 percent of all women had some secondary education and only 1.1 percent of all women had some higher education (García and Gomáriz 1986a:239). According to the latest census in 1981, 49 percent of all Guatemalan women were illiterate. Mayan women are even more disadvantaged than Ladinas in receiving formal education. In 1981, 74 percent of all Mayan women were illiterate compared to 31 percent of non-Mayan women (García and Gomáriz 1986a:206).

Mayan Women

Traditionally, the situation of Mayan peasant women is defined by a strict definition of gender roles. Women do the housework and raise the children while men work in the fields (Bossen 1984:59).

Typically, men are excluded from female activities like weaving (Bossen 1984:60). Traditional crafts like weaving give women some cash-income. The restriction of Mayan women to domestic activities cause them to interact less with people outside their communities and therefore they are more likely to be monolingual in a Mayan language.

However, the scarcity of land has changed Mayan women's traditional roles as homemakers. Some Mayan communities undertake seasonal migration to the coast. Entire families work on plantations, even women who traditionally do not work in the fields are hired as agricultural laborers (Menchú 1984). The scarcity of other income sources forced many young, single Mayan women to leave their rural communities in the city to work as domestic laborers (Micklin 1990). Those Mayan women are employed for low wages and are normally employed by upper and middle-class Ladino families.

However, women's traditional economic activities in intact Mayan communities are changing. Ehlers (1990:44), in her study of a predominantly Maya town, registered a shift of women's employment from family businesses towards employment outside the home. She noted an increase in formal education among young Mayan women (Ehlers 1990:45). However, the longer schooling did not increase Mayan women's employment opportunities. Guatemalan women's opportunities to find outside employment are restricted to the "helping professions" such as teaching and nursing. Because there were not sufficient positions available, those women remained unemployed. Those women were not encouraged to be trained for non-traditional

female careers (Ehlers 1990) that might have increased their chances to find employment.

In addition, indigenous communities recently started to rely on a cash economy rather than on subsistence farming. With involvement into a cash economy, men intruded into traditional female realms of crafts. Traditionally, Mayan women weave and embroider traditional Mayan garments. They have their own income by selling those products. Men jeopardize women's business of handwoven fabrics through mechanically woven cheap fabrics. Therefore, the economic independence of Mayan women is threatened.

Ladinas

Like Mayan women, the activities of Ladinas (non-Mayan women) are also traditionally confined to the home (Hawkins 1986). Unfortunately, information on rural Ladinas is very scarce therefore this synopsis on the gender roles of non-Mayan women applies only to urban women. Bossen (1984:270) described how middle-class Guatemalan men pressured their wives not to find employment outside the home. Therefore, many women worked in the sheltered environment of homes either as domestic workers or small-scale home-based micro-business women. This situation resembles the employment situation of lower to lower middle-class urban Mexican women who rarely completed primary school because they were expected to marry and to raise children. Like Guatemalan women, Mexican women supplemented their husbands' income through selling clothes out of their homes (LeVine et al. 1986).

The economic crisis of the eighties changed the lives of Guatemalan urban women. Many Ladinas had to find work outside their homes to supplement their husband's income. However, their work is mainly an extension of their female role. Urban Guatemalan women work mostly in food services, garment industry and as domestic workers. Their limited formal education and lack of job training confines them to the lowest paid employment in Guatemala.

Vocational training opportunities that would increase women's competitiveness on the Guatemalan job-market are lacking (García and Gomáriz 1986a). Youssef's analysis (1978) of four vocational training centers demonstrated that only few women attended those centers. Those training opportunities in Guatemala City existed only for women with 6 to 9 years of schooling and was not accessible for many

Guatemalan women with less education. Also, women's training was associated with traditional female activities: sewing, cooking, hairstyling and artificial flower arrangements. Those skills do not increase women's employment opportunities because too many women compete for employment in those areas (Youssef 1978:21).

GUATEMALAN WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

Like the majority of Latin American women, most Guatemalan women marry (Ehlers 1991). Based on data by *Encuesta Nacional Sociodemográfica* between 1986-87, 37.5 percent of all women over aged fifteen in Guatemala were legally married, 24.7 percent were living in non-legalized consensual unions, 9.4 percent were widowed and 6 percent were divorced or separated. 22.4 percent of all Guatemalan women were single (cited in García and Gomáriz 1989a:223).

Although most Latin American women marry, many do not stay married all their lives (Ehlers 1991). There are high levels of instability in relationships, where women may be widowed, separated, divorced or abandoned (Hawkins 1984). Youssef (1978:1) found for the 1973 census that 28 percent of the so-called "single Guatemalan women" may have experienced one or more consensual unions. The instability of legal and consensual unions, especially among the poor strata of the population, is documented for Guatemala and all over Latin America (Ehlers 1991, Hawkins 1984, Maynard 1963). The result of marital disruption and instability are single female-headed households. According to the data between 1986-87 by *Encuesta Nacional Sociodemográfica* (cited in García and Gomáriz 1989a:223) 15 percent of all families in Guatemala were female-headed. This is lower than in other parts of Central America.

Youssef (1978) identified the most vulnerable age groups for marital disruption to be women in their early twenties and mid thirties. Marital disruption made them responsible for their own economic survival and the survival of their children (Youssef 1978:27). Most of those women did not have enough marketable skills to find sufficient employment. Single female heads of households (Youssef 1978) were economically marginalized in Guatemala because they did not receive any kind of institutional support.

Supposedly, marriages among the rural indigenous Mayan population were more stable than among urban Ladinos (Maynard

1963). Generally, there were more female-headed households in urban areas 20.5 percent, versus 11.2 percent in Guatemala's rural areas (García and Gomáriz 1989a:196). This would match the general situation in Latin America where single headed households have been described as a pre-dominantly urban phenomenon. However, female-headed households might be under-reported in rural, indigenous communities as a result of cultural values. Moreover, the civil war of the beginning eighties affected indigenous Maya communities to a larger extent than Ladino communities. One of the areas hardest hit by the political violence of the early eighties was the Ixil area in Northwestern Guatemala. A government census in 1989 recorded for the Ixil area alone 2,642 widows (Stoll 1993:228). Nationwide it has been estimated that 60,000 women lost their husbands in the civil war of the eighties (Miller and Sharpe 1991).

The stability of rural marital unions had been attributed to the economic compartmentalization of gender roles in rural Mayan households where women and men depended on each other for their survival. Bossen (1984) found that in spite of female subordination, Mayan women did not bear abusive situations and had the opportunity to seek refuge with their relatives if the situation became unbearable. It seemed that rural women were more protected by their social network than urban women. Ehlers (1990) reported that recent economic structural changes made indigenous women more economically dependent on their spouses and making marriage less stable. For example, men intruded into traditional female economic domains such as weaving. Mayan women with their expensive handwoven fabrics cannot economically compete with men's cheap machine-woven fabrics.

Guatemalan women identified gender roles as the cause of marital problems and marital disruption (Ehlers 1990, 1991). Men's lacking economic contribution to the family income is often combined with alcoholism and abusive behavior. However, only scarce information on gender and marital relationships in Guatemala are available. Therefore, information from studies on gender relations will be supplemented with studies from other Latin American countries and Latinos in the United States assuming that there are parallels with women's situation in Guatemala.

Gender roles in Latin America have been characterized in the sense of the machismo-marianismo opposition. Machismo means that the man is the dominant one in a relationship, while the woman endures

quietly her problems with her husband and takes responsibility for the children (Finkler 1993, LeVine et al. 1986, Stevens 1973). Men have to prove their manhood through having various extramarital affairs and children with several women. Marital unions are instable and machismo causes Latin American men frequently to abandon or to separate from their wives. Hawkins (1986) found, in his study of a Guatemalan town, that the main reason for marital disruption was men's infidelity. Urban Mayan women in Ehlers study (1990, 1991) complained about men's extramarital affairs and the establishment of second households. Hawkins (1986) and Ehlers (1990, 1991) stated that Guatemalan women regarded marriage as very problematic.

Other studies did identify economic reasons and not male gender roles as the reason for marital disruption. Peattie (1968), in her study, found that in Venezuela high male unemployment produces unstable marital relations. Poor Latin American men are no longer able to fulfill the role of providers for their families because of the economic situation in Latin America. This phenomenon shows striking resemblances with poor populations in the United States. Female-headed households in the United States increased at the same time that recession struck the manufacturing industry during the shift of industrial centers from the North-East rustbelt to the Western Sunbelt. The decline of the manufacturing industries and the cuts in social welfare in the Reagan era contributed to persistent poverty in minority communities; African American and Latino employment opportunities are primarily located in the manufacturing industries (Zinn 1987:166). Carole Stack (1976) in her ethnography of a low-income urban, African-American neighborhood observed high instability of marital unions. She found that African American women preferred to marry men who can provide for the family; but the number of African American men without work had increased dramatically (Wilson and Neckerman 1986:254). Women preferred to rely on a network of kin and friends rather than on fragile ties of marriage (Stack 1976:124, Tanner 1974).

Besides men's economic problems to provide for their families and men's infidelity caused by traditional gender roles, Ehlers (1990, 1991) confirmed that urban Guatemalan Mayan women frequently feared to be abused by their husbands. There is very little information available on the extent of domestic violence in Guatemala (Barry 1992:163). Carrillo (1994) pointed out that it is difficult to address the issue of domestic violence in El Salvador and Guatemala because both countries

are very violent societies. The issue of political violence dominates the discussion of violence so domestic violence is not confronted. The available data show that domestic violence is widespread in Guatemala. A newspaper article in 1991 found that 75 percent of all women treated for injuries in a Guatemalan hospital were beaten by their husbands. According to the National Office on Women (ONAM) in Guatemala, four out of ten women murdered in Guatemala were killed by their husbands (Barry 1992:163).

Because of a lack of information on domestic violence in Guatemala, research findings from other Latin American countries might provide insight into the causes for this phenomenon. Finkler (1993) identified domestic violence as endemic in Mexico and understands it as a public health problem. She perceived a shift from an extended towards a nuclear family as the reason for marital abuse. She claims that an extended family network protects women from abusive husbands. In an extended family, the couple receives more support on how to cope with everyday problems. In a nuclear family, a couple lacks this outside support for coping with conflict and crisis situations. Finkler (1993) pointed to the fact that there is a big research gap on domestic violence among Mexican upper and middle-class families. Nevertheless, she speculated that the economic position of middle-class and elite Mexican men helped them to preserve their male honor and prevented them from abusing their wives (Finkler 1993:17). Likewise, LeVine (1993:203) observed that wife abuse was associated with poor Mexican men who resort to alcoholism and to abusive behavior towards their wives. However, research in other Latin American societies has opposed this idea. For example in Nicaragua, domestic violence is not a class problem because domestic violence against women can be found in all social sectors (Collinson 1990:17). Lancaster (1992) interpreted domestic violence in Nicaragua as a problem of men's socialization to abuse women and not as a class issue.

Supposedly, Latin American women complain about men's economically irresponsible and abusive behavior, but stay in their marriages (Browner and Levine 1982, Ehlers 1990, 1991, LeVine et al. 1986, LeVine 1993). Generally, Latin American women's passive gender role has been blamed for why women stay in those abusive relationships. Recently, this traditional view of Latin American women has been challenged (Browner and Lewin 1982, Chant 1991, Ehlers 1991, Scott 1986). Women stay in oppressive relationships with men not because of marianismo; but to maintain their social status as wives,

because of economic dependence and limited access to other income sources (Browner and Levine 1982, Ehlers 1991, LeVine et al. 1986:196). Del Castillo (1993) and LeVine et al. (1986) observed that Mexican wives maintained their marriages with alcoholic, unemployed and disloyal husbands in order not to decline socially to the status of a single woman. Browner and Lewin's (1982:65) comparative study of low-income women in Cali, Colombia and San Francisco, California demonstrated that women regarded marriage as a social arrangement to raise children, to provide economically for them and as a recognized stage in adulthood. However, Latinas in San Francisco were more independent from marital break-up than women in Cali because they could count on financial assistance from the government. Low-income jobs available for both groups of women kept them financially dependent on their male spouses. Swetman's (1988) study of Guatemalan market women proved how financial independence gave these women power to separate from spouses. One market woman stated "My husband was drinking up all the money I make here, so I threw him out" (Swetman 1988:329).

Despite women's economic dependance on spouses, LeVine et al. (1993:196) found in her study of urban Mexican women that recently, some low-income women withstood their husband's abusive behavior and talked back. Some wives started understanding the alcoholism of their husbands as a disease and convinced them to join Alcoholics Anonymous (LeVine 1986:201). Although poor Latin American women are in a vulnerable economic position, it is not always advantageous for Latin American wives to stay with abusive or unreliable husbands. The reason for this is men's spending habits. Men keep a part of their earnings for personal expenses while women spend most of their earnings on household needs (Chant 1991). Men tend to invest more into luxury goods than practical goods for the household (Chant 1985). Chant (1991) found in a three site study in urban Mexico that a single female-headed household would survive better than a male headed household if the man was unemployed. In those situations, it was more advantageous for a wife to separate from her spouse.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN GUATEMALA

Guatemala has a sad history of the longest ongoing armed conflict in Central America. More Guatemalans were victims of political violence than Nicaraguans or El Salvadorans. In 1954, a short period of

democracy was ended by a United States military intervention from Honduran territory. The United States helped the Guatemalan army to install the dictator Ubico Castañeda (Manz 1988:12). He was followed by a series of military dictators, all with poor records of human rights violations.

There were two periods of intensified state violence in Guatemala. The first period occurred during the sixties and the early seventies. By 1966, the Guatemalan guerrillas became stronger and the military reacted by stationing more than nine thousand military commissioners in rural Guatemala. (Morrison and May 1994:116-117). Death squads, composed of military and police personnel, appeared and committed extrajudicial killings of civilians.

The second cycle of violence started in the seventies and lasted until the mid eighties (Morrison and May 1994:117). The seventies were a time of increased political and armed opposition against the government. The peasant union, *Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC)*, was founded in 1974 and became, like other popular organizations, increasingly active after the 1976 earthquake that killed thousands of people and left thousands more homeless (Smith 1988:285). The guerrilla forces that were crushed in the sixties reestablished their base and expanded it to the Mayan Western Highlands. Two guerilla organizations, *Ejército de los Pobres (EGP)* and the *Organización del Pueblo en Armas (ORPA)*, were operating exclusively in predominantly rural Mayan areas while the third one, the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR)*, was operating in non-Mayan areas (Manz 1988:15). The three groups founded the *URNG* as an umbrella organization. The *EGP* was the strongest guerilla organization. It reestablished itself in 1972 and changed its strategy in comparison with the sixties. During the sixties, the guerrillas had been active in the non-Mayan eastern part of the country. However, survivors of the early *EGP* founded a new guerrilla movement in the Mayan villages of the Western Highlands and also in Guatemala City.

Political violence increased by the end seventies under the dictatorship of General Lucas García. Between one hundred to two hundred political killings per week were counted (Manz 1988:14). However, political violence escalated in the beginning of the eighties under the presidency of Ríos Montt. By then, the military regarded Indians as the base for guerrilla support (Adams 1988:287). In 1981, the Ríos Montt military regime launched an eighteen month counterinsurgency campaign against Indian settlements. This was

accomplished by massacres of civilian population and the destruction of villages. The government's goal was to eliminate guerrilla's support base. Manz (1988:17) calls this period a time of "mass terror".

However, the violence in the beginning eighties did not affect the country in a consistent way. In the predominantly Ladino areas such as Guatemala City, the eastern part and the West Coast, violence was more targeted toward individuals who were either involved in political activities of the opposition movement or were trying to improve the social situation of the country. Relatives of those involved in political activities were also targeted.

In the rural Mayan peasant communities, in the remote areas of the Western Highlands, the violence hit more indiscriminately. The Guatemalan army acknowledged that it destroyed 440 Mayan villages between 1982-83 (Black 1985). The army relocated survivors to communities controlled by the military called "model villages" (Stoll 1993). All adult men in the Mayan Highland communities were organized into civil patrols whose duties were to fight guerrillas and to spy on their own communities. Other survivors founded new communities called "communities in resistance" in the forest of the northern part of the country (Stoll 1993).

The violence of the eighties started a mass exodus of rural Mayas who had escaped the Western Highlands and initiated a stream of internal and transnational migration. Some survivors fled to Guatemala City or were internal refugees in the tropical rain-forest of "El Peten", in the northern part of the country. Thousands fled to the Southern part of Mexico and some made it to the United States. Guatemalans started coming to the United States in increasing numbers only in the beginning of the eighties at the height of political violence in Guatemala.

In 1985, Guatemala again had a civilian president the Christian Democrat Vinicío Cerezo (Painter 1987). However, Cerezo was not able to control the influence of the military. Political killings and human rights violations continued. In 1991, Serrano Elías, an evangelical, came to power (Barry 1992:7). Finally, in a surprise outcome in the 1993 election, the leader of the human rights commission in Guatemala, Ramiro de Leon Carpío, became the president of Guatemala. He was chosen for his experience as a human rights activist and his political independence. Nevertheless, the Guatemalan military seemed to have backed his selection to ensure its political power and human rights violations continued (Berger 1994).

Guatemalan Women and Political Violence

In general, women are politically persecuted because they are community or political activists and demand their rights. Women are targeted because they appear vulnerable. They are easily put under pressure and humiliated through rape or they are frightened about losing an unborn baby or a child. Women can be used to threaten men or other family members (Amnesty International 1991:1). During an armed conflict, women are often caught in the cross-fire between government troops and the opposition, suffering violence from both sides. The social and cultural values of the women's societies force them not to report abuse by government officials because they fear stigmatization by their own families as in the case of rape. Amnesty International (1991) lists the following human rights violations against women: rape, sexual humiliation, threats, torture, ill-treatment, exploitation of family relationships, inadequate medical treatment and cruel or inhuman conditions of imprisonment, indirect suffering caused by human rights abuses, imprisonment on grounds of conscience, inadequate or unfair legal proceedings, cruel and degrading punishment, disappearance and extrajudicial execution.

All the above mentioned situations had to be endured by Guatemalan women. In some aspects Guatemalan women suffered from the repression in the same way men did. Those women were targeted because of their social and political activities. Other women lost their lives in the massacres of the eighties together with the children and men of their communities.

However, in some respects the violence affected Guatemalan women differently than Guatemalan men (García and Gomáriz 1989b: 84). In the beginning of the eighties, the main cause of men's deaths was political violence. 78 percent of all deaths for men between 15 and 24 and 75 percent for men between 25 and 44 were caused by violence such as homicide, war and accidents. In general, 46.2 percent of the men killed in the early eighties was due to war or homicide (García and Gomáriz 1989a:211).

For women between 15 and 24 years, only 30 percent of all deaths were cause by homicide, war and accidents, and for women between 25 and 44, 22 percent of all death had the same cause (García and Gomáriz 1989a:211). Guatemalan women were more likely to be survivors of political violence because they were involved to a lesser extent in active fighting. Guatemala women were not drafted into the army, while men

were forced to join the army or the police. Women were only used by the military as informants in counterinsurgency (García and Gomáriz 1989a:101). Only around 15 percent of the Guatemalan guerrilla forces were women (García and Gomáriz 1989b:99).

Women were more likely to be victimized through threats and sexual aggression than men (García and Gomáriz 1989b:85). Therefore, they were more likely to be close relative of victims or war refugees. They were forced to cope with the aftermath of the civil war because the men died in the civil war.

As survivors, Guatemalan women are the ones who carry the emotional scars of the violence and the social consequences of the loss of males in Guatemalan societies (Aaron et al. 1991). They suffer while remembering the dead and having witnessed or experienced the violence. As the violence targeted massively rural Mayan women, they are the most likely to suffer the consequences of traumatic experiences.

Political Violence and Changes in Women's Roles

The civil war in Guatemala had a strong impact on the country's social structure, especially among the Mayan population and on the traditional role of women. The full effects of the civil war on the social fabric of Guatemala and the role of women has not yet been evaluated.

Due to the civil war, women are left with new responsibilities for their families. Many Guatemalan women found themselves without husbands. Children were fatherless due to death or participation with the guerrillas. Of all female-headed households in the countryside, 47 percent were headed by widows, while in the urban areas only 38 percent of all female-headed households were headed by widows (García and Gomáriz 1989a:196). The higher rate of households headed by widows in rural areas is probably caused by the civil war in Guatemala. It is estimated that approximately 60,000 women lost their husbands in Guatemala in the civil war (Miller and Sharpe 1991).

Women were forced to take non-traditional roles and to assume a provider role for their families (García and Gomáriz 1989b:85). Large extended families were largely decimated through the violence. Rural, monolingual Mayan speaking women took up arms and joined the guerrillas, hiding in the mountains, attacking the army. Because Guatemalan women are more likely the survivors of political violence, they are the ones demanding and lobbying to know who are the ones responsible for the killings of their spouses and relatives (Amnesty

International 1991). They are the most forceful human rights advocates in Guatemala. The two strongest human rights groups in Guatemalan are dominated and led by women. Both groups were founded in the eighties. *Grupo Apoyo Mutuo (GAM)* was founded in 1984. It represents the relatives of the "disappeared" and detained. It is lead by a Ladina, Nineth de García Montenegro. In 1988, the *Cordinadora Nacional de las Viudas (CONAVIGUA)*, the organization of widows was founded. Most of the members are rural Mayan women who lost their spouses during the civil war (García and Gomáriz 1989b:218). The head of *CONAVIGUA* is Rosalinda Tuyuc, a Mayan woman. Also the peasant union, *Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC)*, is headed by a Mayan woman, Rigoberta Menchú, who took over the leadership of the union after her father who had headed *CUC* was murdered by the Guatemalan military in the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City in 1979 (Menchú 1984).

Because women advocate on behalf of their disappeared relatives and spouses, women are prone to become victims of political killings themselves. *GAM* members received death threats or were victims of political killings themselves (Americas Watch 1985).

In 1995 the long-lasting war between the Guatemalan government and the guerrillas ended with the signing of the Guatemalan peace accord. Guatemalan women continue their political involvement that started with the massive violence during the early 1980's. After the signing of the peace accord various human rights activists founded a new party the New Guatemalan Democratic Front (FDNG). Two Mayan women and human rights activists who lost their husbands in the civil war, Rosalina Tuyuc and Manuela Alvarado-Montenegro, became member of parliament as representatives of FDNG (Hegstrom 1996).

CONCLUSION

The summary of the background literature illustrated socioeconomic, familial and political conditions in Guatemala that shaped women's lives. Although in many ways women are affected by the same life circumstances as men, for example the ethnic split between Mayas and Ladinos, and the socioeconomic and political crisis situation, in some ways women's situations differ from men's in Guatemala.

Guatemalan women's opportunities for income are limited in comparison to Guatemalan men because of restricted access to

education and employment opportunities in Guatemala. Lower levels of formal education and insufficient job training confine Guatemalan women to the lowest paying jobs in the economy. Even the new generation of young, educated women has problems finding employment because there is limited demand for the jobs they are trained to do. New research on the gender roles of Latin American women demonstrates that Latin American women's limited access to cash income creates economic dependence on their spouses. Recent studies demonstrated that Latin American women endured abusive behavior of spouses not because of their passivity, but because of economic dependance on men as well as to maintain their social status as wives.

The socioeconomic and political crisis changed many traditional life circumstances. Guatemalan women, Mayan women and Ladinas as well, were ideally restricted to domestic chores in the seclusion of their private homes. Mayan peasant women whose husband's had sufficient land to support their family, middle- and upper-class Guatemalan families where husbands earned higher wages could support a non-working wife and family. Low-income Guatemalan women always contributed to their family's income. Low-income rural Guatemalan women work as domestic workers in the city, as market vendors or as agricultural laborers in coastal plantations. The economic crisis of the eighties forced even urban middle-class women to contribute to the family income and to find work outside the homes.

In addition, high rates of marital disruptions and widowhood caused by political violence made many Guatemalan women to single heads of households solely responsible for their families survival. There are two explanatory models for high rates of marital instability in Latin America. The first model regards the male gender role of machismo as the reason why many Latin Americans separate from or abandon their spouses. The second model regards lacking income opportunities for low-income men as the reason why men do not maintain their marital relationships.

Another aspect that influences the lives of Guatemalan women is the political conflict in Guatemala. Although political violence distressed all sections of Guatemalan society, the civil war affected Guatemalan women's lives in some ways that were different than Guatemalan men. Women were involved to a lesser extent in active fighting. They were more likely to be the survivors of the political conflicts. Therefore, Guatemalan women have to cope with the

aftermath of the conflict; the loss of spouses and relatives and with increased economic responsibilities for their families. In general, many Guatemalan women who are left with the sole economic responsibility for their families have difficulties fulfilling economic needs because they are confined to the lowest-paying jobs.

The following two chapters will illustrate how those socioeconomic, familial and political crisis situations expedited Guatemalan women's immigration to the United States. Women's initiative to participate in transnational migration to the United States can be understood as a reaction to their living circumstances in Guatemala.

NOTE

1. The civil patrol is an institution that had been initiated under the government of Ríos Montt in the early eighties at the height of the political conflict in Guatemala. All adult men were organized in paramilitary units called civil patrols. The civil patrols would patrol towns and villages, would report or arrest "subversives" and would report directly to the military. This step was a way to control especially guerrilla activities in the Maya Western Highlands (Stoll 1988).

CHAPTER 5

Women Who Made the Decision to Immigrate

Chapter 2 argued that feminist immigration research contributed to a better understanding of women's migration processes. It demonstrated that women have their own distinct motivations for participating in transnational migration and that they can be pioneers in the migration process (Chant 1992, Crummett 1987, Morokvaśic 1984). Traditional migration research has stressed that women immigrate only as dependents of men and relatives. It assumed that men are always the initiator of the immigration process and make the decision for women to migrate (Pessar 1986:274). Latin American women have been stereotyped in their gender roles as passive, and obeying male authority (cf. Browner and Lewin 1982, LeVine 1993, LeVine et. al 1986, Scott 1986). There is no question that Guatemalan men have a more privileged and powerful position in Guatemalan society than women (Youseff 1978). Nevertheless, some Guatemalan women interviewed in Los Angeles took the initiative to immigrate to the United States, immigrated independently from their spouses or parents, or preceded their spouses' immigration. This chapter analyzes cases of Guatemalan women who made their own decision to immigrate to the United States while chapter 6 evaluates case-studies of women who did not take the initiative for immigration to the United States.

For the purpose of analysis women who took the initiative to immigrate were classified into female heads of households (de jure and de facto), women in intact marriages and single women. For each category, cases will be discussed to show why women had the power to immigrate independently from spouses and parents and what caused

them to immigrate to the United States. Individual case vignettes illustrate women's individual stories and demonstrate how different motivations combine in each woman's life.

FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS: IMMIGRATION AS ECONOMIC NECESSITY

Guatemalan female headed households can be categorized into two types: de jure and de facto headed households (cf. Youssef and Hetler 1983). De jure female heads of households had already experienced marital disruption at the time of immigration to the United States and were separated, abandoned or widowed women. No woman interviewed identified herself as divorced. The second group of female heads of households were women who still lived with their husbands until their immigration to the United States, but were de facto female heads of households because the economic contribution of their spouses to the family income was marginal.

As previously mentioned, marital instability and men's problems to provide economically for their families create large numbers of female headed households in urban Latin America, especially among urban Central and South American women (Youssef and Hetler 1983). Common-law unions are prevalent among low-income urban and low-income rural Guatemalans. Lancaster (1992), in his research in Nicaragua and Del Castillo (1993) in Mexico, found that some women preferred common-law to legal marriage because they could threaten to leave their husbands if they had marital problems.

Chapter 4 described why Guatemalan women were less prepared to compete with men on the Guatemalan job market. This situation was reflected in all interviews with urban women. Most urban Guatemalan women interviewed, like the majority of Latin American women (cf. Chant 1991, LeVine et al. 1986), had worked in traditionally female occupations such as beauticians, garment workers, street vendors or did homework to supplement family income. In general, most women had access only to low paid employment. Guatemalan women, in general, did not have the earning capacities to support their families with their own income. An exiled Guatemalan union activist and factory worker summarized her point of view of urban Guatemalan women's employment situations:

> There [in Guatemala] is no work for women . . . They still say a woman can't carry that. They always underestimate your abilities. They say, "She is a woman and she is not good for this or that." We are behind in women's liberation. This is discrimination of women by some institutions. To get work there [in Guatemala] you have to work in cafeterias, you need to wait tables, or to work at home; which means low pay.

All Guatemalan women interviewed had a strong awareness of household expenses because they were responsible for household expenditures and their children's survival. Urban women constantly recited price lists, compared their earnings and spendings in Guatemala and described how their families were not able to survive on the family income in Guatemala. A Guatemalan refugee woman in Los Angeles described this situation:

> I think that women feel more the economic problems in our country because the women are going to the *mercado* [market], they are going to buy . . . they are in charge of the house, the children, everything and men just give the money but they don't realize that they need more and also more women now, they want to do more, to have more, to have better life for their kids [*sic*].

Female heads of households had to be more economically active than married women in relationships where men contributed to household expenses (Youssef 1978). Female heads of household could not share the economic responsibilities with a spouse. The women's stories illustrated that the economic problems in Guatemala were greater for women who were the main providers for their families. Guatemalan women's preparation for the job-market and generally lower wages for women made it difficult for single female heads of households to provide for their families in Guatemala. In addition, the economic crisis of the eighties made it difficult to find employment and to afford even daily necessities because of inflationary price increases (Barry 1992). Pessar (1992, 1988) found that Dominican women immigrated to the United States because of lacking income opportunities for women in the Dominican Republic. Ho (1993) found that the majority of Caribbean women in Los Angeles are female heads of households. In the Guatemalan case, a combination of limited access for women to income in Guatemala and female headed households

facilitated women's independent decision to immigrate to the United States (cf. Buijis 1993, Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990, Moore 1988).

De Jure Female Heads of Households

The case studies of Guatemalan women in Los Angeles illustrate that marital disruption forced them to immigrate to the United States independently from spouses. In the absence of a male authority figure, Guatemalan women took the initiative for immigration. Migration was a way for these women to gain financial autonomy from men (Buijis 1993:185) and their family members.

Traditional immigration research assumed that most immigrant women cross international borders as wives. It is true that the majority of Latin American women marry, but a large percentage experience marital disruption (Ehlers 1991). Urban Guatemalan immigrant women in Los Angeles emphasized the instability of their relationships with men (cf. Ehlers 1991, Hawkins 1984, Youssef 1978). The case stories analyzed reflect exclusively the experiences of urban Ladinas. Urban women attributed the instability of their marital relationships to men's lacking economic support and men's "irresponsible" behavior (cf. Finkler 1994, Ehlers 1991, LeVine 1993, LeVine et al. 1986).

From the limited interviews with rural Mayan women, marital unions seemed more stable. Bossen (1984) found that in the case of a marital break-up, Mayan women would more likely return to their parent's families than urban Ladinas. The stability of marital unions among Guatemalan Mayas has been associated with the traditional complementary and interdependent roles of Mayan men and women (compare chap. 4). I interviewed only one rural Mayan woman in Los Angeles who had separated from her spouse in Guatemala. Nevertheless, she was not a de jure single head of household because she was integrated into her extended family's household (cf. Bossen 1984). As I pointed out earlier, the information on rural Mayan women residing in Los Angeles remains scattered due to difficult access to interviewees.

Besides the fragility of marital relationships caused by gender roles, the civil war increased the numbers of single female-headed of households in Guatemala through widowhood. Women were less involved in active fighting or political activities than men (Miller and Sharpe 1991). Women were more likely to be the survivors of the civil war (García and Gomáriz 1998a). It remains unclear how rural widows

coped with the loss of their husbands because none of the interviewed Mayan women in Los Angeles had lost her husband because of the civil war. However, Magdalena's case serves as an example of an urban Ladina who became a widow because she lost their husband as a result of political violence.

When I asked another Guatemalan woman how de jure female heads of households survived, she identified three ways. The first one, is job training and education. Educated women are more likely to earn a salary to support their families. The second factor is support of kin. Sharing resources with kin allows single heads of household to maximize their resources.

> There are some people who have the security of professional training. [. . .] One of my sister-in-laws has been a nursing assistant for fifteen to twenty years. She has four children. She is also single, but today her salary is, I think, like six hundred a month. Besides this, she is working sixth shifts to get more money.
>
> However, a single mother who works in a factory has to work double the time and the money still does not last. She is late for the rent, can't pay for food, and can't pay the doctor. She won't have money. She is always borrowing money from other people and gets advancements on her salary and after a while, she does not know how to pay it back. [. . .] Yes, yes there are many women who find work but they also have the help of their father, or their mother. If they [the parents] have their own house, they will not charge rent. They will take care of the children while she [the daughter] is working. She continued to speak about women who did not have those support systems.
>
> And the women who don't have any help of this sort? They are very poor people who live in inadequate housing to raise children. [. . .] What can they do? Sometimes they wash clothes or sew whatever. They sell things in the street. They abandon their children. And sometimes the children can't go to school. They walk without shoes, all dirty because there is no time to take care of them. This class of single mothers, let's say poor, low-income[. . .] How can I say it, they are not low because we are all human. The middle-class single mothers can manage because they have work that gives them more income. They can survive comfortably. They earn enough money for food and housing. Like that you live there, nothing changes, there is no improvement to see. There is no time to study, to

> work more, to give to the children so they can get ahead; because you do the most that is possible. The most you can do with fighting to get housing and food is to get them [the children] up to the sixth grade, so they [the children] go to secondary school. They have to work to go to college. They have to work during the day and go to school at night. [. . .] They sacrifice a lot. That's how single mothers survive.

Considering this description, it does not seem surprising that immigration to the United States is a feasible survival strategy of de jure female heads of households in Guatemala. Asking a Guatemalan woman who came alone to the United States if it was not a contradiction to be married and immigrate alone to the United States she answered:

> No, I was separated. [. . .] That happens a lot in Guatemala. Many women come here [to the United States] who are separated.

Carmen describes in a similar way the temporary immigration of her mother to the United States.

> Seven or six years ago [my mother came to the United States]. [. . .] My father was dead [. . .] and besides that they had separated seven years before that. Therefore, they did not live with each other and my father stayed with me. [. . .] My mother lived by herself. No, he [my father] was not affected by her coming here. She came here to look for a better economic situation.

It is a recurring theme in interviews with Guatemalan de jure female heads of households that they made their own decisions to immigrate to the United States. De jure female heads of households tended to be responsible for their own economic survival and that of their children. They resorted to the decision to immigrate to the United States to look for feasible economic survival strategies when all other options failed. Women cited that responsibility for their children was the major force for leaving their country to search for better economic opportunities in the United States.

It seems that de jure female heads of households did not have to conform to the same social rules as married women. Contrary to de facto female heads of households and married women they do not negotiate their immigration plans with their spouses. Goodson-Lawes

(1993) pointed out that Mexican women accumulated more status with age through motherhood and marriage. Through motherhood Mexican women created their own power domain. Most de jure female heads of households immigrated in their late twenties or their thirties. Their age and the fact that they had been married and had children gave them the opportunity to make their own household decisions, independent from their parent's families.

Some women used the support of friends and family to immigrate to the United States. Women borrowed money from parents and siblings to pay for the trip to the United States. Some women immigrated with siblings to the United States. Other women had family members and/or friends who already lived in the United States and provided an opportunity to stay with them for a few nights after their arrival. Women emphasized though, that family does not necessarily serve as a support network if they had no strong personal ties previous to immigration. One de jure head of household stressed that she did not have any prior contacts in the United States when she arrived the first time in Los Angeles. However, all the interviewed women in this group emphasized the independence of their decision to immigrate to the United States.

Guatemalan de jure female heads of households were in different marital situations during their life time. Women's marital situation could change from living with a husband who would contribute to the household income, to de facto female-headed households, to de jure female-headed households. When a husband was a responsible provider for their family, he would leave for the United States in search of better economic opportunities. In the cases of female heads of households, women would immigrate to the United States.

Maria's[1] Story: "I am a father and also a mother."

Case Vignette

Maria was an urban Ladina. She was born and raised in the Guatemalan capital, Guatemala City. Maria welcomed me in her room, which just had space for two beds. One was hers and the other one her son's. On the side of the entrance were shelves with a TV and silk flower arrangements, some finished, some unfinished, and other objects of decoration in different stages of work. As we were talking, it became clear that the small room was Maria's and her son's only living space.

It was a hot Los Angeles day. The windows and apartment door were wide open and the loud noise of a busy street came into the room. Maria sat down on her bed. I faced her sitting on a chair next to the entrance. Her son leaned against his bed. Maria offered me *horchata*, a rice drink with cinnamon which I happily accepted. She seemed exhausted; later I understood why. During the day, she worked in a garment factory in East LA. After work, she arranged silk flowers and other objects of decoration to sell in furniture stores. On the weekends, she sold toys at the busy intersection in front of her apartment building.

She introduced herself as the **head of her family**:

> I am a mother and also a father [to my son][. . .] I am working so that he can study and misses nothing. I work. [. . .] In Guatemala I had a store but because it did not make one cent I got rid of it, and I dedicated myself to work *en la calle* [outside the house]. I left to work in the factory. We came [to Los Angeles] because of the situation [in Guatemala], because it is getting worse and worse all the time. I earned very little money. The money is not enough and you want more for the children [. . .] I left to look for something better.

Maria immigrated twice to Los Angeles. The first time she came with her husband, but she made the decision to come.

> Him? No, at first he did not want to come because he said that he had suffered a lot and experienced a lot of pain because he was here before I came. He has been here for three years and suffered a lot. He did not want to go, and he did not want me to come with him either, because if you leave as a wetback it is very dangerous. Something dangerous could have happened but I made the decision to leave [with him].

She described that it was much easier for her to find work than for her husband, because she had experience in working as a sewing machine operator in the garment industry. After they had lived in Los Angeles for a while, the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) deported her husband twice. The first time he returned after two weeks but the INS deported him again. Then, she followed him to Guatemala. She did not indicate for how long she stayed in Guatemala before she returned to the United States.

Upon her return, she managed to get to Los Angeles within two days and even managed to bring her youngest son with her. I asked her who organized the trip.

> Me. Yes, I did. Me, because in those days he [my husband] was not with us because of the problem he has . . . He is an alcoholic. It had been almost one month. He had not come home . . . he had left the house. During that month, I decided to leave and [. . .] after a few months he came to look for me here [. . .] I came here at my own expense.

Maria compared men's decision making with women's decision making. She emphasized that she made a quick decision to leave to the United States.

> Yes, we decide fast[. . .] men think a lot before doing a thing and I—no I'm don't—I say I am leaving and [. . .] I leave fast. The first time I came I decided in two days, and I did not have any money.

At the time of the interview, Maria lived permanently separated from her husband.

Analysis

Maria's story is an example of how female initiative for immigration is dependent on her current living situation and how those variables can change over a life time. Maria's life shows how the economic situation in Guatemala and the economic problems of her husband forced her to step out of traditional Latin American gender role expectations. Her immigration experiences reflect the changing conditions of her marriage. In accordance with traditional perceptions of Latin American her husband initially went to the United States to earn money.

Maria's narrative described how the general decline of the Guatemalan economy and abandonment by her husband changed her traditional gender role and forced her to take over the economic responsibility for herself and her son. The inflating cost of living in Guatemala pressured Maria to leave the sheltered environment of her home in order to contribute to the family income. The failure of her home-based business required her to work in the factory instead of her

home, which she characterized as *en la calle* (literally:in the street) which is considered as less respectable for Guatemalan women.

However, also her economic contribution could not keep the family out of the economic crisis. This time her husband refused to return to the United States because of his prior negative immigration experience. Maria pressured him into returning to the United States and went with him. She returned to Guatemala when her husband was deported by the United States immigration officials. At this time their marriage was still intact.

The last time she left Guatemala by herself and made her own independent decision to come to the United States. She named financial responsibility for her children as her reason to take this step. She came alone because her husband was not reliable as a provider anymore. Her husband's alcoholism had become more severe and had he left her for a month. Maria had become temporarily a de jure head of household. Instead of her spouse, Maria used her family, especially her sister Elsa, as a support system for immigration. She took over the responsibility as a provider for her son and expressed it when she said that she was both, father and mother for her son. Her independent decision to immigrate reflects that fact.

Magdalena's Story: "They killed him!"

Case Vignette

Magdalena was a middle-class Ladina who had migrated from the eastern part of the country to Guatemala City. She had completed 12 years of schooling and had started college in Guatemala.

At three different times in her life she intended to come to the United States. Only by the third try did she reach the United States. Magdalena was unsatisfied with her situation in her home village. She had high aspirations for herself. However, she faced different obstacles. First, in Guatemala there were less opportunities to receive an advanced formal education in the countryside. Second, there were prejudices against coed education. Parents and teachers did not like girls to share a classroom with boys.

> They did not teach higher grades [in my village], they did not have . . . but three grades: first, second and third. [. . .] The male teacher did not like girls in school. They wanted a female teacher for the girls and a male teacher for the boys.

Magdalena faced the same problem when she wanted to attend nursing school. Her mother did not like the idea of her studying with men.

> Yes, I liked . . . I liked to study. But I was not allowed.. I would have liked to become a physician. I like nursing, too. Therefore, I continued studying. [. . .] My father died at fifty-two. I stayed alone with my Mom. [. . .] I talked to my Mom, to send me back to school. I returned to school, but I was already older. I received two scholarships for nursing school, but it was the same as before. There were many men.

Magdalena was unsatisfied with her situation and wanted to leave for the United States to escape the constraining situation in her mother's home.

> When I was sixteen I wanted to come to this country but not because somebody told me, "Come here because here you make a lot of money." No, I wanted to come, but my mother did not allow it.

When Magdalena was not able to go to nursing school, she helped in her brother's business. She felt unsatisfied with her life. She left her village and moved at twenty-one to the capital, Guatemala City. There, she hoped to continue her education. Magdalena described how she got married, lost her husband, tried to finish her education and finally made the decision to come the United States.

> I said, I will work and study and this is what I did. Well, I had problems getting to work on time. They did not give me permission, permission to go to school, to start at the correct hour at school. So, I quit school and continued working.
>
> After a while I fell in love. I was with my husband for one year then he died in an accident. I found myself alone.
>
> Again, I started working with the government. I worked in a juvenile correction facility and I was paid very little money. I like money. It was very little money. [. . .] Sometimes it was not enough and it did not last because I had to pay somebody to take care of my daughter while I was working. [. . .]
>
> I entered the University [. . .] to complete my bachelor but the situation became very ugly, ugly [at the university] when they put up

street barricades and burned busses. It became ugly so, I could not continue to study. I was scared at San Carlos University. I quit studying and decided to come here [to the United States].

I came illegally. I arrived and I found two jobs, one to work as a live-in maid and another one to make curtains. I only knew that the situation in Guatemala became worse and worse every day.

Becoming a Female Single Head of Household for Political Reasons

During the first interview, Magdalena stated that her husband died in an accident. It was only at the end of the first interview that she admitted that the traffic accident was a cover-up for her husband's murder. He had worked as a body guard of an important politician.

Madgalena's case provides an example of a Guatemalan woman who became a single head of households because she lost their husbands in the violence of the civil war. In it, she described how she almost had left the country because of her husband's political involvement. Magdalena's own word will be used to describe how she lost her husband because of political violence. During the second interview I asked her to talk more about the background of her husband's death.

G.K.: Why did you have an idea that it was not an accident?

I had the idea because all, all people who get involved in the politics of our country, in somehow or another something bad happens to them. Because of that, you know. If I am walking with you, [. . .] let's say, I am protecting you or I am walking with you to watch so that nobody can threaten you, I know what you are doing. Right? If something happens to you I know about it. I can get killed too and will be eliminated. This happens because they accompanying them and taking care of them. They knew where they were, what they did and everything like that.

Magdalena pointed out that her husband suspected that his life was in danger and that his employer might have wanted to get rid of him. He knew the only way to escape his work was to leave the country. Magdalena and her husband decided to leave to the United States; this time for political reasons.

It happened to him [my husband's death] because he talked and told these men that he wanted to go to the United States, that he did not want to stay in his situation. But, he knew that to leave without anybody realizing would be difficult. So, I think they killed him on December 4. We had planned the trip to the United States for January 15. I think, it was the penalty for wanting to come here [to the United States]. They killed him before he could leave.

Magdalena described how her husband resisted leaving Guatemala because she was pregnant.

We? We had plans to come together [to the United States]. [. . .] I did not want to come if he [my husband] did not come, but he did not want to. He said, "You will have a child and I want to see it when this child is born." However, he did not see her because shortly afterwards he died.

She continued to describe how she found out that he had been killed for political reasons.

They caused the car accident, but he already had bullets in his head. The pathologist told me, that we should not dress him because he was too bloody. But I was curious and at three o'clock in the morning we opened the coffin and started checking [the body] and here. He had bullet holes in his head. They used cotton wool to cover the holes.

The political party who had killed Magdalena's husband gave her work in juvenile correction as compensation for her husband's death. After her husband's assassination, she remained traumatized. I would like to present the complete account of how her husband's death effected Magdalena to demonstrate how the trauma of loosing her husband prevented her from leaving Guatemala despite her difficult economic situation as a single mother.

Me, it affected me a lot. I was pregnant with my daughter and did not want to have her. I wanted to die. I got to the point where I wanted to have a motorcycle accident because [my husband's death] affected me a lot. [. . .] For me it made no sense to continue living. But little by little, I got better. But it cost me a lot, a lot, seven years, seven very bad years. Three or four years were the worst ones. I lived only

in my mind and then, well, my daughter was born. I was not interested in anybody, not in what surrounded me. I only vegetated. My life did not have any meaning for me. How can I describe it to you? My mother died a year ago . . . and today I recognize that we are born to die. However, in the case of my husband it was different because he was perfectly alright. I felt very bad, very bad, traumatized and I started to think I needed to see a therapist. But I told myself . . . only I, I can make the situation better. I did not feel the need for another person to take me out of what I felt because [. . .] I thought, I thought it is natural how I felt, don't you think so? . . . I did not know how . . . This never happened to me before. It cost me a lot. I did not leave the house, nowhere. I liked the solitude, to be inside the house, no friendship, no friends at all, no boyfriends . . . and the time passed by. Before I knew it, it had been seven years, eight years.

The lady where I worked told me, "Think, think about the future; think of what you're got. You can re-build your life; think of yourself; think of your daughter. Whoever is dead is dead."

Like that, little by little I got better and managed to recover completely, but it cost me a lot.

Her husband's assassination traumatized Magdalena. Only after she had recovered from it she make the decision to leave Guatemala. She emphasized that it was her initiative to migrate to the United States.

I did not leave because somebody told me to come [to the United States]. [. . .] My cousin did not know before I arrived that I would come. After I arrived I looked for him.

G.K.: Who planned the trip?

I, alone, nobody else. I came with one female friend and two friends by bus from Guatemala. [. . .] And here I still am.

Collaboration with the Ruling Party as Survival Strategy

At the end of the last, interview Magdalena admitted that she was a member of an extreme right wing party. In her case, collaborating with the ruling party was an economic survival strategy. She also pointed out that involvement with those parties is a risky game. Her husband lost his life by collaborating with right wing parties. Like many

Guatemalans in Los Angeles, being involved in politics on whatever side was a threat to life.

Whoever gets involved in politics, in government business is running the risk, so, I tell you, I do not . . . I was, I was associated . . . to tell you the truth because I wanted a job, work, but I was not successful

G.K.: You too where part of an organization, a political party . . . ?

Yes, I was a party member. [. . .] But if you are affiliated to a party, you never will tell anybody about it because, like I told you. You take a risk and they can kill you. They can abduct you. They can do a lot of things to you. [. . .] I never went to campaigns. I never did anything for the party. I only affiliated myself to the party. I went to the party headquarters. I went there only a few times because I did not like it.

G.K.: Why did you not like it?

Because . . . because of the risk. I did not like it, I did not like to be involved in something . . . because it is a problem for you and not only for yourself but for the children too. [. . .] I have seen so many things happening . . . I had a friend . . . He was in the Christian Democratic party. Campaigns and campaigns, my sister was involved and stayed. Finally, after all they won but what, what did they benefit from it? One year the big rodeo came. My brother rode there and I went to watch him, watch him riding,[. . .] I saw how they killed him. [. . .] Therefore, I tell you whoever gets involved in our countries into politics has to be very careful and not talk about it. If you talk about it, they kill you. This is how it is. [. . .] Today I am not there anymore and if I was there, I would not participate in any party, in any party because I know that . . . No, no I cannot help myself with it.

Analysis

Like Maria, Magdalena had changing motivations in her desire to immigrate to the United States. As a young woman, she wanted to escape the gender discrimination that did not permit her to become a nurse. However, she pointed out that her mother prevented her from leaving to the United States and she could not leave as long as her mother was alive.

Later, when she was married, she and her husband planned to leave for political reasons. Both, Magdalena and her husband, were members

of the right-wing ruling party [2] for economic survival. She was only involved on a superficial level, but her husband's involvement was deeper. He worked as a bodyguard for a politician of the same right-wing party. He knew the only way to leave his job alive was to leave to the United States because he knew too much. Before they could leave he was assasinated by his employers and covered up as an accident. Magdalena was traumatized by her husband's death. Unexpectedly, she became a widow and single mother. Magdalena became a widow for political reasons. Like thousands of other women, Magdalena had to cope with the consequences of the civil war in Guatemala. Still, the experience of political violence did not motivate her to leave Guatemala immediately. The post-traumatic syndrome immobilized her. It was only after she recovered that she left Guatemala for economic reasons. As a single mother she was not able to provide for her daughter. The political situation at the university did not permit her to complete her studies so she could find better paid employment.

De Facto Female Heads of Households

According to Radcliffe (1986), married women with children are the least likely to participate independently in migration because they are responsible for child care. According to traditional Latin American gender roles perceptions, husbands decide about their wives movements. Yet, some Guatemalan mothers and wives took the initiative to immigrate and came without their spouses to the United States. They left their children with relatives in Guatemala and sent money home for their expenses. All those women were de facto heads of households. They were married, but were the main providers for their families. Their husband's economic contributions to the household were minimal or non-existent.

Like de facto female heads of households, most de jure female heads of households interviewed in Los Angeles were urban Ladinas. An exception was Juana, who was a de facto head of household but was a Mayan woman who lived in a rural area. However, Juana was not fully a traditional rural Mayan woman. She had lived for many years in the capital, Guatemala City and moved back and forth between the capital and countryside.

Guatemalan de facto female heads of households regarded men's alcoholism as the main reason they cannot support their families economically. Other reasons Guatemalan wives cited for husbands not

economically providing for their families were physical disabilities or continued attendance in college.

An urban Guatemalan refugee woman summarized why Central Americans come independently to the United States. It is because they cannot rely on their spouses as economic providers. She identified the economic necessity to provide for their family and the escape from their marital relationships with alcoholic and womanizing husbands as the reason why Guatemalan wives left Guatemala to go the United States without their spouses. She stated:

> They do that. Many women do that, I think, in most of Central America. I know Guatemala and El Salvador they do [it] a lot. They are by themselves here, and they have their children sent, and also they have worry about their husbands. They are *mujer riego* [womanizer], they are drinking . . . alcoholics. [. . .] They [the women] need to get out from that situations, and also they need money. They need a better economic situation and they decide we need to . . . they leave [*sic*].

In the cases of de facto heads of household, immigration of husbands would not have been a viable option to increase families' survival in Guatemala. Wives could not trust them to be reliable providers in the United States and send money back to their families in Guatemala. Most husbands were not willing to find a more stable job, to quit drinking or to risk leaving for the United States. So, de facto heads of households had no other choice but to leave Guatemala and go to the United States by themselves. Consequently, de facto female heads of households had to ignore traditional Latin American gender role expectations. Passivity would have meant that their children would have had a worse future or would not have been able to survive. A Guatemalan refugee woman pictured how her mother made the decision to go to the United States without her father.

> Yah, my mother came without my father. My father stayed with my grandmother because [she] wants to have a better life for us and thinks, I cannot do it here because she was working like fifteen jobs in one place and she couldn't do anything, oh she does but she wants more. She wants a better education for us and she say I have to go and she left. My father was mad with her but she doesn't care. She came here [*sic*].

Guatemalan wives described their husbands' reactions as being surprised when they told them they would go to the United States. Friends and family members played important roles in facilitating women's immigration. Siblings or friends accompanied them on their trip to Mexico, offered them a place to stay in Los Angeles and helped them with the job search in the United States.

Until the point of immigration, most women had conformed with societal expectations of a loyal wife and had suffered through economic hardship with their spouses. Most Guatemalan women had conventional gender role expectations when they entered their marriages (cf. LeVine et al. 1986). Guatemalan women narrated how they could not bear their economic problems in Guatemala anymore. They attempted to cope with the fact that their husbands did not earn a sufficient salary to pay all household expenses. Women described how they searched for other economic strategies in Guatemala in order to support their families and tried to discuss their family's economic situation with their spouses. Like other Latin American women, Guatemalan women were more likely than men to work in the informal economy where their earnings could not support a family (cf. LeVine et al. 1986:191).

The political situation in Guatemala added to women's stress that was created by the economic crisis, their marital situation and their economic position. Juana's case-study illustrates how the violence of the civil war especially affected rural Mayan communities. When Guatemalan women's economic problems and/or political problems escalated and all other options failed, immigration to the United States was a way for Guatemalan women to provide for their families.

The crisis in Guatemala and lacking economic contributions of their husbands made it impossible for women to conform with traditional role expectations. Lewis (1951) reported that Mexican women broke up with husbands who did not economically support them, if she had established a relationship with another man who would support them. Instead of looking for another man who would provide for them, modern Guatemalan women chose immigration to the United states as a way to gain their financial independence.

Guatemalan de facto female heads of households interviewed in the United States, did not show any intention to reunite with their spouses in Guatemala, but wanted to reunite with their children left behind. Yet, Guatemalan de jure female heads of households carefully maintained their images as married women. Del Castillo (1993:244)

stated that Mexican de facto female heads of households were careful in protecting their social status as married women even if the cost of maintaining a household with a man who would not add to the household income. In Carmen's case, she emphasized that she was still a married woman even if she did not reunite with her husband in Los Angeles. Juana, another de facto head of household, had re-established her status as a married woman in Los Angeles with a new consensual union.

Frequently, Guatemalan de facto heads of households addressed their suffering in Guatemala. Like LeVine et al.'s (1986) urban Mexican informants, Guatemalan women mostly spoke about suffering created by economic hardship or created by political violence. Women never admitted that they had left Guatemala, not only for the economic hardship and the political violence, but also to escape their marriages. They justified their independent immigration to the United States through their roles as mothers and their responsibility for their children, but never for their own, individual well-being. Similarly, Castro (1986:244) found in her study that Colombian mothers and wives in New York do not have individual motivations for immigration, but that they came to improve their children's or family's living situation.

Yet, women showed relief to have left their marital situations. For example, Carmen pointed out that she had changed in the United States and that she would expect more personal respect from her husband. In this way, immigration is for these women, not only a liberation in the sense of finding new economic opportunities to support themselves and their families, but also a liberation for themselves.

Elsa's Story: "I had to come to work here and to support them."

Case Vignette

Elsa, Maria's sister, lived with her daughter and her son in the upper part of a duplex. The street was quiet and there were only small homes with no large apartment buildings. Although it was the Pico-Union district, everything appeared well maintained. Pico-Union is one of the most disenfranchised neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles. Frequently, buildings are overcrowded and badly maintained. Elsa's apartment was in walking distance from her sister's. Her apartment was spacious, had a lot of light and was arranged in a middle-class taste. Elsa was well groomed, she appeared like somebody who was well established with her life in Los Angeles. She sold artificial flower

arrangements but to furniture stores and not on the street like her sister. Elsa used to work in the garment industry and cleaning houses. Nowadays she seemed to have enough demand for her flower arrangements. Both of her children had found employment to help Elsa with the household expenses.

Elsa had completed primary school in Guatemala. After grade school she took a typing course. Her sister Maria had told me that Elsa was the first to come to the United States. Like Maria, Elsa had multiple immigration experiences coming to the United States. The first time, she came with her husband for their honey moon. They extended their stay to earn some money before they returned to Guatemala.

> I came in '79 when I got married and my brother-in-law gave us a honeymoon present. He gave us a trip to Disneyland. While we were here, my husband met a friend. This friend invited us to stay for a while in his house. We said, "Let's stay for a month and during this month we will work." [. . .] We returned [to Guatemala] after one and a half years.

Elsa's husband continued law school after they had returned to Guatemala. However, an earthquake had destroyed large parts of the country. Elsa found that it was impossible to support her family. She left a second time to the United States, this time by herself.

> I came here [to Los Angeles] because . . . the earthquake destroyed Guatemala and work places closed [. . .] From here [Los Angeles]I helped my family. I sent money for my children, so they could get ahead. I stayed here two and a half years and then returned. I stayed in Guatemala for about six months and very saw that the situation was too difficult. It was not possible to earn money. [. . .] What we earned was not enough to sustain my two children, even if my mother helped us.

While Elsa worked in Los Angeles and supported her family in Guatemala, she stressed how she suffered from the separation from her children. When she spoke about supporting her family, she only talked about her children. It was almost like her ex-husband was not part of the family.

> I had to come to work here [in Los Angeles] to support them [her family]. I was separated from my children for two and a half years.

Her husband continued law school and took care of the children. It was only when I asked her specifically that Elsa talked about supporting her husband. "Yes, I helped him so he could study. When I was here, I worked for them . . . I worked for them so that he could finish his training."

However, Elsa was not satisfied with how her husband took care of the children in her absence.

> He [my husband] took care of them. He studied and sometimes he took care of them, but he did not take very good care of them because a man can never be the same as a woman . . . Or it might be because there are many problems when a family is separated.

After two and a half years Elsa returned to Guatemala. Elsa and her husband separated from each other. During her absence, her husband had established a relationship with another woman.

> When I returned he [my husband] had completed his training as a lawyer and soon we had family problems because he saw a different woman. So, we decided to separate.

Elsa returned another time to Los Angeles because the salaries in Guatemala were to low to support her children. This time she was a separated woman. She brought her daughter to Los Angeles and left her son with her husband in Guatemala. She trusted her husband to take care of her son. However, her son ran away from his father and sought refuge with his grandparents. Her parents called Elsa in Los Angeles. Her husband had abused their son. Elsa returned a fourth time to Guatemala this time for custody of her son and brought him to Los Angeles as well.

Elsa identified her situation as a separated woman and the economic situation as the main reasons for immigration to the United States. She perceived poor economic opportunities as the reason why she had to leave for the United States.

> Yes, here there are many opportunities to get ahead. More if you are let's say single. But I was married. I separated from my husband.

> Therefore, to get ahead with my children I had to work a lot, to give them schooling, a place to live, food and everything else. Anyhow, in my country, in my country I would not have been able to give it to them because salaries are very low. You earn very little and it is not enough. How would I have given them an education. Instead of studying, I would have had to send them to work and this was the reason, the reason why I came.[. . .]

Analysis

Elsa had economic and marital reasons for coming to the United States. Like in her sister Maria's case, Elsa's immigration story portrayed her changing marital situation. When her marriage was intact, she came with her husband. During her husband's training as a lawyer, her marital relationship experienced a role reversal and Elsa became de facto head of household. Elsa realized that she was unable to sustain her family with her salary in Guatemala even if she had her parents support. Like her sister, Elsa left to the United States to earn more money. Her husband stayed in Guatemala to continue his education. He took over the traditional female role and took care of their children. Elsa did not regard their role reversal as an ideal solution. She considers women better caretakers of children than men. In terms of child-care, Elsa had a traditional perception of marriage. She accepted the role reversal for practical reasons and left for the United States. When Elsa returned to Guatemala, she found out that her marriage had disintegrated. Her husband had established in her absence a new relationship with another woman. She left a third time to the United States, this time as a separated woman.

As de jure head of household, she could not support her children in Guatemala. Her job-training and family support would not have allowed her to provide sufficiently for her family. Work in the United States was her best option.

Carmen's Story: "I had many problems in my home."

Case Vignette

Carmen was an urban Ladina from Guatemala City. She was a member of the job-cooperative. At the time of the interview she was in her late thirties. She had completed high school in Guatemala. She stopped working outside the home after she gave birth to her son. Initially, she

had lived with her parents who took care of her expenses. Later, she decided to marry her son's father and accepted low-paid homework. At first, she only identified economic reasons for her immigration to the United States.

> You are forced to come [to the United States] because of economic problems. [. . .] I had horrible financial problems and I was desperate. I did not have another way out.

Carmen was married in Guatemala, but she left her husband and her son in Guatemala and came to Los Angeles with her brother. When she described her married life in Guatemala, she talked only about problems and suffering. She stated: "If you are married you have to carry your problems. [. . .] Sometimes I do not miss the married life because of the problems."

Carmen did not want to get married to her husband in the first place, but social pressure forced her to marry her child's father.

> With force I got married, with force. I thought about it a lot, a lot. In every way, it did not turn out well. I thought about whether I would return [to Guatemala]. I would have to return to my married life. I don't want this bad [situation]. I don't know, my marriage is a very, . . . means a suffering life because of the alcoholism of my husband.[. . .] I had many problems in my home.

Then, she explained how her economic problems were related to her marriage. Her husband did not have a stable income because he was an alcoholic.

> Yes, yes he had work but it was not enough to cover the debts we had. For example, before we married and we rented an apartment, I worked too but he is an alcoholic. He is an alcoholic and he is handicapped. He uses a prothesis on the right leg. When he was young, he had an accident and they amputated it. He was a toolmaker. [. . .] Because of the problem of his alcoholism, he sometimes worked. He sometimes did not work, because of his alcoholism.

Carmen described her ideal husband; a husband who took care of her and protected her.

> Sometimes I think . . . I know I can't because I am married but because out of curiosity I would like to know a person that *me respalde* [can back me up]. If you have a relationship with a much younger person, you never feel supported. [. . .] I would like to know how it is to have somebody who knows how to respond to you. In all cultures, a woman will be always a woman and a man will be always a man. We women, we always want to feel protected, we want to feel protected by a man. If you have a man, you feel more protected, you feel more complete, with more value.

Carmen's husband could not help her to leave their economic problems. The couple had borrowed money from a bank to build their home. Carmen's father had mortgaged his house to make the bank loan possible. The couple could not make the house payments because Carmen's husband did not have a regular income. Carmen's father would have lost his house and she would have lost hers too. She went to the United States to solve her financial problems. She pointed out that she never had intended to come to the United States. When she was young, she read a book about the immigration experience of a Spanish writer. She did not have a rosy, romantic view of life in the United States.

> When I was single I had many opportunities to come here [to the United States] but I did not accept the life style here [. . .] and I never wanted to leave. However, I was forced. I did not have another solution.

Carmen pointed out that her marriage and the responsibility for her child changed her life.

> If you are married everything is different. [. . .] If you have a child it is different because you can not think only about yourself. Everything you do affects the child or the husband. It is difficult to decide. This happened to me.

Carmen did not want to come to the United States and asked her parents in-law for help, but they refused it.

> Before I left, I did not want to come. [. . .] I asked them [my parents-in-law] to help me. I asked my mother-in-law, "Help me to pay my debt. It is your son's house. [. . .] Nowadays, she [my mother-in-laws] repeatedly asked me to forgive her because she did not listen to me. She says, "Come back! Please, come back." But no! I argued with them because I am still in debt. If I return, I still will be in debt. I will always have problems.

Carmen's father financed her trip to the United States.

> The only one who helped me was my father. Poor one, he always helped me in the house. If I did not have anything to eat, he gave us food or things like that.

Carmen's parents in-law and her husband pleaded for her to return to Guatemala. However, Carmen did not consider these pleas seriously because neither her husband nor her parents-in-law made serious attempts to come to Los Angeles to convince her to return.

> Nobody told me come back. [. . .] Even today, he insists but he does not do anything so I will come back. How can I tell you? If you like a person, you fight until that person returns with you and is in your home with you. For one year he did not worry about me, because he did not do anything, or better, he did not do anything concrete. He did not come here to look for me. [. . .] Yes, he cried and he tried to convince me to return. He said a lot of things even that he would come here [to Los Angeles]. I don't want him here. [. . .] He would create problems for me; because to be here alone is difficult, but to be here with a family is worse.

Although Carmen was initially not willing to leave to the United States; by the time of the interview, she did not want to return to Guatemala. The separation from her husband had changed her perception of her relationship.

> Yes, I suffered through all the loneliness here [in Los Angeles] and why should I return to nothing. It is still the same [when I left] and what would I do? I never will have work there? Always the same pain, the same suffering.

Her stay in Los Angeles has changed her perspective on her relationship with her husband. She is not willing to endure her suffering anymore.

> Yes, it is very difficult. It is very difficult because you also get used to being alone in terms of a sexual life. [. . .] My husband is suffering a lot there nowadays. I lost the capability of suffering because he does not help me to recuperate. [. . .] Nowadays, if I returned I would not allow my husband many things because he obliged me to come here.

Carmen spoke about reuniting with her son in Los Angeles "to define [my situation]", which meant that she wanted to clarify her relationship with her husband. When I asked her if she had separated from her husband, she laughed and seemed unsure how to respond. She seemed ambiguous about the state of her relationship with her husband.

Analysis

Carmen came alone to the United States because of economic and marital problems. After she gave birth to her child, she conformed with traditional Guatemalan role expectations and quit work. She stayed with her child in her parents' household and her father provided for her. She did not want to marry her child's father, but her family pressured her to agree to get married to him. Finally, she gave in and married her child's father. Like in Maria's and Juana's marriage, Carmen's husband only had unstable employment because of his alcoholism. The couple had problems making their house payments and there was not enough money for daily expenses. Carmen saw that the origin for her economic hardship was her husband's problems keeping a job because of his alcohol dependance.

Carmen described herself as a victim. Endurance and suffering are the main themes she associated to marriage. When she talked about suffering, she addressed economic suffering. Carmen like Maria, Elsa and Juana came to the United States because her husband was unwilling to come. She did not want to leave for the United States, but neither her husband nor his family were willing to help her. The circumstances had forced her to come to the United States. She emphasized, that despite loneliness and a struggle with life in the United States, she had lost the ability to endure in her marriage.

Immigration also appeared to be a convenient solution for getting away from her alcoholic husband. Her immigration to the United States seemed almost like an escape from her relationship even if she denied it in the interview. She emphasized that her main motivation for immigration was her responsibility to provide for her son and make payments on her house.

With her immigration to the United States, she has stopped being a victim. She made herself economically independent from her husband and is now able to support her son while paying the mortgage on her father's house. For Carmen, immigration to the United States meant economic independence and liberation from an unwanted marriage. This is the reason why she did not want to return to Guatemala.

Juana's Story: "I have to get ahead"

Case Vignette

Juana is a Mayan woman in her late thirties. At the time of the interview, she had been in Los Angeles for five years. When I met Juana she asked me if I was married. I answered no. She asked me if I have children. I answered no. She answered *"que bien"* (how good). After I had listened to her story. I understood why she reacted like that.

When I met Juana she was in a very difficult situation. She was pregnant with her second U.S.born child of her second common-law husband. This common-law husband had temporarily left her. She collected aluminum cans and glass bottles at the Los Angeles beaches for a living. Her health had deteriorated because she developed diabetes during her pregnancy.

Juana left her first husband and her three children in Guatemala. She did not show any motivation to bring her first husband to the United States and had established a new relationship with a different Mayan man in Los Angeles.

In Guatemala, Juana had her own business selling clothes in the capital and across the border in Mexico. One or two weeks she would stay for business in the capital, then she would return to her husband's village in the Department of El Quiché and take care of her household. Sometimes she would get up at two o'clock in the morning, take the bus to Mexico, stay there over night, sell her products and then return to her village in El Quiché. Juana identified her low-income family background as the reason for her economic problems.

> The reason why I am here is because my Dad was very, very poor. He did not have money, he did not have money and my Mom, my Mom died [. . .] My Dad remarried.

When her father remarried, she left her village to go to Guatemala City to find employment as a domestic worker.

> I continued with my life [without my father] and worked. I started working at age ten in the capital of Guatemala. [. . .] Then life was cheaper in Guatemala and I could sustain myself.

Later, she established a relationship with her first common-law husband. She identified economic reasons for that decision.

> At thirteen, fourteen you know the mind is changing. I got together [with my husband] to support my children and [I thought] everything would turn out well. I was 14 years old.

Juana's husband did not help her to support their children. He was an additional burden because he was an alcoholic and did not work.

> I saw he [my husband] also did not give me anything other than children, and children, and children. We had no [money] to send my children to school with. [. . .] I worked with my children. One was next to me, another one I carried on my back. I was in the same state as I am today [She means she was pregnant].[. . .] I earned everything and he, if he would have got his act together, . . . but when I realized that he would not get his act together, [. . .] I told him, "Get yourself together because I want to buy something for our children and give them an education." [. . .] He only lived in bars, only drunk, drunk, only a clumsy bundle and he did not think [. . .] How could we get a house, or how will we manage to pay the rent. [. . .] I said to myself, "I won't abandon my children. I have to get ahead." [. . .] "Look, José", I told him [her husband], "please, stop drinking and help me with the expenses. Only do me that favor. I am tired because only I am working. Stop drinking! Let them [the children] go to school. Man, let's do it for them not for ourselves, not for ourselves. We are old. Let's do it for them."

Juana sold clothes in the capital. She would stay for one to two weeks with her business in the capital. Then, she would return to the Western Highland and take care of her elderly parents-in-law[3] . Sometimes she sold aprons, bras, blouses and shoes in Mexico close to the Guatemalan border. She would get up at two o'clock in the morning to take the bus to Mexico. She arrived in Mexico at night and would sell her goods the next day.

> But what happened Gabi, weeks and weeks went by and my capital was eaten away. [. . .] I started failing with my business too. [. . .] If we could read, we could defend ourselves better.

Besides the economic pressures, the political violence in the Mayan Western Highlands added to Juana's stressful life. In the beginning eighties, the Guatemalan army bombed and eradicated entire Mayan villages. The hot spot of the political violence was the Western highlands where a majority of the population were Mayan peasants.

> I am the only one here [in the United States]. My two siblings stayed. They suffered more because my sister's husband was killed.

Juana described how her brother-in-law disappeared. From then on, she recounted her experiences with political violence in El Quiché. I chose one incidence to illustrate her experiences. She was at her mother-in-law's village.

> The soldiers killed. The soldiers. This is what I saw. I saw it. I was in my mother-in-law's house when it happened. Imagine! [. . .] I thought I still do not want to die. I better leave. I was there, there [. . .] with my mother-in-law [. . .] when, imagine, the soldiers came. The soldiers came like, like twenty or thirty soldiers and they shot [. . .] but that is . . . what happened there to my sister-in-law, the sister of my husband. She had two girls, *señoritas*[4] [. . .] and I saw this. I tell you this. It hurts me. Imagine, Maria was 11 years old and Sara was 13 years old and do you know what the soldiers did? They tied my sister-in-law to the avocado tree and they tied my nieces too. They told my sister-in-law, "If you scream, we will kill you." And you know what they did with the girls? Almost all the soldiers *pasaron* [raped, literally: went by] the girls.

She continued to describe how she saw the dead bodies of her nephew's wife and his daughter.

> On the second day [after the killings], the son of my sister-in-law said, "Let's go to Guatemala City." He abandoned his house in El Quiché. [. . .] There in the villages of El Quiché there are only a few people living. There the majority of people abandoned their land, abandoned their houses. [. . .] At this time I told the father of my children, "What shall we do? Let's get your mother and let's leave." Then, he told me, "Where shall we go? We don't have another house and to pay a room in Guatemala City, how will we pay it?" [. . .] At this time I said; "This is the end of the world." [. . .] There in El Quiché, are still many deaths. My daughter told me, "No, Mom if God allows, don't come here. It is better if you work there [the United States]. Let's fight there, because here [. . .] it is not possible to live." Life is very critical. It is very critical.
>
> G.K.: Today, is it the same?
>
> It is the same, it is the same. You cannot manage like that. Yes, it is very dangerous. Yes, it is very dangerous.

Analysis

Juana presented three reasons why she left Guatemala for the United States: Women's restricted access to cash income, her husband's lacking financial contribution and the effects of a civil war on the Mayan people. Her motivation to come to the United States was caused by her economic, marital and political situation. Her immigration story showed the break down of all her support systems in Guatemala. Her story combined elements of an urban and a rural Guatemalan woman. She lived for a substantial time in the city, but had returned to the countryside to live with her husband's family.

Juana entered her marriage with the traditional expectations that her husband would support her. However, Juana and her husband did not practice the typical traditional division of labor of Mayan peasants because her husband though did not make any economic contribution to the household. Her husband's alcoholism made him into an economic burden. Juana carried all the economic responsibility for her family and was the de facto head of household. Juana supported the family with her business.The decline of her own business made it impossible to sustain the family.

In terms of her experience of political violence, Juana's life represents the experiences of the rural Mayan population. After the military massacred part of her village, she wanted to leave the area. However, the family's bad financial situation and her husband's attitude did not allow her to leave. The family's financial situation prevented her from leaving the area.

The political violence scared her and her business failed because of the economic crisis in Guatemala. All those pressures forced her to take her own initiative and to leave Guatemala. She left for the United States when she realized there was no hope her husband would change his attitude and support the family. Her accounts do not identify how she was financially able to leave for the United States, but was unable to afford a residence in Guatemala City. Immigration was her way to leave her marriage, leave the violence of the civil war and to provide for her children. In Los Angeles she started a new common-law marriage. She planned to re-unite with her children she had left with relatives in Guatemala.

WIVES IN INTACT MARRIAGES

In the case of Guatemalan de jure female heads of households, women identified their husband's lacking economic contributions to the household income and their responsibility to provide for their children as their reason to take the initiative for immigration. In marriages where men did not fail to be economic providers, women should have no economic justification to initiate immigration or to immigrate independently from spouses. But, some married women who were married to men who were reliable economic providers made the decision to immigrate to the United States. In those cases, Guatemalan women maintained their relationships with their husbands after immigration and later resided with them in the United States. Some Guatemalan wives with economically responsible husbands made the decision for immigration. This provides an example that there is a difference between cultural values, such as female submissiveness towards men, and what is actually happening (Del Castillo 1993:245). Fromm and Macoby (1970) and Benería and Roldán (1987) found that Mexican women only pretended to be submissive towards their husbands. In reality, Mexican women were confrontational and argumentative if husbands try to intervene in household matters. Furthermore, husbands had only limited power to control their wives

movements to visit friends and relatives. Francisca's story is an example of how a woman reasserted her own economic interests and initiated immigration to the United States while she carefully maintained her public image as a loyal wife.

Husbands did not necessarily interfere with their wives decision to immigrate. Patricia's case provided an example where her husband agreed with his wife's decision to immigrate to the United States. Patricia and her husband's marriage provides an example for a balanced power dynamic in a marital relationship.

Like all Guatemalan mothers, these married women justified their immigration to the United States not with personal interests, but as a strategy to provide for their children.

Francisca's Story: "My husband did not want to come."

Case Vignette

The Economic Situation in Guatemala

Francisca was an urban Ladina from Guatemala City. She lived with her husband and three children in a small single. Her sewing machine and clothes in progress took a lot of space. Francisca married when she was 17 years old. She emphasized that her marriage was not a conscious decision.

> I married very young. I did not have time to think if it would be the best for me or not. [. . .] I was still in school and took a typing course.

Francisca dropped out of school because she was pregnant and married her husband. At twenty she started her own business.

> I sold at a stand on the street. I sewed clothes at home to sell them, but always with my children next to me. I sold clothes and shoes. When I started, I sold out of my home or went to sell perfumes, body lotions, clothes, earrings and things like that to friends in their homes.

Later on, Francisca had a permanent location in a market where she sold clothes. Francisca belonged to a family of small entrepreneurs. Her mother had a business and almost all her siblings with the exception of her sister were self-employed. She said, "In business matters we realized that all siblings have business in their blood." For Francisca,

business was a way of life. She sewed clothes in her home and sold them to friends and acquaintances while she visited them in their homes. She had an income and socialized with her friends at the same time. Her own business allowed Francisca to fulfill her traditional roles as mother and wife, and to earn money at the same time.

> I prefer to get a loan and start my own business. [. . .] If you have your own business, you can take care of your children and also your husband.

Contrary to Francisca her husband was an example of a person with a "nine-to-five" mentality. He had worked as an accountant in Guatemala. He preferred a stable salary and taking risks was uncomfortable for him. According to Francisca, her husband had a very different attitude towards life. Francisca was very ambitious and ready to take risks, but her husband feared change and did not like to take chances.

> It happens in Guatemala, in our households. [. . .] The woman has to take care of the household. The woman has to take care of the house. She cleans the children. She takes care of all those duties and if a woman studies and gets further ahead, she can put herself at the same level as a man. The man does not like that very much.

Francisca started to get into conflict with those traditional gender role expectations.

> A man always likes to be the man in the house. If the woman gets further ahead than he does, he does not like that very much. In the beginning, this happened to me with my husband. One day I had worked a lot. I had a lot of money. Well, it is not my money because it is my business's capital.
>
> He [my husband] told me, "You listen. Where did you get all that money?"
>
> "Working", I told him.
>
> "I work and work and I never have anything", he told me.
>
> And I tell him, "No, go ahead and work harder."
>
> "I work a lot and I don't have money. You keep your money always in your pocket".

"But it is not mine", I tell him, "I have to pay [business expenses]."

For Guatemalan standards, Francisca's husband earned a relatively good income. She had traditional gender role expectations in the way that she expected her husband to take care of all the family's expenses. When she had to use her own income for those expenses, it was an alarm signal for her that something had to change.

> Yes, the two months I stayed in Los Angeles I started to think about my life there in Guatemala. I had to work very hard to get ahead because the money did not last. It did not last because of three children who I had to dress, buy shoes . . . It was not enough. He earned like eight hundred, nine hundred Quetzales. He gave me five hundred Quetzales spending money. Besides that, he paid gas, oil and I don't know how many things he paid. He gave me seven hundred Quetzales for food. I only had three hundred Quetzales left per month. It had to be enough to pay the bus fare, to buy clothes, to buy [school]uniforms, to pay school[fees]. He said yes, it was enough, but it was not enough, really. Honestly, I had to contribute my own money [to household expenses]. My money was not normally used for general household expenses, but I would use it if I took the three [children] to the store and bought them shoes. That helped too. I paid two hundred or two hundred and fifty Quetzales for shoes. I bought shoes for myself, I bought clothes for myself and that was also a big help. That was five hundred Quetzales. Therefore, in order for us to make it, he would have had to earn at least one thousand six hundred. But it did not happen and for months I did not have any work either.

A Story of Manipulation and Pretense

After Francisca realized that she used her own money for family expenses and she had problems finding work, she decided to search for better opportunities in the United States. However, she was aware that her husband did not want to take the risk of leaving. Francisca used manipulation to get her husband's permission to go to the United States and she manipulated her brother in the same way to take her with him. Francisca's narrative will be presented in order to demonstrate how she managed to get her husband's "permission" to leave without him and their children to the United States.

No, it was very tough, very tough. I was tired of the situation. I told my husband to give me permission to leave [to the United States]. But I told him , like I was playing.

In those days he said, "Yes, yes I will give you permission."

"Yes, really?", I said.

"Yes, I give you permission", he said.

Then I started thinking. I said, "I go."

And he said, that I am just joking. [. . .] This is what he thought. One day my brother arrived from a trip to Mexico.

I told him, "You know what, imagine, I am going to the United States."

"Ah, you liar", he said. "How will you go?" he said. "I don't believe you", he said. "You have a home, you have a husband, you have children. What will you do over there?", he told me. "I want to go", I told him, "and he gave me the permission." Isn't this true?" [. . .] I said to my husband.

He [my husband] told me, "yes", that he would give me permission. [. . .]

It occurred to me that my brother would say that it was a joke. She is joking or something like that. [. . .]

And I told him, "You know what, I plan to go with you."

He told me," How will you go?"

I answered," Well, you know, if you don't take me, I'll go alone."

"Well, we are here . . . if you are going, it is better that I leave with you."

"Good", I told him, "If that's what you want, we will go together."

When my husband was ready to go to work, I told him, "You know what, today I leave."

"Where?", he said. "

Well, to the United States."

"To the United States? Have a good trip.", he told me. But he answered me like you tell a child not to bother you.

"Is this true?", he told me, "Ah, leave my dear. Have a good trip". He gave me a kiss and he went to work.

At night he returned and asked the kids, "And your Mom?" "You allowed her to go to the United States", the kids answered.

"Ah, it's a lie", he said, "look for her. Tell her that I came back."

"No, Dad, Mom left", he told me the kids said.

"It's a lie", he told them, "she did not leave".

"Yes, she left, Mom left [. . .]. You told her that you would give her permission and in the morning she said that she was leaving", they [the kids] said, "Didn't you see that she had the suitcases ready?"

"Yes, but I thought she was a joking."

[. . .] He told me that he regretted that he said yes and that he prayed to God, that it hadn't happened, that they would stop me, that they would return me. O God, I hope she won't be able to cross the border." That's how I managed to get [to the United States] and pretty fast. In eight days I was here [in Los Angeles] and with no problems. No problems at all. That's how I managed the trip with his permission. He told me repeatedly, yes and later, he regretted that he told me that. However, I took his word [literally] and I told myself that I would try and see what happens. I wanted to make some money and he regretted [that he gave me permission] and told me to call him and that I should come back. But when I was here, I realized that there would be many opportunities for him to find work. At that time, I saw everything easier because I had work and they also offered me work for him, not only for myself.

After Francisca's husband discovered that his wife actually had left for the United States, he desperately called her in Los Angeles. He tried to convince her to return.

There [in Los Angeles], I lost a lot of opportunities because . . . [. . .] However, at that moment I had to balance [different things], because I came alone and left them there, my children and my husband.

When he [my husband] called me from there [Guatemala], he told me that I should come back and so on.

"No, I am working", I said to him. I was here and I was earning nine [dollars] per hour. I said [to him], "Well I have to decide what to do. If I will stay, I earn nine [dollars] an hour. This would be a lot of money for me."

I hardly spend anything here because I paid my brother very little rent. I spent only a hundred a month and the food. This was also very little because it was only for myself. I told myself, if I stay, I earn nine [dollars] an hour. I have a good job but I will have problems with my husband there [in Guatemala]. Everybody will get strange ideas in their heads, because I left. Who knows what she is doing over there. "She does not like you [the husband]", or "She got rid of the children and everything like that."

So, I said [to my husband], "Well, I will return under one condition, that when I arrive you'll return with me."

And he did not tell me, "I will think about it." He said, "Yes, come back and we leave".

Francisca returned to Guatemala, but only to return to the United States with her entire family. Her brother loaned her money as proof for the United States embassy in Guatemala to get a tourist visa for her family.

My husband did not want to come. The days passed and passed by and I did not see him saying, "Well, let's go to get the papers [the visa to the United States] or let's do this." Nothing!

Finally, you know what I told him, " I am gonna be in x place. You go there because I have to take care of my visa problems."

I was angry and everything, but I went [to the United States embassy] and they gave it to me. They gave us visas for all the children and for us but I had to carry money. My brother had loaned $4,000, but it was not enough for us to come.

I said, "Well, if I am not leaving, I will return this money quickly." But I had decided not to stay and I told [my husband], "You know what? With this money we could get a house." [. . .]

"No", he said. "This is not our money. This is a lot of money for us, to pay back."

That's how, I convinced him to come. It was against his will. He did not come here because he wanted to come. I told him, "Think about it well. I am losing many opportunities there. I was offered a job for nine dollars an hour and I will work at the same place where my brother worked."

He made samples for garments and a guy over there wanted me to be the assistant.

Analysis

Francisca's story illustrates that also women who are in married to men who are "good" economic providers can take the initiative for immigration. Francisca had exclusively economic reasons to come to the United States. Her case story is an example of how actual gender

roles are negotiated and how wives have covert ways to assert their own interests even in male-dominated societies. Her entrepreneurial mind conflicted with her husband's nine-to-five mentality. She saw better business opportunities in the United States and convinced her husband to immigrate to Los Angeles. However, Francisca was concerned about maintaining a public image of a loyal wife. She only pretended to be the obedient wife. She manipulated her husband into giving her the permission to leave without him to the United States. To his surprise, she left Guatemala to go to the United States. By phone, he tried to convince her to return to Guatemala. She was concerned with public opinion because she left without her family for the United States. She used the fact that she was in the United States already as a tool to pressure her husband into leaving with her and the children to the United States. So, she manipulated her husband to follow her to the United States while she pretended to obey his authority. Once she returned to Guatemala, she managed to get tourist visas for her family and left.

Although Francisca had very traditional expectations from marriage, she did not match the traditional image of the passive, suffering Latin American woman. She was bothered by her husband's nine-to-five mentality. Therefore, she relied on her brother to leave for the United States.

Francisca's case demonstrated that gender role expectations for women in Guatemala can have three sources: the women themselves, their husbands, and their social environment. In her way, Francisca conformed with some traditional gender role expectations. She demanded that her husband provide all the money to maintain the household. Francisca regarded her own earnings as surplus income for herself or emergency money for her children. She used her own money for herself and for her children. When her own money was used more and more for general household expenses she felt she needed to have more income and took the opportunity to join her brother's business in the United States.

Francisca departed in other ways from traditional Guatemalan gender role expectations. Before leaving to the United States, she got into conflict with her husband when she earned more money than he did. Francisca's husband did not like the fact that Francisca was more economically successful than he was. The third source of gender role expectations is expressed in the form of social control. Her narrative demonstrated how powerful social control can be. With her initial

manipulation she superficially had conformed with societal norms and jokingly received her husband's permission to go to the United States.

It was the knowledge of social control and that people would gossip about her leaving without her husband that brought her back to Guatemala. The fact that she was in the United States gave her power to negotiate their immigration to the United States with her husband. She would only return under the condition that shortly after he would leave with her and the children. But, she needed to use a last manipulation to force her husband to leave with her. Her case demonstrated that public pressure and opinion is a powerful tool to control women's behavior. Francisca's case demonstrated that women can use manipulation to reach their goals anyway. Francisca is an example of a woman who is not passive at all in reaching her goals.

Patricia's Story: "We Could not Manage Because of the Political Problems."

Case Vignette

Patricia was a Ladina from Guatemala City. She and her husband came to the United States during the late eighties. At the time of the interview, Patricia was thirty-five years old. I met her at a job-cooperative. In Los Angeles, she cleaned houses for a living and her husband was doing gardening. Patricia left her two children in the care of Patricia's mother in Guatemala. Recently, the family reunited in the United States.

Patricia had finished high school in Guatemala and had completed her first year in Bio-Chemistry at the university. Her husband had two more years left to finish law school. Patricia and her husband married in their early twenties. Patricia describes her husband as "a very calm man. He is patient with his children, very domestic, a very good father." Patricia spoke always in very positive terms about her relationship with her husband and emphasized it was a strong marriage. It seemed that her husband had different ideas about man-woman relationships than traditional Latin American men. At the job-cooperative he sometimes sold raffle tickets to members out of a basket, a chore female cooperative members usually do. When I commented on this fact, he answered that he was not macho.

When I asked Patricia, who decided to come to the United States she answered, "Me. I was the one who made the decision." Her

husband agreed with her decision to leave. Patricia came with a female cousin and her husband followed her a few weeks later.

Patricia's case demonstrated how the deteriorating Guatemalan economy of the eighties also affected the urban Ladino middle class. She contrasted the economic situation of the seventies with the economic situation of the eighties. During the seventies, Patricia conformed with traditional Guatemalan gender role expectations and she stayed at home taking care of domestic chores and her children. She took beauty courses on the side, but did not have a regular income.

> When I got married, in the seventies, times were not so bad [in Guatemala]. My parents helped us a lot. This was the typical life we could have there in Guatemala. Parents or family, relatives would assist and they would help us like it does not exist here. [. . .] In Guatemala, his mother [her husband's] like my mother helped us. During the first three years with Alma and the first year with Oscar, I did not work nor study. I dedicated myself only to raise them. Later, I took a course, but this course was how to cut hair or something like that. In Guatemala, many people [women] do that. After five, seven years I started to study. [. . .] I dropped off the children in the morning. The last year, I had to leave the children the entire day [in day care] so that I could study a little bit.

The economic decline of the eighties forced Patricia to contribute to the family income. She continued her education with the hope of finding better paid employment.

> In Guatemala, I had [completed] my first year in Bio-Chemistry. [. . .] I was working as a laboratory assistant. [. . .] I counted cultures. I also drew blood, checked urine, etc., etc. [. . .] It was my first year at San Carlos University in Bio-Chemistry and the cost of living made studying difficult. In Guatemala I only had two children. Living expenses were very high. We had an apartment [in Guatemala City]. [. . .] Life was very difficult because we didn't have a very high salary. Imagine how many things you need for your studies that are also very expensive. All books are in English in Bio-Chemistry. You have to buy them and they are very, very expensive. Well, the only thing you can do, is to xerox them.

It was difficult for Patricia and her husband to balance their family responsibilities with school and work. They left the children in a day care facility of the Salvation Army. In addition, they had problems paying their household expenses.

Patricia and her husband studied at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City. The Guatemalan army had continuously persecuted faculty and students from San Carlos University. The army tried to control university student's political activities and had infiltrated the university with spies. Patricia stopped her studies because she felt her life was threatened.

> We could not manage because of the political problems in Guatemala. You don't know with whom you are talking to in Guatemala. You cannot talk too much. How can I explain it to you? Juan was involved all his life in politics. [. . .] He was member of [. . .] a strong union during the time of Vinicío Cerezo[5]. During this time, there were frictions. We thought the government would normalize to a democracy, but it did not happen. There were more frictions and more political conflicts and what I did, I stopped studying. Studying at the university meant sometimes you could lose your life. When the military got into the university, it was even worse . . . Nobody wanted to return. Later on, everything got very tense. How can I tell you, to maintain the apartment, because of the rent we could not pay. [. . .] We came here to not lose the little bit we had. [. . .] There is work in Guatemala, but the salaries are not enough.

Patricia's husband's political activities as a union activist became a threat to the family. Her husband told me, that at the time they left, other union members had disappeared and that he feared that he was next to disappear. Patricia was concerned for the well-being of their children. Their economic problems and her husband's political involvement were her motivations to decide that they should leave the country.

Analysis

Patricia mentioned economic and political reason for leaving in Guatemala. Like Francisca's husband, Patricia's husband supported his family economically. Patricia's story portrayed how the economic

decline affected the country's small middle class. At the beginning of marriage, she conformed with traditional gender roles and stayed at home to take care of her children. Family support allowed her not to work for wages. The decline of the Guatemalan economy forced her to start working too. Patricia continued her education to find better employment, but for political reasons she was unable to continue her education. The continuing army presence at the university made it dangerous to pursue college education. Besides, her husband's union activism posed a threat to the entire family. The couple could not meet the economic demands of their household and left for the United States.

Patricia was one of the few Guatemalan women who described her marriage in positive terms. She pointed out that their cooperation was the reason that her marriage had lasted many years while she saw other couples separating. It was Patricia who made the decision to leave the country to protect the well-being of their children. Patricia initiated the decision to leave Guatemala and her husband followed her to the United States. She did not need to pretend to be a traditional, passive Guatemalan woman because her husband did not disagree with her decision to leave to the United States.

SINGLE WOMEN: ESCAPING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The last category of women who made their own decision to leave were young, single women in their late teens or early twenties. Usually, young, single women in Latin America dominate internal rural to urban migration. They leave to the city because there is a large demand for domestic laborers in the urban areas (Brydon and Chant 1989:125, Radcliffe 1986, Youssef and Hetler 1983).

Generally, men still dominate transnational migration (Chant 1992:199). It is presumed that young, single women's migration processes are more controlled by parental decisions than the migration of young, single men (Chant 1992:202). It seems unusual that a young, single, rural Guatemalan women would immigrate without family support to the United States.

The case study presented demonstrates how crisis situations forced Guatemalan women to take unusual steps. The civil war in Guatemala created an emergency situation, especially for rural Mayas in the Western Highlands (Manz 1988, Stoll 1993). The political violence in the Mayan Western Highlands of Guatemala massacred entire communities and displaced others who escaped. Displacement due to

civil war and loss of family members led to the dissolution of communities and family systems. Men were more likely to be killed than women (Aron et al. 1991, Vlach 1992). The civil war destabilized the lives of entire rural Mayan communities and this impacted on traditional female gender roles (cf. Roe 1992, Vlach 1992:122). In the absence of men, Mayan women had to take on traditional male roles like supporting themselves and their families. In emergency situations created by the civil war, women had to react fast and could not wait for others to make decisions.

Eva stressed that for a traditional young, single Mayan woman, it was inappropriate to leave her home without a being accompanied by a family member. However, the civil war left decimated family networks of rural Mayas (Anderson and Garlock 1988, Black 1985). The civil war not only took Eva's parents, but also other family members such as aunts and uncles she could have relied on. Other members were displaced in Guatemala or were exiled in Mexico and the United States. In the absence of her parents, Eva had to support herself economically.

Although Eva's move to Mexico was caused by the threat of political violence, her move to the United States was an escape from domestic violence in her sister's home. Eva was not willing to endure watching her brother-in-law beat her sister. Finkler (1994) reported that domestic violence is endemic in Mexico. Recently, scholars and women's activists drew attention to the prevalence of domestic violence in Central America. Because Central American countries suffered from the atrocities of political violence, the issue of domestic violence had been neglected. Guatemalan women were very conscious of domestic violence in Guatemala. But, Eva was the only woman who admitted that domestic violence was her motivation for coming to the United States. Argüelles and Rivero (1993) found in their conversations, with Central American and Mexican women in Los Angeles, that many women had been abused by their husbands in their home-countries and they interpreted Latin American women's independent immigration to the United States as a strategy for leaving abusive relationships. Women's rights activists even demanded to accept domestic violence as a reason for women to seek refugee status (Walsh 1993). Cases of Guatemalan women's immigration need to be explored in detail in order to prove Argüelles' and Rivero's (1993) findings.

Eva's Story: "I had a large, large family . . . "

Case Vignette

Eva was a Mayan woman from a small village of the rural Guatemalan highlands. She was the only female Mayan member of the job-cooperative. At the time she was interviewed, she worked as a live-in baby sitter and later as a caretaker of an elderly woman.

In comparison with other Mayan woman, she was unusual in many respects. She did not have any relatives in Los Angeles. She was in her early thirties, unmarried and never had children. This is very unusual for a rural Mayan woman. Women often get married at fifteen. She was fluent in her native Mayan language, English and Spanish, while many Mayan women in Los Angeles struggled to learn Spanish to blend in with the large Los Angeles Latino community. She interacted privately with people of other nationalities who were not Spanish speaking while most other Guatemalan women interacted with other Spanish speakers. She had a driver's license and drove her own car while other Guatemalan Mayan women in Los Angeles relied on husbands or relatives for rides and did not learn how to drive.

Her account explained why she diverted so much from the normal life path of a rural, monolingual Mayan speaking woman. Other people would compare Eva with Rigoberta Menchú, the Mayan leader who received became the Nobel Peace laureate, because she gave public presentations about the situation in Guatemala using examples from her own life.

Eva's story described what effects the political killings in Guatemala had on the Mayan people. She was obsessed with this story and repeated it over and over again in different situations, private and public. By the time Eva told me her story, over a decade had passed since the Guatemalan army massacred her family, but the events were still with her. She saw a psycho-therapist to overcome her post-traumatic syndrome. Her therapist told me that Eva was unusual because she saw her regularly. Other Central American refugees with similar experiences would only come once. The psychologist would provide the proof that they were suffering from the aftermath of political violence for their asylum application.

The first part of her story entitled, "Running Away from Marriage" is based on transcribed interviews. Her remaining story is based on field notes because she told me many details of her life in informal conversations while taking walks or while having dinner in restaurants.

Running Away from Marriage

Eva's immigration story actually began with her attempt to avoid marriage and her decision to seek refuge with her sister's family. She had agreed to an arranged marriage and her family and her perspective husband's family had already made all the arrangements for the wedding ceremony.

> I say to myself, o my gosh, if I'm gonna get married this guy, I'm gonna go [to] his family home. I'm gonna start my life a housekeeper, housewife. Ay, housewife, and soon I'm gonna have kids. "No!", I said to myself, "No! What can I do with life?", you know.[*sic*]

She explained her expectations of married life and how it would make her life worse.

> "I don't know what can I do", I say to myself,"but another thing I'm gonna be a housewife and have to bear kids and it seems like I gonna be have a miserable life".[*sic*]

As a little girl, Eva avoided learning the traditional domestic duties of Mayan women because her father did not pressure his youngest daughter.

> And other thing I was afraid [of], because I don't know how to cooking, how to handle the kitchen. That's one thing is happen with me, you know. I was such afraid with that and don't know how to make tortilla. I try, but is not tortillas beautiful, I mean, how to say do you say? Some place over there [in Guatemala] the ladies when they make tortillas, they are very thin tortillas.[. . .] Is coming tortillas very tortillas very circle, you know, and very big. But when I once start to do tortillas I can't do it. My tortillas coming tiny, over here thin, here is thick and over here is like, Jesus, is not circle. Is like gosh and the woman, Indian woman they are not agree about it to see, yah.[*sic*]

She felt that she could not reach up to the standards. That would make her vulnerable in her new home because she was expected to move in with her parents-in-law.

His parents, they not gonna be happy with me because you know, the ladies what they have to do, when they go to the guys parents. The lady she has to make tortilla for the parents. The lady she has to cook. She has to give the food for the . . . this guy parent, so that why I say to myself, "No, I can't do it. I can't say this lady, ok, teach me how to cooking, how to do this stuff in the kitchen."[*sic*]

Eva was worried about being an embarrassment for her parents because she never had made any effort to learn how to fulfill the usual household chores in a Maya peasant household.

I can't say that. Now I think my Daddy, my parents, they gonna get upset with me. hey gonna hear from somebody, I don't know how to cooking how to working with this people.[*sic*]

When her brother-in-law visited her parents, Eva told him about her problems and he offered her to come and hide at his home. Her sister and her family had to leave the area because they were politically persecuted.

My sister, she was left already in my house because her husband, yah her husband he was persecuted, persecuted.

G.K.: For what reason?

For the military. They was looking for him. Aha, aha, they was looking for him and my sister, too. So, that's why they left quickly [. . .], you know. They was refugee in other place. [*sic*]

When Eva left her parent's house alone, to escape the unwanted marriage and sought refuge with her sister's family. She described how awkward she felt going somewhere unaccompanied by a family member. Even in Los Angeles, where she had to move by herself, she felt uncomfortable to go to places alone. Once she got upset with me because I could not join her at a party even if she new the hosts much better than I did.

I never, never, never left [. . .] my home [. . .] by myself. [. . .]

"Gosh", I say to myself, "What can I do, because if my Daddy he gonna find me over there where I was walking. O, my gosh , forget about it, you know", and say to myself. "I'm gonna walk because [. . .] bus is not coming."

I have to walk, I have to walk, walking, walking. I walk like one hours I think one and a half hours. I walk to get to the place where I can taking the bus. [. . .] One neighbor, he saw me in the way, one neighbor . . . That this guy he was working with my parents.

I remember, he say, "Hi, how are you?" in my own language. "Hi, how are you? What you doing?", he say.

"Fine, thank you". I was so scared. Then he say, "Why you walking with yourself?"

"No, just I came, I come first, because my Daddy he say I can walk quickly, so that's why he say, go first and now we find you in the way, he say that. So, my Daddy he is coming behind me, you know," I says to this guy.

"O.k., I [. . .] never, never, walk just only with yourself. You never go out with yourself, so, every time when you wanna out, you go with your Mom or you go with your Daddy", he say. [. . .] "No, because we have to go [to the next town] and we have to buy something, so my Daddy he came a little late but he say he gonna come quickly, you know."

"Ah, o.k., so o.k. let's go", he say this guy.

He go, he is walking. [. . .] He is walking quickly, you know, he walking but I'm going behind him but I was so scared because nobody people I can see the way just only me, walking, walking, walking. Come car but car is not take me in the place because people they have only their own car coming like faster, they passing me in the way. So, I was so scared.[*sic*]

Escaping Political Violence

Eva's decision to avoid marriage changed her life in an unexpected way. Because she stayed with her sister, she survived and was not massacred by the Guatemalan military. When she returned to her village, the Guatemalan military had killed her parents, two brothers and one sister, her aunt and her uncle. She said that her parent's house looked like somebody had slaughtered animals. There was blood all over the place. The military came at night when her family was asleep. They broke into the door of her parent's bedroom. Eva said that, before the massacre, she was part of a large family but now it was relatively small. Many family members had been killed, others were hiding in Guatemala or exiled in Mexico and in the United States.

After the massacre of her family, Eva fled to Guatemala City to avoid persecution. She found work as a maid. Ironically, her employer was the widow of a military official. Her employer forced her to exchange her Indian clothes with Western style clothing. She said this made her very angry because her clothes are a part of her identity. Her employer did not treat her well. She had to get up early in the morning to start work. She told me how she once broke a pot. It was a large pot and because she is a short woman she had problems lifting it and broke it. Her employer deducted the price of the pot in installments from her small income. When Eva left her village, she spoke only her Mayan language. While she worked in Guatemala City, Eva learned how to speak Spanish. She spent three years in Guatemala City. Three years after her family had been massacred, Eva thought that enough time had passed by and she thought that she could risk to visiting her home.

When she arrived, she found that it was a dangerous decision to return. The leader of the civil patrols[6] arrested her and took her to the military base where she was interrogated. The civil patrol found it suspicious that a Mayan woman like her spoke some Spanish and wore pants. They suspected her of being a guerrilla member. A military officer interrogated her. He asked her to stay in the village to work as a military spy. Eva answered she could not stay because her employer in Guatemala city, who was the widow of a high military official, would expect her to return. Instead, the lieutenant asked her to work as a spy in Guatemala City. She agreed with his proposal to regularly send reports to the military base. The lieutenant released her, but instead of returning to Guatemala City, Eva took the next bus into exile in Mexico.

Escaping Family Violence

Eva joined her sister's family in Mexico City and found work as a baby sitter for the daughter of an American woman. But, she had problems with the living situation with her sister. Eva's brother-in-law beat her sister regularly and had a an extra-marital affair with another woman. She told me that her brother-in-law had beat her sister regularly in Guatemala as well. Her sister did not ask her father for help because she had married her husband against her parent's advice. Eva expressed her fear that in a marriage she would also be subject to such abuse and pointed out that wife beating was a frequent phenomenon in Guatemala.

Eva felt that the continuous conflict between her sister and her brother-in-law was unbearable for her. Eva's sister and her brother-in-law were fighting constantly. Eva's sister expected a baby. Her brother-in-law continued beating his wife and continued his relationship with another woman. Eva felt she was in the middle of their argument and both her sister and her brother-in-law tried to convince her to take their side. She could not return to Guatemala because she feared political persecution. So, she left for the United States. Her American employer had left to the United States and offered her she could stay in Los Angeles.

Analysis

Eva's life story is an example of how political violence has changed a Guatemalan woman's life path tremendously. Eva's story tells how the political repression of the Guatemalan military on the Mayan people changed her life path unexpectedly and detached her from her family. Many Mayas were displaced in Guatemala, lived in exile or had been killed by the military.

Eva was unusual for a rural Mayan woman in many ways. She successfully avoided learning traditional female chores. Until she was twenty-one, she avoided marriage. When she finally was supposed to get married she ran away from home. The massacre of her family left her orphaned and suddenly without a traditional family support system. and went to Guatemala City to find work as a domestic worker. The killing of her immediately family accelerated the changes in her life. She left the traditional life of a rural Mayan woman and she escaped to the capital. There, she joined a majority of unskilled Guatemalan women who work as domestic workers for middle and upper-class Guatemalan families. Her employer forced her to give up the symbols of Mayan identity like her traditional dress and language. The visit to her natal village and her arrest by the military forced her to take a more extreme step and to leave for Mexico.

Political repression forced her to seek refuge with her sister in Mexico. Her brother-in-law physically abused her sister. She could not return to Guatemala because of the likelihood of being killed by the army and she could not stay in Mexico because she could not bear sister's abusive marriage anymore. So, she followed her American employer to the United States.

CONCLUSION

The stories of Guatemalan refugee/immigrant women challenged gender stereotypes of Latin American immigrant women. Guatemalan women have their own distinct reasons for participating in immigration to the United States. They take an active role in the decision making process to immigrate to the United States.

Traditional immigration literature assumed that women are in stable marital relationships, that men are the heads of households and are functional economic providers. However, Guatemalan women are frequently female heads of households. High marital instability is caused by male cultural roles, high loss of men in the Guatemalan civil war, and low-income men's dilemma to provide for their families. In the absence of male authority figures and where women were in marital relationship where spouses provided only marginally to the family income, women had to take over traditional male responsibility as economic providers and decision makers. Women's economic position confined them to the lowest paying jobs and did not allow them to provide economically for themselves and their families. The responsibility to support their families and/or direct threat by the political situation in Guatemala forced them to leave the country.

Married women with husbands, who provided economically for their families, took the initiative for immigration and were pioneers in the immigration process. Even those women had their own independent economic motivations for leaving to the United States. They justified their immigration with their children's well-being. If husbands agreed with their wives decision to emigrate, they cooperated with her decision to immigrate to the United States. If the husband did not cooperate the wife, wives used covert ways of manipulating their husbands to follow them. They pretended to obey his authority; but in reality, pursued their own interests.

Lastly, political violence was an additional stress factor on Guatemalan women's lives. Maya especially lost relatives, spouses and friends in the violence of the civil war. Women were forced to take over traditional male roles if their husbands died in the civil war. If they were de facto heads of households, their economic situation did not allow them to leave the area of civil war. The displacement and killings of entire communities has left rural Mayas with an uprooted and reduced family support network. In the absences of their normal support systems, Mayan women had to take untypical decisions such as

escaping Guatemala without any family support in order to save their lives.

Besides political violence, there seem to be indications that domestic violence might also contribute to Guatemalan women's decision to immigrate to the United States. Only one woman named domestic violence as a reason to come to the United States. Therefore, the impact of domestic violence on women's migration decisions needs to be validated in future research.

NOTES

1. All individual's names have been changed.
2. The same right wing party that gave Magdalena a job after her husband's assassination.
3. Mayan women usually assume patrilocal residence and stay with their husband in their parents-in-law's household (Bossen 1984, Hawkins 1986, Ehlers 1990).
4. *Señorita* refers to a young, unmarried women.
5. Christian Democratic President in Guatemala from 1986-1991 (Stoltz 1993:158).
6. She refers to Guatemalan men being forced to join the civil patrols. See definition in Notes: Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 6

Women Who Did Not Make Their Own Decision to Immigrate

Not all of the Guatemalan women in Los Angeles made their own decision to come to the United States. This chapter analyzes cases of Guatemalan women who did not make their own decision to immigrate to the United States and usually immigrated together with spouses or parents. Traditional immigration research assumed that men are pioneers of migration. Women's migration was seen as having social reasons, not economic ones and to be associated with marriage (Moore 1986:94, Pessar 1986).

The previous chapter evaluated women's stories who, contrary to popular notions of immigration, were the pioneers in the immigration process. This chapter has a closer look at the conditions and causes under which women did immigrate as dependents and/or did not take the initiative to immigrate. It evaluates the assumption that women are merely passive followers of male authorities in the immigration process. Guatemalan women who did not take the initiative to immigrate were classified in two categories: wives and single daughters. Like in chapter 5 case vignettes of women's immigration stories illustrate general findings.

This chapter is based on fewer interviews than the previous chapter that explored women's cases for the following reasons: Most women interviewed were members of employment related organizations and were economically active. The sample probably overrepresents women who were female heads of households because they probably tended to be more economically active than women in intact marriages. Women who made their own decisions and arrangements for coming to the

United States tended to be more outspoken about their motivations and causes to come to the United States than women who came as dependents (see chapter 3). For those reasons, the cases of wives and daughter who immigrated as dependents could be further developed in future research and is more a beginning stage than research presented in chapter 5.

IMMIGRATION OF WIVES

The dependent immigration of Guatemalan wives seems to match the common stereotype of female immigrants to immigrate for marriage reasons, to bear many children, and not to be part of an economic labor force (Boyd 1986:45). Their immigration seems to correspond with the perception of Latin American women submitting to decisions of male authorities. The case stories will be used to evaluate if wives who followed men to the United States are merely passive followers of men and if they really did not contribute economically to their families income. Among Guatemalan wives who followed their husbands, two groups could be distinguished: Women who agreed to immigrate to the United States and women who resisted coming to the United States.

Although some Guatemalan wives agreed to follow their husbands to the United States, they could not easily be stereotyped as passive followers. All women had clear perceptions of why they immigrated to the United States and gave accounts of their own on why they left Guatemala. Hitchcox (1993:148) observed the same phenomenon among Vietnamese refugee women in Hong Kong. Even if Vietnamese women had a subordinate position in Vietnamese society, most Vietnamese wives had their own reasons for why they left Vietnam even if their husbands had made the decision to leave. For Guatemalan wives in Los Angeles, their accounts were linked to their families' economic survival. In that way, they did not differ from mothers who took their own initiative to immigrate to the United States (compare chapter 5). Rural peasant women addressed the scarcity of land and hunger, while urban women spoke about missing job opportunities. Rural Mayan wives also mentioned the political persecution of their husbands by the military or the killings of relatives as their reason for coming to the United States. A rural Mayan wife who followed her husband to Los Angeles described her husband's political persecution and the economic situation in Guatemala:

> There was a lot of guerrilla [activity] when I was in Guatemala. They organized the men. Every district had a watch tower and every man had to be in this watch tower to keep guard for twenty-four hours[1]. Because of that and the lack of food we came here. At that time, there were many guerrillas [in our area]. One uncle got killed and my husband was threatened [to be killed]. [My uncle was accused] of being a guerrilla member and being involved into insurgent activities. Neighbors and *enviosos* [envious people] blackmailed him saying he was in the guerrilla. He was taken to the military base. At that time, many [people] received threats. They grabbed people because of *envidia* [literally: envy]. Many people were involved in problems and many people were taken to the military base. After people arrived [at the military base] they killed them sometimes. However, I thank God that nothing happened to my husband and he returned home. [. . .] Here [in Los Angeles] the situation is very different. Here, it is very comfortable. Here, I don't have problems. The children go to school. I am working.

The statement of the rural Mayan woman also showed that she had a job in Los Angeles. Traditional immigration literature denies the economic contribution of immigrant wives (Boyd 1986). Guatemalan women in Los Angeles were not passive child- bearers. Many wives contributed to the wage income of their families. Mayan wives especially felt that their illiteracy and broken Spanish restricted them in their mobility in Los Angeles. Some rural Mayan women, who had too many children to go to work outside their homes, complained about their social isolation. They were confined to their apartments while their husbands worked in the Los Angeles garment industry.

However, rural Mayas in Los Angeles came not only because of an economic emergency, but also because the civil war had devastated their region economically. The political violence in Guatemala had directly threatened their own lives and of spouses and relatives. So, immigration to the United States was also a safe-haven from political violence in Guatemala.

Not all Guatemalan wives agreed with their husbands' decision to come to the United States. Maria Elena's case story provides an example of a Mayan woman who followed her husband against her will to the United States. It shows that immigration to the United States does not necessarily improve women's status. Some immigrant women have to carry the double burden of domestic responsibilities and wage

labor (cf. Foner 1986:141, Lamphere 1986, Pessar 1986:280). In the United States, Maria Elena ultimately she would have to carry the double burden of her domestic chores and factory work. In Guatemala she would have only been responsible for the domestic chores.

In general, Maria Elena seemed to match the stereotype of a submissive immigrant woman who joined her husband to take care of the household chores, to bear children and to not engage in wage labor (Boyd 1986). Her narrative demonstrates that she was not a passive follower, but community and family pressure forced her into the submissive role of a young wife and obliged her to follow her husband against her will to the United States. She had used marriage avoidance as a strategy to avoid traditional Guatemalan gender role expectation and to maintain her personal independence. Like in her case, marriage avoidance was a recurrent topic in many of the case stories presented by Ladinas and Mayan women. Women from other cultures have developed comparable strategies to Guatemalan women for avoiding unwanted marriages. Abu-Lughod (1990:45) reported how young Berber women used spirit possession to resist marriage with unwanted men.

Ehlers (1990) described in her study how young, urban Mayan women avoided and delayed marriage. Prolonged education and paid employment gave Mayan women the opportunity not to marry even if they had children out of wedlock (Ehlers 1990). Young Guatemalan women were well aware of the consequences of their role as wives. They were scared of the marital responsibilities that were associated with what they called *la vida casada* (the married life). Both Mayan women interviewed, (compare Eva's story in chapter 5) who tried to delay marriage, still did not feel ready to bear children and feared to leave their parent's household. Like Guatemalan women in Los Angeles, Ehler's interviewees feared to be without their birth family's support. Ehlers (1990) stressed that unmarried Guatemalan women had more freedom than married Guatemalan women. She (1990) reported that young, urban Mayan women feared the patrilocal residence that is associated with marriage. The control of fathers over their daughters tended to be less restrictive than husbands over their young wives. With marriage, the control over a woman's well-being is traditionally transferred to the husband. Through patrilocal residence, young wives initially lose their social support network (cf. Goodson-Lawes 1993). Guatemalan women interviewed validified those findings. In general, young women described themselves as being under the control of their parents and their husbands than older women.

Maria Elena's Story: "They brought me here."

Case Vignette

Maria Elena was a Mayan woman who I met in a Protestant church in Los Angles. She gave me her phone number at the women's leadership meeting of the church. Unlike other women who spoke only broken Spanish, she spoke Spanish fluently as well as her native Mayan language. She completed elementary school in Guatemala and was literate in Spanish and her Mayan language. Maria Elena lived with her family south of downtown Los Angeles. The area used to be the pride of Los Angeles' African American community. Nowadays it is one of the most disenfranchised areas in the City of Los Angeles. There are no large department stores, instead there are countless liquor stores on street corners and swapmeets to buy daily necessities. Maria Elena told me how she was assaulted at the local swapmeet by a young man who stole her purse. Now, she was scared to leave the house. Maria Elena's family shared the house with her brother's family. The house was badly maintained but spacious. Her family lived in the area because it was close to the downtown garment district. Maria Elena's husband and brother both worked as sewing machine operators in the garment industry.

At the time of the interview, Maria Elena was twenty-three years old. She arrived in Los Angeles three years ago. She had two children, a boy and a girl. She only gave me a short interview and asked her talkative brother to continue the interview with me. First, I thought she was too shy to talk, but then I saw that she was too busy with her domestic responsibilities. Maria Elena did not like to be in Los Angeles because she did not come here by her own choice. Her husband told her to follow him to the United States where he could find better economic opportunities. Maria Elena had worked in Guatemala, in her parent's store. Her younger sisters were already married. As the only unmarried daughter, she took care of the family store. She was twenty years old and was considered to be an old maid by Mayan standards. Maria Elena described the social pressures to get married.

> There, in my country, they talked badly about me. [. . .] Yes, because I was old and I had a sister who married at fourteen years, and the

other one married at sixteen, and the other one was eighteen. I continued to stay with my parents because of my education. At that age, I still did not want to get married. I wanted to finish [my education], I wanted to achieve something. I did not want to marry until I was twenty-five, twenty-six years old. However, many people talked badly about me. That I was old. That they were gonna see who wants to marry me. So, because of them . . .

G.K.: You got married?

You have to find somebody quickly. Yes, they talk badly about you when you are old. I was twenty years old when I met my husband.

G.K.: So, twenty years is old for your country?

O yes, at twenty they talk badly about you. [. . .]

When I was fifteen, my mother sometimes told me, "Look my daughter, one day you will get married to a man. You will have children", she told me. [. . .]

I did not want to have children. At this age, I did not think about children and I did not think about men until I was twenty years old I still did not want [to get married].

However, my father, my mother told me, "Yes, get married. You know how the people talk about you. More or less, you won't have problems if you will get married. There won't be any problems . . . "

So, . . . and I still did not want [to get married] and I did not want to have children.

I did not want, but they told me, "Yes, one day you too will get married. You have studied and even if you have not finished everything, it will be enough for you."

Maria Elena did not marry earlier because she wanted to complete her education. She took music classes at a bible institute.

I wanted my diploma in these *estudios* (studies), but I met my husband [. . .] and therefore I lost my degree [. . .] when I got married with my husband. I got married in 1990. In January, I got married and in December, or November, I would have received the diploma in music.

I asked Maria Elena why she did not finish her training as a musician. She said that her marriage to a Mayan man, who had immigrated to the United States, was the reason. Like other Guatemalan

women, Maria Elena had a clear perception of why her husband came to the United States. Unlike Guatemalan wives who altruistically came to the United States, Maria Elena was interested in her personal well-being and resisted getting married and following her husband to the United States. Her husband told her to join him in Los Angeles. She came against her will, in her words, "They brought me here [to Los Angeles]". She did not want to follow her husband to the United States immediately after her marriage, but he did not want to wait for her. Maria Elena's husband asserted his male authority and was not willing to wait for her to finish her diploma as a church musician or to permit her to follow him to Los Angeles after she would have finished it.

Yes, I told him [my husband] why I wanted to wait another year. I want my diploma, I told him. But he told me, that he would not wait.

"If you leave, you leave now. If you loved me the way I love you, you won't wait."

So, it was better for me to leave with him. Because I liked my studies, I did not get married when I was eighteen years, nineteen years old. Many [men] liked me but I only liked my studies. In the end, I lost my studies. But who knows, some day, I may return, I will continue them.

Maria Elena pointed out that another reason she did not want to come to Los Angeles was the hard work. She did not have an idealistic image of the United States. She knew, from her father who had been an immigrant worker in Los Angeles, that life in Los Angeles was not desirable for her as a woman.

I knew about everything [in the United States]. My father told me. There [in my country] I did not work like here. I did not have to pay rent. I would not have come here, but he [my husband] is responsible for me nowadays.

She stressed that she did not want to come to the United States because she would be responsible for the domestic chores, child-care and wage labor in the garment factory. In Guatemala, she would have only been responsible for housework and child rearing. Maria Elena's brother agreed that women's life is harder in Los Angeles than in Guatemala.

> My husband told me, "You have to go to work too." I don't want to go, I don't want to go because to work eleven hours at the [sewing] machine from six to six tires you. [. . .] It tires you. Well, the men come back and just relax, but we have to prepare the food, to change the children, go drop off the children with the person who takes care of them. Yes, it is difficult. Therefore, I did not want to come, but they brought me here. One day I will have to work, I will work to return soon because I do not want to stay.

Besides her marriage, Maria Elena identified the civil war as the reason why they came. The civilian Mayan population was caught in between the conflict of the military and the guerrillas. The lives of Maria Elena's family was only saved by coincidence. The area was economically devastated at the end of the civil war and many had escaped the area. Maria Elena's family did not have enough money to relocate to a different area.

> We came because of this other event that is in my memory. I don't know how many years, may be four years ago, there were guerrillas close to our place. The war planes passed by and dropped bombs because they said there were guerrillas. The government told us they will burn everything where we lived because of the guerrillas [*por la guerrilla*]. They told us that everybody who is living in an area with guerrillas will be bombed. [. . .] There used to be many guerrillas [where I lived] and the soldiers killed. We had relatives who lived in another place and until now we do not know if they are still alive.

Maria Elena continues to describe the atrocities of the military. She describes how the military burned people alive in their houses and many, including relatives of hers escaped to Mexico.

> There were rumors that the guerrillas planned to assault my father and burn our house. Sometimes they [the guerrillas] passed by and threw leaflets that perhaps they would come and which date they would come and burn the house [. . .] Close to our place they came to kill people. Only we, we were in the middle of it. Because we are evangelical we prayed to God, if it would be God's will that our end had come, we would die. [. . .] Sometimes the guerrillas passed by close to us but they did not bother us. They only passed by our house and took other people. They did not do anything to us. They only wanted to attack my Dad. [. . .] If you have faith in God, God helps you. We prayed and nothing happened to us. [. . .] There are people who also died close to our place. I don't know if the war plane dropped bombs. Yes, that made you feel scared. It would have been better to go to another place but because we did not have money we could not leave. Therefore, we had to stay in our house but nothing happened to anybody.

Maria Elena emphasized, that because the military was not close to her place, the Guatemalan military violence in her village was targeted more selectively toward individuals and not the entire community.

> I came here, my brother and my other sister who lives here too. She spends a lot of time here and today only my Mom, Dad, another sister and brother are there [in Guatemala]. Only they live there [in Guatemala]. They have a little bit of money. They have a small business and they own land. We send money. If we talk about violence . . . there is always violence [. . .] They kill people [. . .] However, it's not come like before and because we are here, it is better. Nowadays because we are here, my husband is working in the garment industry.

Analysis

Maria Elena represents a new generation of Mayan woman. Contrary to other rural women in Los Angeles she was literate and bilingual in K'anjobal and Spanish. Her family's economic position had already been strengthened because her father had accumulated some money as a migrant worker in the United States. It is interesting to note that her family was economically unable to leave their region when it was hit by civil war. Maria Elena and her family were survivors of this conflict, but they did not leave the area because of limited financial resources.

The civil war had economically devastated the region. The economic situation added to the motivations of Mayas to leave for the United States to earn money to rebuild their devastated communities.

Although, Maria Elena identified the civil war as a good reason to leave the area, her resistance going to the United States has it's origin in her status as a woman. Maria Elena had marital reasons for coming to the United States. It was the social pressure that forced her to marry a Mayan migrant living in Los Angeles. She was able to prolong her

single status by pursuing her training as a church musician while she worked in the family business. Community and family pressure in the form of gossip forced Maria Elena to marry. Finally, she gave in and married a men who had immigrated to the United States. Maria Elena stressed that she still did not want to get married. She wanted to achieve something in her life and with her marriage she lost her personal achievement, her diploma. As a married woman, the responsibilities for her life and well-being were transferred from her father to her husband. Guatemalan gender role expectations did not give her the option to stay in Guatemala. She was obliged to follow her husband who had immigrated to Los Angeles. He had left for the United States to save money to buy land and build a house in Guatemala. She stressed that they left because of the violence of the civil war that had left the area economically devastated.

The second reason why Maria Elena did not like life in the United States was the fact that she would have to carry the double load of domestic chores and wage labor. In Guatemala, she would have only been responsible for domestic chores. Third, Maria Elena's father had told her about his suffering as a migrant laborer in Los Angeles and told his daughter about the suffering of immigrants in the city. She did not want to experience the same.

Immigration was not an improvement of her personal situation. As she expressed it, her husband was now responsible for her and had the authority to make decisions about her life. Maria Elena's story demonstrated the limitations of choice for a young rural Mayan woman. Her parents and her community found ways to pressure her to conform with the standards of her community. Maria Elena had limited options to resist that pressure. Her desires and aspirations for a different way of life still persisted.

IMMIGRATION OF DAUGHTERS

Like young Guatemalan wives, young single Guatemalan women interviewed in Los Angeles usually did not have the option of making their own decision to leave for the United States without their parents permission. Goodson-Lawes (1993:289) found that Mexican women acquire more power only with increasing age and with establishing her own families. Their status was derived from their motherhood and their roles as homemakers. Young, single women had not acquired this power yet. Magdalena stated in her case vignette, in chapter 5, that she

planned to leave Guatemala for the United States as a teenager. Her mother prevented her from leaving. Magdalena only had the authority to make her own decision to leave after she herself had been married and became a mother.

Only young, single women without a family support system, as in Eva's case in chapter 5, made their own decision to leave. The following cases are further illustrations of how Guatemalan mothers decided about their daughter's immigration. The first case is an example of a family reunification and the second case is an example where a mother sends her daughter to the United States to escape to be killed in the civil war.

Family Reunification

Historical data about immigration to the United States demonstrates that children of immigrants were often separated from their fathers, but not from their mothers (Robles and Watkins 1993). But, some Guatemalan mothers left their children in the care of relatives while they left for the United States. Sontag (1994) found that Caribbean women left their children behind because women were pioneers in immigration and established themselves economically first before they reunited with their children. Almost all Guatemalan mothers interviewed in Los Angeles had left their children behind in Guatemala. They indicated that they did not want to expose their children to the trip through Mexico where immigrants face theft and women were in the danger of being raped (Miller 1989). In addition, they could just pay the trip themselves, but not for their children. Others preferred for their children to grow up in Guatemala because they did not like for their children to be influenced by a North American life style.

The separation from their children created constant suffering for Guatemalan women in Los Angeles. Women cried regularly when they spoke about children left behind (cf. Sontag 1994). Guatemalan women presented pictures regularly of their children in Guatemala. They sent money to Guatemala to take care of their children's expenses. They financed a good education for their children and/or saved money to pay for their trip to the United States.

Three Guatemalan women interviewed in Los Angeles could not bear the separation from their children and returned to Guatemala while the study was conducted. One mother described how she had returned

the first time because she could not endure the separation from her children.

> I came for the first time in 1974 [to the United States] and returned after a year because I did not have my children with me. [. . .] I was alone [in Los Angeles] without relatives, without anybody.

It was women's ultimate dream to reunite with their children (cf. Leslie 1993:201, Sontag 1994). Leslie (1993) pointed out that Central American immigrant parents develop unrealistic views about children left behind and that reunification after years of separation is problematic.

Marta, a single Ladina, was reunited with her mother after many years of separation. Like many other urban Guatemalan women, Marta's mother was a de facto head of household who left Guatemala because her alcoholic husband could not support the family. Marta stayed with her grandparents while her mother worked in the United States. For a young, single woman like Marta it was socially inappropriate not to reunite with her family in the United States. She came to the United States to contribute to the survival of her family network. During her mother's absence, Marta had established closer ties to relatives and friends in Guatemala. When she left Guatemala, she had to leave this support system against her will.

Marta's mother had financed her daughter's education with her work in the United States. Marta had completed high school and took courses in trade school. In a country where a large percentage of women are illiterate (García and Gomáriz 1989a) or just completed elementary school, Marta was a well educated woman and had received a better training to compete on the Guatemalan job market. She was an example of how even better educated young women have problems finding appropriate employment in Guatemala to support themselves (cf. Ehlers 1990). When she came to the United States, she suffered from occupational downward mobility (cf. Vlach 1992) because she only had access to the same kind of jobs as her mother who had completed elementary school.

Marta's Story: "Almost all my family is here."

Case Vignette

Marta lived in a one-storied house. She told me that she shared the space with her boyfriend, her grandmother, her aunt, her mother, a United States born and raised female cousin, a male cousin, and a two month old male cousin. Both Marta and her mother were members of the job-cooperative.

At the time of the interview, Marta was twenty-one years old. She had completed high school with a concentration in marketing and advertising in Guatemala. After graduation, she had found office work in the next town and continued to take courses in trade school at night.

It was very difficult to conduct the interviews with her because her mother and grandmother were always present and listened carefully to our conversation. Sometimes they were even interfering into the conversation. Marta's grandmother had an especially strong presence in the house. It seemed that she had control over all activities in the house. While she listened carefully to our discussion, she still noticed what was going on in other rooms and interfered every once in a while in the other activities. Interestingly, the men in the house had a non-interfering, almost non-existent presence.

Marta's father had died in Guatemala and her mother had immigrated to the United States. The second time Marta was interviewed at a different location because I felt that her mother and grandmother might influence her from talking freely. It was at this time that she told me her father had been an alcoholic and therefore he was not a reliable provider for the family. After her father's death, Marta's mother had come to the United States to provide for the family. Later, she insisted that Marta join the rest of the family in California.

> Why did I leave Guatemala? Well just how I told you previously. I left Guatemala last year because . . . Almost all my family is here [in Los Angeles]. First, my mother came. One of my sisters is here, my Grandma, my aunt.

Besides family related reasons, Marta described the economic situation in Guatemala as the reason to leave. Although Marta is a well educated woman for Guatemalan standards, her wage was not sufficient to support her entirely. In the recorded interview, she stressed the economic reasons. However in the informal conversation, she

emphasized that her mother said that she would have to join the rest of the family.

> I also came because of [economic] necessity. In my country, I did not get paid much. [. . .] I worked and I continued studying. [. . .] You lack [money] because you have many necessities: expenses for clothes, for personal things. I bought books because I continued to study, things you need, food and things for myself. Well, I continued to see the same thing. I earned very little. I earned at this office 250 Quetzales and they increased it to 300 Quetzales [equivalent to 60 Dollars in 1992] monthly. [. . .] It affected me a lot because I was taking courses at a school called *Escuela de Comercio* (trade school). The bus fare to go there was a lot. I spent like 3 Quetzales per day for a round trip. However, sometimes, I also bought a soft drink. The cost for the bus fare affected me a lot and the cost for books. I studied English and I studied accounting at night. [. . .] Everything is very expensive clothes, shoes. Just a pair of shoes cost 60 to 70 Quetzales. I earned 300 per month and the shoes are worn down easily because there you don't drive, you walk.

Finally, Marta emphasized that she came to the United States to help her family and for "personal progress". However, she described the disillusionment when she could not find office work because of her undocumented status and her language limitations. Marta recounted how she suffered from exploitation as an undocumented worker in the factory. She expressed her anger that she declined in social status because in Guatemala she worked in an office. In informal conversation, she stressed her frustration at being forced to live in Los Angeles and doing menial exploitative work while in the recorded interview, she stressed her solidarity to her family.

> You don't come to this country with bad intentions. We come here to earn a little bit to help out the family, to earn a little money to help them, to help the brothers and sisters, the grand-parents, or to help the family. [Coming here] is about personal progress, because I got my studies. I have the knowledge of what I learned in twelve years. But here, I see with myself, running into a negative situations. I would like to work in an office and help with the papers, with books, bills and accounting. I miss working in an office, because I don't have papers and I am unable to speak English.

Marta pointed out that she did not want to come to Los Angeles. She missed her friends in Guatemala. She felt well integrated in Guatemala. She had, prior to her arrival, an idealized image of the United States that was destroyed when she arrived.

> Yes, I knew that I could find work [in Los Angeles]. When people [. . .] come from Los Angeles to Guatemala, they tell you it is very nice, very cheap. It has a lot of advantages. They paint you a beautiful picture and we [in Guatemala] say, "Let's go, find a good life there." [. . .] However, it is the opposite from how they described it. They only say it to be malicious. The majority of Latinos who here come are [. . .] in a more problematic situation than before [in their countries]. It is very sad here.

After Marta's arrival in Los Angeles, she perceived life in the United States very negatively. She despised the life style. Distances were too large between friends to socialize easily.

Analysis

Marta's main reasons for immigrating to the United States were economic necessity and her commitment to her family. She was an example for a young, single woman who whose mother left her daughter in the care of relatives while she left for the United States. Her mother had financed Marta's job training in Guatemala. Marta had completed high school and continued to take courses at a trade-school. Her salary was not sufficient to provide for her expenses. However, she liked Guatemala because she felt socially integrated. She resisted leaving Guatemala for social reasons because while her mother had worked in the United States, she had established close personal ties in Guatemala. When Marta was in her early twenties, her mother sent for her daughter to reunite with the rest of the family in the United States. She came for "personal progress" because, even as an educated woman, she could not find work in Guatemala that would cover her living expenses. Marta left Guatemala to help supporting the family in Los Angeles. In Guatemala she had an idealized image of the United States.

After she arrived in Los Angeles, she suffered from the loss of her social network, and from working in blue collar, underpaid jobs. She dreamed of continuing her education and finding work in an office.Even if Marta spoke about coming to the United States for

"personal progress", she found out when she arrived in the United States that instead of enhancing her occupational opportunities, she could only find blue collar work. She was left with contributing to her family's survival. She despised the Los Angeles life style and had problems adjusting to it.

Being Sent Away to Escape Violence

Like in Marta's case, Rosa's mother made the decision that her daughter leave for the United States. It is an example of how crisis situations like the civil war forced women to take unusual steps. Eva's story in chapter 5 illustrated how the civil war forced her to immigrate without any family support. The civil war uprooted the life of Mayan communities. Rural Guatemalan Mayas were caught in the middle of the conflict of the guerrillas and the military (Stoll 1993). The violence created a climate of distrust and terror among the civilian population where nobody was safe from persecution. Mayan women had to make unusual decisions like sending their single, young daughters without a chaperon to the United States. The civil war had a different impact on individual Mayan women's lives. In Rosa's case, she was still left with a family support system. Her mother had the traditional responsibilities for her daughter and arranged for her escape to the United States. Political violence is the reason that Rosa, who was an illiterate, rural woman who spoke only her Mayan language, needed to leave alone to the United States.

Rosa's Story: "Because of the guerrillas"

Case Vignette

Rosa was a rural Mayan woman from a small hamlet in the Guatemalan Western Highlands. When she arrived in Los Angeles, she only spoke her native language. She started to learn Spanish in Los Angeles. She had arrived in Los Angeles without any friends or family connections, only with a *coyote* who had brought her across the border.

At the time of the interview, Rosa was twenty-five years old. I met her in her apartment with her five children (3 boys and 2 girls). Rosa worked as a sewing machine operator in the Los Angeles garment industry. However, she quit this work because of her responsibilities for her five children. She stayed home all day and played with the children.

Her following story explains why a young, monolingual Mayan woman had to come to the United States under such unusual circumstances.

Rosa was born into a family of landless Mayan peasants. Her family had to work as migrant workers on the coastal plantations because they did not own land. The entire family worked as seasonal migrant workers on coffee plantations. Rosa even went with her father as a young girl to Tabasco, Mexico to work. Even if her family worked hard, they did not have enough to eat because they did not own land. Rosa identified owning land as the crucial factor of survival in the Mayan highlands.

> O yes, some people have land there. They do well, very well. They have food and money, they do well but without land you can't manage.

Rosa's father was a landless peasant who had to support his family by working as a farm worker in Guatemala's coastal plantations and in Mexico. Rosa joined her family early on to work on the plantation picking coffee. She never went to school and was illiterate. This was a major concern to her because she felt life would be easier for her if she could read and write. Rosa's father died when she was young so she stayed with her mother.

Rosa's story illustrated how the Mayan population in the Guatemalan Western Highlands was caught in the cross fire between the Guatemalan army and the guerrillas during the civil war of the nineteen-eighties. Her description of the civil war illustrated that she neither agreed with the military, nor with the guerrilla forces. Both groups brought death to the area. She identified the guerrillas as the immediate threat that forced her mother to send her teenage daughter to the United States. I want to use Rosa's own words to tell her powerful story and then use the analysis to give an interpretation of her story. Rosa's immigration story started when the guerrilla forces took her mother. Rosa stated that she and her mother opposed the guerrillas. Her mother was able to escape from the guerrillas. She borrowed money from other evangelicals to send her daughter alone on the trip to the United States to save her life. It remained unclear why the guerrillas tried to kill Rosa and her mother because they had conveyed important information to the wrong people. Rosa did not specify what her mother told to whom.

There, they [the guerrillas] don't want you to speak to anybody. They don't want you to speak to anybody, with another woman or other *hermanos*. I didn't want the guerrillas, the guerrillas. I didn't want them and neither did my Mom. [. . .] I did not want to talk a lot about this but my Mom she loves to talk. Yes, she wants to chat, she wants to chat. My Mom she has many friends. She has a lot of friends over there and I did not like them either. The guerrillas took my mother and two girls with them. [. . .] The guerrillas sent two guys. [. . .] And they took my Mom. They took her to the mountains and she did not come back for almost one day and one night. [. . .] I did not open the door. I was waiting [for her], I was waiting for my Mom. I was crying together with my brothers. I had many small siblings. There, we were crying and my Mom was not coming back. [. . .] I thought that she was dead and that the guerrillas had killed her. My Mom returned in the evening. She had very dirty clothes. Her clothes were very dirty and she carried a pistol and a machete. She said, that there were many guerrillas there. My Mom told me that they were going to come that night to take us. I left that same day and came here [to Los Angeles]. [. . .] I came here because of that problem.

Rosa's mother sent her daughter with some money to the district's capital to find a *coyote* to leave for the United States. The following story in Rosa's own words describes how vulnerable a young Mayan woman becomes in such a situation and how different people try to take advantage of her vulnerability.

Yes, my Mom told me, "Leave, leave.". [. . .] From there [my home] I went to Huehuetenango with nothing else but my clothes. There, I found a man who was a *coyote*.

He asked me, "Where are you going?

"I am going *al norte* [to the United States, literally: to the North]."

"*Al norte*"?, I said, "Would you do me a favor and take me there? I have money."

"Sure", he said, but he was not reliable.

He also said, "Let's get married, let's get married."

I did not want to leave with him. I stayed another week in Huehuetenango and I did want to leave, not with that man. I did not want to get married to him. I wanted to leave [the country]. I had many problems there [in Guatemala]. [. . .] I only wanted him to do

me the favor and take me [to the United States]. But he did not want to take me, if I did not get married to him. I stayed in town. Then, I met a *hermano* [literally: brother, evangelical] of the church and he introduced me to someone who was going leave to Los Angeles. I asked him when I would leave to Los Angeles.

He answered, "Tomorrow".

"This is great. Could you do me the favor and take me there? I have money to pay for the trip".

"Alright", said my *hermano*. "Alright. Let's go there together."

Instead of taking her to the United States, the *hermano* took her to the guerrillas and her money was taken away from her. She was forced to join the guerrillas.

This happened to me and they took me. They took me for one month to those subversives. I was there for one month, but I thought, I thought what they were doing is not right. Yes, I spent a month with the guerrillas.

G.K.: And why did you stay with them?

They took my money. They told me, to go with them and they wouldn't kill me. [. . .] They told me, "Here is food, here is work. Work here [with the guerrillas] in the mountains. If you won't come, we will kill you and we will kill your Mom." I went with them and they took me there [with the guerrillas]. There were many women. Many wear those green clothes[2]. They have food, but it is dirty food. It is not good food. [. . .] It is not worth collaborating with them. O no, it is not worth it and I did not want to do the work they do. [. . .] I was walking with them all day and all night, walking, walking. I did not sleep. There were no blankets and there was no electricity. The guerrillas found some soldiers. [. . .] The guerrillas killed two soldiers. I did not have any weapon. I was there and watched everything. I stayed there and I cried. I could not do anything. I did not have money.

Rosa escaped from the guerrillas forces and managed to find her way to the border between Mexico and Guatemala. She found a *coyote* to bring her to the United States but she had lost all her money. Rosa had a brother in the United States. The *coyote* called her brother. Initially, the brother was hesitant to pay for Rosa's trip but ultimately agreed to pay for her.

"Alright", said the woman, "give me your brothers telephone number and let's see what he says." I don't know what the woman told my brother. My brother agreed to send the money. That's how I got here, but I still did not have any money for food or clothes when I got here.

Although Rosa identified the guerrillas as her immediate reason for her escape from Guatemala, her following narrative demonstrates that the situation during the civil war was more intricate. Rosa described the Mayan population as being caught in a conflict between the army and the guerrillas where the Mayan peasant population was caught in the middle. The guerrillas tried to recruit Mayan peasants into their ranks but were so poorly equipped that they could not defeat the Guatemalan army. The army regarded Mayan civilians as potential guerrillas and persecuted civilians even on very vague grounds as guerilla supporters. There was a time when even accusations would lead to assassination by the military. Rosa narrated how the army also threatened their lives. Sometimes her narrative was unclear in the distinction between army and guerrillas. Initially, I thought that was because of her limited Spanish skills. However, it might also reflect that she did not distinguish between the two forces and regarded both as unwanted military units that both brought trouble and destruction to the area.

My father died of a disease and one of my brothers died because of those guerrillas.

G.K.: He was in the guerrillas?

No. He did not want to join. He did not want to go with the guerrillas. That's why he died. There are people who are liars and they talk to the soldiers. They say this one is a guerrilla and that one is a guerilla but they are not guerrillas. Many people died there because of the soldiers.

G.K.: Because of the soldiers?

Many people say things like that. But he was, he was not in a guerilla. He was not a guerilla. But he because of the lies . . . because of the soldiers . . . The soldiers killed many people. Many people died because of the soldiers bullets. [. . .] The *alcalde* (mayor) of [my village] died and the Catholic church was burned. They burned the Catholic church. Many people died and many children died. They were killed *por la guerilla (because of the guerrillas).* [. . .] There is a field, a large field. [. . .] The soldiers and also the guerrillas were there. I was there. The guerrillas were screaming. Those guerrillas did not have weapons like the soldiers. [. . .] The guerrillas almost never have . . . have good weapons. [. . .] I could not leave the house. We locked the house. All the people locked themselves into their houses. [. . .] They did not leave their houses. They said, if you leave your house, you gonna die. The children could not leave the house. [. . .] The civil patrols [. . .] told them that they could not go outside. Today the soldiers would come and the guerrillas. [. . .] They [the soldiers] had a paper, a large paper, a notebook and there they had names, the names of guerrillas. The guerrillas change their names[3]. It wasn't their real names. [. . .] When the soldiers arrived they asked, "Where is this guerrilla?" They had my mother's name on the list.[. . .]

G.K.: The soldiers had your mother's name?

On this list, there was my Mom's name and mine too. [. . .] [A soldier] looked for people who had their names on that list. [. . .] I did not know where my mother was.[. . .] When the soldiers arrived, they carried all the animals away and took my sister too.

G.K.: Did the guerrillas or the soldiers look for your mother?

[. . .] I think, those guerrillas had lost the paper and the military. The soldiers found that paper. [. . .] On the list there were a lot of names. They looked for those names. Many people had their names on it and the soldiers looked for them, "Where is this woman? Where do we find her?" I answered, "I don't know her." They asked for a woman with a twelve year old daughter and they killed the daughter.

G.K.: The soldiers?

[. . .] Yes, I saw it. There were the soldiers but I did not leave the house. The other house was very close. I saw it. My mother had a bakery. That day she had a lot of bread. [. . .] My Mom earned a little bit of money with [selling] that bread. The soldiers ate all the bread [. . .] They ate the bread and they wanted to drink coffee. "We want coffee", said the soldiers. They ate everything and my Mom did everything they said. Some who had their names there [on the list] they died, they died. This lieutenant, this lieutenant ordered it. [. . .] The military arrived by helicopter because you can't pass with a car because of the rocks. [. . .] The guerrillas blocked the road with rocks. We were scared, we were very scared of not having food. [. . .] The soldiers did not want many tortillas. There, are some people who have a lot of tortillas over there. The soldiers said, "Don't give the guerrillas tortillas!" [. . .] We did not have problems because of those guerrillas. Only the soldiers said, "This one is a guerrilla. This one killed somebody. This one killed a soldier."

Rosa concluded the interview by stating that the violence in Guatemala has decreased, but that the conflict still continues. However, one main problem that has not changed is the distribution of land. For a Mayan peasant, the basis of wealth is land. Many Guatemalan peasants who do not own enough land have difficulty obtaining the bare necessities to survive.

There is nothing. If you have land, if you have corn, if you have beans, wheat and potatoes [it would be alright]. There is not enough land. It is beautiful there but there is no food. Yes, there are no jobs. It is a very poor country. Many people there don't have any food but here [in Los Angeles] they do not have food either. [. . .] There are people who don't have a place to stay.

Analysis

Rosa's immigration to the United States can only be understood in the context of an immediate emergency situation created by the civil war. She seemed inadequately prepared for a migrant.

Rosa's mother was the authority figure who organized the money for her daughter's trip. The violence created by the civil war forced Rosa's mother to send her monolingual daughter to the United States. Rosa had to take the unusual step to migrate without any support from her family or her community. Rosa's mother sent her daughter to the United States to save Rosa's life. Her mother used the network of their evangelical church to raise money for immigration. Although the initial decision was made by her mother, and Rosa's own strength helps her to get to the United States. During her trip to the United States, others tried to take advantage of her vulnerability: A coyote who wanted to marry her and guerrillas who forced her to join their forces. In the end, Rosa was able to find a *coyote* who would bring her to the United States. She used her brother in the United States to finance her trip.

Rosa's need to escape from her home village was created by the conflict of the guerrillas and the Guatemalan army. She described Mayan civilians as caught in the middle of the conflict. The guerrillas were not powerful enough to defeat the army. The civilian population had to pay the price for the conflict. The army in its paranoia persecuted everybody who they thought supported the guerrillas.

CONCLUSION

Some Guatemalan women migrated as dependents to the United States. Their dependent migration demonstrates how Guatemalan women are influenced by the power dynamics in their families and their communities in Guatemala. It has been demonstrated that mothers can control their young, single daughters immigration process and that husbands have power to control their wives immigration, especially if their they are young. These young women were not passive by nature, but they did not have an option to escape the social control of their families and their communities.

Only in the emergency situations, like escaping from the violence of the civil war, were young single women sent away from their mothers. They left traditional gender role expectations and made the trip without anybody accompanying them.

Usually, young women did not have enough power to assert their decisions even when they wanted to come to the United States because they feared the price they had to pay: losing their social networks in Guatemala or carrying the double load of household chores and wage labor. The cases of young women who did not want to come to the United States demonstrated that immigration is not necessarily a liberation or improvement of their situations.

Guatemalan women in Los Angeles who migrated as dependents did not match the stereotypes of passive wives and daughters. All women had clear reasons why their came to the United States, even if those reasons were associated with their spouses' and families' situations. Women's reasons were mostly not associated with personal improvement, but with improving the situation of their children and their families. Contrary to the assumption of traditional migration research, most women participated in the United States in wage labor and contributed to their families income.

NOTES

1. She probably describes how the Guatemalan army forced all adult Guatemalan men to join the civil patrols during the early eighties in response to the guerrilla activities (Stoll 1993:99).
2. She refers to the guerrilla uniform.
3. Probably refers to *nome du guerre*. Guatemalans who joined the guerrillas took on pseudonyms.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

FINDINGS

Feminist immigration research and theory proved that women have their own reasons for participating in transnational migration. As immigration research on women advances, it has become clear that there are a variety of reasons why women migrate. The case stories of Guatemalan women show a heterogenous picture of who made the decision to migrate. Some Guatemalan women made their own decision to immigrate to the United States; some women made a cooperative decision with their spouse; and other women did not have any motivation for coming to the United States, but their families or spouses forced them. That many Guatemalan women interviewed made their own decision to come to the United States, supports the findings of other feminist immigration researchers that women are active participants in transnational migration. Although, some Guatemalan women followed family members and did not have the option of remaining in Guatemala. Those women did not have the power to enforce their own interests. Even though these women did not come to the United States by their own initiative, they did not match the perception of passive followers of male or other familial authority figures. These Guatemalan women had clear reasons why their spouses or family members had to leave Guatemala and why they did not have any choice about staying behind in Guatemala.

The Guatemalan women's case stories show how a multiplicity of reasons caused them to come to the United States. Feminist immigration theory has focused primarily on women's economic reasons to participate in migratory processes. This was a

counterreaction to traditional immigration research that denied that women had their own economic reasons for participating in migration. Confinement to the lowest paid jobs in Guatemala is a powerful economic motivation for women leaving Guatemala to come to the United States. However, a purely economic framework as provided by most migration theories is not sufficient for explaining why Guatemalan women leave. Socioeconomic factors are intrinsically linked with familial and political reasons and are represented differently in each woman's life.

According to traditional gender relations, Guatemalan women should not have the opportunity to make their own decisions to come to the United States. Although most Guatemalan women interviewed had a subordinate status towards men and young women towards their mothers, there are varying degrees of female subordination (cf. Ehlers 1991). The gender roles of Guatemalan women do not remain static but change over a woman's lifetime.

Some Guatemalan women's immigration processes matched, more closely, a framework of traditional gender role expectations where spouses and relatives made the decision to immigrate to the United States. Still, even women who did not make their own decision to immigrate had clear perceptions of why they came to the United States, even if those were associated with spouses or parents. Contrary to traditional perceptions of immigration research, they contributed to the wage income of their families and were not just responsible for domestic chores. Women who came as dependents were well integrated into their community and their family networks. Young women especially, did not have the power yet to resist a spouse's or parents' wish to leave for the United States. For those women immigration was not a desirable state because they lost their social network in Guatemala and were responsible for the double burden of domestic chores and wage labor in the United States.

Women's conformity with traditional gender role expectations is limited by the socioeconomic and political realities in Guatemala. Economic crisis, women's limitations to cash income, fragility of marital relationships, and destruction of social support systems through political violence forced women to be active in the decision to leave Guatemala in order to support their families. The survival of their children was, for wives, a reason to immigrate to the United States independently, even against societal norms.

The interviews with Guatemalan women in Los Angeles validate that the findings of migration research on female migration in Africa and of the African diaspora. Cases in the Caribbean can be extended to the Guatemalan case. Marital instability and disruption facilitate Guatemalan women's independent decision to migrate. Marital disruption in Guatemala has socioeconomic and political causes. Women become de facto heads of households because of separation and abandonment by spouses. Other women lost their spouses in the civil war and had to support their families on their own. Immigration to the United States provides economic independence for women to support their children in Guatemala. For all female heads of households, de jure and de facto, many traditional gender role expectations are not applicable. De Facto female heads of households are the only one's who can take the responsibility to immigrate and do not need to negotiate their decision with a male authority figure.

In cases of de jure female heads of households, women had already experienced a role reversal because they were the main providers of their families. For de facto heads of households, most men were too incapacitated to be successful migrants and would not be reliable in terms of finding work abroad or sending money home for their families in Guatemala. Although women reported that they entered their marriages with traditional gender role expectations, the realities of their marriage did not match those expectations. They had to fulfill male and female responsibilities. Were responsible for domestic chores and were economic providers at the same time. Therefore, women took over the responsibility for immigration from men, against societal norms, in order to secure the survival of their families.

Women's independent immigration does not mean that they are not limited in terms of gender roles. Women's marriage avoidance and social pressure on women to conform with the expectation to get married revealed that Guatemalan women are under high pressure to comply with traditional expectations. However, there were varying degrees of subordination. Some husbands were willing to comply with their wives' wish to immigrate to the United States while another was indirectly manipulated to reach the wife's goals.

The independent immigration of young unmarried Mayan women to the United States is an example of the impact of political violence on Guatemala's social fabric. Rural Mayan women, who were disconnected from their social network through politically caused destruction or the decimation of their family by the Guatemalan

military, needed to take unusual steps. In the absence of a family network, rural Mayan women made their own decision to immigrate or had to come to the United States without a chaperon in order to escape death.

The political violence in Guatemala contributed to women's desire to leave Guatemala. It proved that rural Mayan women were more affected by the impact of the civil war. The civil war detached women from their normal social support network and, in the face of emergency, forced them to take unusual action like immigrating independently to the United States. Even in the face of political violence, women sometimes could not leave the area of civil war when the financial situation did not give them the opportunity to settle somewhere else.

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research provides an initial understanding of the Guatemalan community in Los Angeles. It is the first study that attempts to provide an understanding of the immigration processes of Guatemalan women to Los Angeles.

Further research should concentrate specifically on the effort to separate interviewees according marital status and interview the same number of single women, single female heads of households and women who reside with their husbands in the United States in order to validify my qualitative results with quantifiable data. However, as I pointed out in the methodology section, research with undocumented refugee women in an urban setting like Los Angeles presents an unusual challenge to the researcher. This study represents, to a larger extent, the immigration stories of women who are an active part of the public sphere and are more economically active. It provides a better understanding of women who participated actively in the immigration process such as single heads of household and urban Ladinas (non-Mayan women). The research demonstrates the drastically different situations of rural Guatemalan Mayan women and urban Guatemalan non-Mayan women. Therefore, future research should be directed towards the understanding of rural Mayan women. This requires a long-term involvement with this community in Los Angeles. Research with Mayan women provides an unusual challenge to the researcher because of their limited participation in public life and language barriers. Even limited knowledge of the main languages of the Mayan groups represented in Los Angeles, such as Quiché and K'anjobal, would

facilitate a better understanding of the immigration processes of Mayan women to Los Angeles. Mayan women in Los Angeles only speak broken Spanish and no English. A separate study of the Mayan community would provide an understanding of the increasingly diverse immigration from Latin America.

One of the major contributions of the study is to demonstrate how spousal relationships in combination with women's limited access to sufficient income caused Guatemalan women's independent immigration to the United States. This study presents an exclusively female perspective on the problem. In recent years, feminist research has contributed to a better understanding of women's situation. This research made me curious about the male point of view and investigating the male perspective on what Guatemalan women told me, especially spousal relationships. Such a study would provide a better understanding of why men failing being economic providers; and what gives other men the opportunity to interact with their wives in a cooperative fashion.

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