

## Introduction

### *How Violence Varies: Subnational Place, Identity, and Embeddedness*

Tina Hilgers and Laura Macdonald<sup>1</sup>

Late one night in Quito, Ecuador, two women were held in the office of a jail. One, a pregnant local woman with dark hair and skin, had been found in possession of a drawer full of watches. She covered her face as a police officer repeatedly pepper sprayed and berated her, demanding to know how she came by the watches. He complained that he could not throw her in a cell and be done with her because of her condition. The other woman, a white foreigner, had been arrested outside a nightclub for not carrying valid personal identification. An officer tried to intimidate her, threatening to put her “in the back” with other detainees – “they’ll kill you back there.” She did not take him very seriously and was released when an Ecuadorian friend turned up with cash to pay off the officers.<sup>2</sup>

This anecdote highlights not only that the police in the Americas (as in many other parts of the world) often behave unethically, but also that (in)security means different things for different people. The officers, although acting outside the regulatory framework of the law, were part of a system of police, political, and judicial collusion that provides corrupt and abusive individuals active and passive protection – the latter through a socio-political history of power over the masses. Democracy has not been able to shift this system of power (see Eaton and Prieto; Müller;

<sup>1</sup> A previous version of this chapter was presented at the *Violence in Latin America: New Actors, New Issues?* workshop of the Réseau d’études latino-américaines de Montréal working group on Citizenship, Mobilization, and Inclusion, Concordia University, Montréal, Nov. 13, 2015. We thank Lee Seymour and other participants for valuable comments. We also thank Robert Gay and Desmond Arias for helpful comments on previous versions.

<sup>2</sup> Hilgers, personal experience, spring 1997.

Durazo Herrmann; and Gay, all this volume; and Brinks 2007). The foreigner had the financial resources to buy her way out of the situation, and recourse to support from institutions and individuals in her immediate environment, including her embassy, multinational employer, and resourceful local friends. The officers knew this. The local woman, however, had no such resources. Her race, clothing, and gender, and likely the location of her arrest, gave her away as someone who could easily be abused. We can imagine that this was not the first time she suffered because her legal rights meant little in practice – without money or influential individuals to protect her, she was powerless. Identity and place matter to the structure and experience of violence.

Insecurity is a daily reality in Latin America and the Caribbean and has risen to the forefront of civil society concerns and political agendas over the past several years. In aggregate figures for the region and individually in twelve of the eighteen countries studied by Latinobarómetro (2013), crime and insecurity now precede unemployment and the economy as citizens' principal concerns. Based on the readily comparable national-level homicide statistics often used to evaluate violence (see Daudelin, this volume), their concerns are legitimate. The region accounts for only eight percent of the world's population, but generates 42 percent of all gun-related homicides (OAS 2008). Of the estimated 437,000 global homicides in 2012, the highest percentage (36 percent) occurred in Latin America and this was an increase of 8.5 percent over the 2010 rate. Central America has the highest regional average rate in the world (along with Southern Africa) at twenty-five homicides per 100,000 population, while South America's twenty-three per 100,000 put it in third place, and the Caribbean's sixteen per 100,000 is also significantly above the global average of 6.2 per 100,000 (UNODC 2013). Individually, El Salvador has the world's highest homicide rate at 103 per 100,000, with Venezuela (90), Honduras (57), and Jamaica (45) also scoring extremely high (InSight Crime 2016). Time series data since 1955 indicate that the Americas have always had homicide rates between five and eight times higher than Europe and Asia, the areas with the lowest averages (UNODC 2013). In addition, more than half of the countries in the world ranked "high" or "very high" for femicides (the killing of women because they are women) are located in the Americas. Here, too, El Salvador ranks as the worst in the world (UN Women 2015).

While homicide (and femicide) rates are one reason for security concerns, they do not explain the intensity of citizen fear. The region's countries have largely emerged from the era of civil war, genocide, and

dictatorship as formally peaceful democracies. But citizen perceptions of security have not improved. In fact, things may be worse. During times of war and state-led terror, there was some feeling that one could escape the violence by avoiding particular geographic zones or keeping political affinities quiet. Now, crime and assault appear ubiquitous and there is no reliable way of knowing where threats originate or when one might be struck: “ ‘[P]eace’ can be ‘worse than the war’ ” (Moodie 2010: 2).

Homicide statistics reveal little about victims, perpetrators, and the nature of violence. It is in disaggregating the figures for gender, age, race, and class at the local level, and in going beyond homicides to non-lethal experiences of aggression, that we come to grasp the scope and internal differentiation of violence. For example, young, black males are at much higher risk of dying a violent death than their white counterparts (Amparo Alves 2014; Willadino and Barbosa 2013); women are less likely to be killed than men (Daudelin, this volume), but – unlike men – will often be killed merely for the reason of gender (Prieto-Carrón, Thomson, and Macdonald 2007); women suffer high rates of physical and/or sexual violence (UN Women 2012; Bott, Guedes, Goodwin, and Mendoza 2012); and aggression among youth has exploded (Imbusch, Misse, and Carrión 2011; Auyero and Berti 2015). Femicides are particularly prevalent in certain zones of Central America and Mexico, youth violence is highest in drug trafficking areas, and race-related aggressions are widespread in the poorest areas. The criminalization of (often overlapping) poverty and race means that people living in poor urban neighborhoods are frequently under threat of police aggression (Müller 2012) and the remoteness of many rural areas, with their traditional social hierarchies, results in violence against local peasants and workers (Kay 2001). It is also difficult to generalize what will happen in what kind of setting, because the differences appear not only between races, genders, income levels, and geographic locations, but also *among* experiences of violence (Daudelin, this volume; Bott, Guedes, Goodwin, and Mendoza 2012). We have to focus on subnational spaces and actors to understand who are the victims of violence.

The need to dig into the data is also driven by the characteristics of the perpetrators of violence. In the 1970s, bureaucratic-authoritarian states monopolized violence to a much greater degree than contemporary democracies. Violence often had an intensely local character – particularly related to land ownership, natural resource bases, and market structures (see Roniger 1990) – but under bureaucratic authoritarian regimes with highly centralized state forms, hierarchies of power to inflict violence

were relatively easy to identify. Through the process of democratization, power has devolved and, with it, violence (Eaton 2006; Eaton and Prieto in this volume). Today, state agents, parastatal organizations, political parties, organized criminals, petty gangs, private enterprises, landowners, civil society groups, and individual citizens recur to violence to impose themselves on others or make themselves heard, with a view to generating a societal order in which they can strive for their particular personal, economic, and political goals (Arias and Goldstein 2010). Courts suffer from insufficient resources, investigative police are poorly trained, the police are militarized, and violence against the poor masses is culturally acceptable. Impunity reigns for white-collar or violent crimes perpetrated by elites and state officials, while the masses know that justice is beyond their reach (NACLA 1996; Ungar 2013; Müller this volume). Who engages in violence and gets away with it depends on subnational power structures and the connections among individuals with different types of resources; that is, on how people are embedded in their contexts, how they network, and how they exchange goods, services, and loyalty through patronage and clientelism.

We argue that contemporary violence is a moving target, characterized by configurations of historical legacies, economic structures, institutions, and actors that are embedded in subnational space and identity. The chapters in this volume examine cases from across the region, analyzing how identifiable political actors and institutions link down into people's lives. This meso level focus allows us to connect structural and physical violence, and to relate types of violence often studied in different disciplinary literatures, including criminal, electoral, gender- and race-based violence. In polities that have grown out of centuries of violence and exclusion, identity-based divisions prevail, millions lack social and economic opportunities, and neoliberal democratization has led to institutional changes that have decentralized power and violence to regional and local levels. Organized and petty criminals, savage elites, and frustrated have-nots take what they can, using personal networks and clientelism linked into local, as well as national and transnational, sources of power to circumvent formal rules and regulations or to bend these to their will, while layers of rational-legal state actors, truncated by limited resources, do not have the capacity to monopolize or organize violence. How the map unfolds varies from one place to the next.

The collection is designed to shed light on the nature and causes of violence in the Americas. This introductory chapter begins with an overview of the debates surrounding violence as a concept, before considering its

changing forms, the embeddedness of its perpetrators, the importance of subnational space and identity to its understanding, and the methodological difficulties of collecting the data on which the chapters are built.

#### TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Violence is a debated notion, with scholars and practitioners applying a variety of definitions ranging in scope. In a chapter dissecting the concept, de Haan (2008) identifies twenty different forms, which he then further classifies based on internal distinctions. Thus, criminologists and legal scholars may define violence as illegal acts of force, while anthropologists might include social and cultural configurations in which the marginalization of certain groups or persons routinely exposes them to physical and psychological harm.

For statistical purposes, violence is often classified as homicide or other acts of force with discernible perpetrators and victims. Homicide rates are useful because they allow researchers to generate comparable indexes across locations and societies and because they are more easily recognizable and quantifiable than other indicators (UNODC 2013). Public health perspectives cast a wider net with their inclusion of “injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” resulting from applied or threatened force (World Health Organization (WHO) cited in Dahlberg and Krug 2002). This understanding of violence comprises self-directed, interpersonal, and collective behavior, with the latter perpetrated by groups or states for social (terrorism, hate crimes, mobs), political (war and state violence), and economic (for profit) reasons (Dahlberg and Krug 2002). The WHO’s attempt to deal with damage caused by behavior considered acceptable in some cultures, such as corporal punishment of family members, by focusing on outcome rather than process also has the benefit, like homicide rates, of facilitating cross-regional comparison.

Some sociologists and anthropologists take the meaning of violence beyond cases where perpetrators are readily identifiable, to include social structures that indirectly harm their victims. Galtung (1969) identifies violence as a situation keeping someone from reaching her full potential, thereby including any context in which the possibility of improving her physical, mental, and emotional condition exists, but the knowledge, freedom of action, goods, and/or services necessary to do so are kept beyond her reach. We may not be able to easily indicate who is doing the harming and who is harmed, but can say that power structures exist to create

winners and losers. Farmer summarizes this structural violence as “violence exerted systematically – that is, indirectly – by everyone who belongs to a certain social order ... the social machinery of oppression ... structures that are both ‘sinful’ and ostensibly ‘nobody’s fault’ ” (2004: 307).

In a similar vein, some feminists use the term femicide to draw attention to the intersection of different forms of violence against women. Femicide and femicide are often used interchangeably to refer to the killing of women because of their gender, but many Latin American feminists prefer the term *feminicidio* because it conveys the idea that the source of the violence is rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities, and also interacts with racism and local and global forms of economic injustice (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010: 4–5). The term femicide implicates both the state (directly or indirectly) and individual perpetrators, thus encompassing both widespread systematic and everyday interpersonal forms of violence (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010: 5).

Crossing the disciplines of anthropology and political science, Arias and Goldstein (2010) build on ideas of violence as a structure to identify Latin American democracies as inherently violent. Their concept of “violent pluralism” is also intended to further an understanding of the social order as violent per se, where physical violence between individuals is but a symptom of a broader reality. Constitutionally protected citizens vote in regular elections and are represented by politicians of all ideological stripes and personal backgrounds, but the regimes deviate from Northwestern normative ideas of democracy in that they are constructed on violence. States rely on violence against their citizens to maintain stability, non-state groups use it to contest power, and citizens employ it to force state responsiveness. The legal (Weberian) and illegal uses are linked inextricably; differently from one place to another, but always such that they construct “particular forms of order” (Arias and Goldstein 2010: 26).

None of these definitions are without analytical and methodological problems. Encompassing ideas are appealing because they attempt to capture the effects otherwise hidden in social configurations. At the same time, umbrella terms such as structural violence or femicide can be counterproductive, when the causes and consequences of the various acts and situations, as well as the agency of perpetrators and victims, should be disaggregated (Wacquant 2004). For those interested in broad comparisons and quantitative models, structural violence is also difficult to operationalize: how might one identify, let alone measure, something like the effects of exclusion embedded in cultural norms? Violence then falls into the category of stretched concepts, along with democracy, clientelism,

corruption, and others (see de Haan 2008; Collier and Levitsky 1997; Hilgers 2011). Minimalist definitions, on the other hand, can also hide as much as they reveal. As Daudelin (this volume) argues, the national level homicide rates often used as proxies for violence gloss over significant subnational spatial and demographic variations, such as the coexistence of violent and secure locations and the differences in numbers of male and female victims, in addition to the problem that the rates of homicides and of other acts of violence may vary unrelated to each other. And, the minimalist perspective does not obviate data problems, as even homicide statistics can be inadequate or challenging to collect. They often have to be based on combinations of records kept by police, the public health system, and nongovernmental organizations, in order to arrive at reasonably reliable totals, not to mention statistics disaggregated by gender and age (UNODC 2013; Dahlberg and Krug 2002; Prieto-Carrón, Thomson, and Macdonald 2007).

For the purposes of our argument in this chapter, we adopt a broad definition of violence, including both its structural and its epiphenomenal aspects. We do not aim to undertake wide-ranging comparisons, but to understand the processes leading to, and the qualities identifying the character of, locally differentiated realities of violence. Our position is that the intersections between individual and group identities, social and political configurations of power, political institutions, economic characteristics, and history at the local, regional, and national, levels are constitutive of the different degrees and characteristics of violence from one place to another.

Aggregate statistics are interesting for overviews of basic global trends, but hide variations among domestic regions and municipalities and changes in their rates (see Daudelin in this volume). For example, Brazil's homicide rate has hovered around 26 per 100,000 inhabitants since the late 1990s, but the 2013 state-level figures range from 11.6 in the southern state of Santa Catarina to 65.3 for the northeastern state of Alagoas (Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública 2014). In the 2005 to 2012 period, the national rate increased by eight percent, but Rio de Janeiro state's decreased by 40.3 percent and São Paulo state's by 36.6 percent, while Paraíba's increased by 186 percent (Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública 2013). In 2009, the average homicide rate in the city of Rio de Janeiro was 52 per 100,000, but actually much lower – 34 per 100,000 – in its infamously violent favelas. Among favelas, rates ranged from 22 to 44, and in their immediate peripheries from 48 to 129 per 100,000 (Barcellos and Zaluar 2014). As we begin to break the statistics

down, we uncover important questions about perpetrators, victims, and the processes leading to violence. Aggregates cannot help us to identify the groups and individuals involved or the socio-political structures and hierarchies that are integral to the quality and quantity of violence on the ground.

Although Wacquant (2004) considers Farmer's (2004) desire to express the oppression of marginalized peoples in terms of an all-encompassing form of violence as problematic for the same reasons we evoke for steering away from national statistics, the concept of structural violence *can* combine well with the disaggregation of data. It gives us the tools to imagine that the violence faced by so many people in the region is embedded in structures, institutions, cultures, and identities and to seek out the characteristics of the actors involved in order to understand how their links with the context place them in positions of active or passive aggressor and victim. The result of this effort is a volume that brings together contributions analyzing violence at the intersection of different spaces and identities – for example, Müller's chapter deals with direct human rights abuses committed by the police, while Lapegna's analyzes a more indirect form of violence in the effects of agribusiness pesticide use on the health of peasants – and is able to draw out the commonalities among them.

#### CHANGING FORMS OF VIOLENCE

The Americas are marked by a history of political and economic violence, as colonial powers, world markets, and their own elites exploited local populations. Spanish and Portuguese colonization of Latin America claimed millions of Indigenous lives in the sixteenth century and the nation-building policies of the newly independent nineteenth-century republics came close to exterminating many native groups (Gabbert 2012; Trinchero 2006). Colonial and post-independence economies in Latin America and the Caribbean depended heavily on slave labor and debt peonage (Gabbert 2012; Alston, Mattiace, and Nonnenmacher 2009). These racialized systems of oppression created unequal and exploitative agrarian economic systems (Kay 2001). Industrialization led to a demographic shift, as rural folk migrated to the cities, but the pattern of property-related marginalization continued with municipal governments seeking to remove the poor to inadequately serviced city outskirts with uncertain property rights (Davis 2014). Struggles for rural land access and urban housing, services, and jobs morphed into broader political

*How Violence Varies*

9

conflicts and then civil wars and/or military dictatorships in which hundreds of thousands perished (Kay 2001; Figueroa 2013; McSherry 2007; Ortiz de Zarate 2003). In the context of war and civil unrest, women faced particular forms of aggression. Rape was used as a weapon by opposing forces in El Salvador, Peru, and Haiti (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010: 2), and Guatemalan soldiers sexually enslaved Indigenous women during the counterinsurgency war in the 1980s (Ruiz-Navarro 2016). Patterns of violence did vary internally, depending on the type of interaction between colonizing forces and natives, the pervasiveness of the slave trade, the strength of local democratic regimes, and insertion into global trade routes and markets (see, for example, Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Van Cott 2000; Stinchcombe 1995). Since the third wave transitions to democracy and the peace processes, however, a greater variety of sub-national actors are taking on the role of perpetrators.

Colonization, the slave trade, and independence were as violent in the Caribbean as in Latin America. After the decimation of native populations, first African slaves and then Asian indentured laborers were used to work plantations under brutal conditions (Klein and Vinson 2007; Northrup 1995). Post-emancipation, white or mulatto elites retained positions of power and privilege, as race and status mobility remained closely intertwined – with the exception of Haiti, where exploitation has not been race-based. Since the slave revolution (1791–1804), Haiti’s black political elite has been unable to create an “integral state” – one in which society recognizes its leaders’ hegemony – and has ruled with predatory force (Fatton 2006). Local autocrats have also ruled in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, but, beyond these cases of nineteenth-century independence, colonial regimes survived well into the second half of the twentieth century, with several islands remaining as French, British, or American territories or protectorates even today (Imbusch, Misse, and Carrión 2011). Subnational actors have played a critical role in post-independence violence in the second half of the twentieth century. Political parties are key among these, especially in Jamaica, where competing parties’ attempts to create fiefdoms populated by loyal voters developed into deadly conflicts (Sives 2002; Levy 2013; Campbell and Clarke in this volume). Gangs and drug traffickers now challenge the hegemony of political parties, ruling their territories according to their own laws, while parties in power counter gang violence with *mano dura* policing that overwhelmingly targets poor and black sectors of the population (Levy 2013; Campbell and Clarke in this volume).

As the contributions to this volume make clear, there is no easy distinction between violence under authoritarian and democratic regimes, as authoritarian practices – especially within the police – have carried into the contemporary era. The region’s authoritarian regimes were inherently violent, repressing, killing, or disappearing members of opposition movements and civilians suspected of subversive impulses, and riding roughshod over civilian rights. Under formally democratic governments, state and non-state armed actors coerce and repress civilians in their territories, with the former justifying their actions with the need to ensure public security and the latter contesting that power (see Bonner 2014). What is the difference? Authoritarian governments ruled through violent coercion, while democratic ones try to create institutions that will allow for rule without violent coercion, but – mired in social, political, and economic problems – they often recur to it to maintain order (see the chapters by Müller, Gay, Durazo Herrmann, and Eaton and Prieto in this volume).

The new forms of violence in the democratic era are the result of a number of cultural, economic, and political forces. As much as insecurity tops political agendas and private concerns, the centuries-long prevalence of state violence along with state corruption related to human rights and security issues has created a culture of acceptance. State and civil society actors believe that violence is an integral part of the regional environment. This fatalism undermines the possibilities for change and enables new forms of violence (Arias and Goldstein 2010). Structural factors reinforce cultural ones. High rates of inequality, lacking opportunities for socioeconomic advancement among lower class youth, and low pay for law enforcement officials mean that drug gangs, paramilitary groups, and other criminal organizations with resources are able to attract youth and subvert the forces of order (Crisis Group 2012; Perlman 2010; Shefner 2008). Unforeseen side effects of democratization and electoral concerns have created an institutional environment that allows criminal elements to flourish. The increased local autonomy that followed transitions to democracy was intended to limit conflict and enhance representation and service delivery. Decentralization has had beneficial results in certain areas, but in others enabled criminal and paramilitary forces to capture local resources and power and use them to entrench and expand their activities (Gay 2012; Eaton 2006; Eaton and Prieto this volume). Containing violence has also been difficult because cohesive, effective programs are lacking. Policy directions change often and institution building tends to be piecemeal, so that the state – at all levels – cannot build

*How Violence Varies*

11

capacities to control violence (Imbusch, Misse, and Carrión 2011; Crisis Group 2012; World Bank 2011; UNODC 2007).

The factors enabling the activities of organized crime, petty crime, paramilitaries, and other groups and individuals directly inflicting violence on their surroundings are intermeshed with those that have built the structures in which particular groups and individuals are highly vulnerable, and routinely exposed, to these and other forms of violence. Centuries of neglect and exploitation based on race, ethnicity, social status, and gender have been exacerbated by neoliberal policies that limit welfare programs and flexibilize labor to create a diverse underclass of people who are normatively, institutionally, and economically marginalized. Thus, descendants of black Africans imported as slave labor during the colonial and independence eras continue to form a disproportionately large percentage of the poor and very poor, of prison populations, and of those targeted by the police (Amparo Alves 2014). Indigenous groups are caught in paternalistic relationships with the state and manipulated by business interests seeking to exploit their land and resources (Finley-Brook and Thomas 2014). Gendered crimes are viewed as unimportant and often go unreported by victims who find little help among law enforcement or medical professionals in cultures that revere images of male machismo and female virginal purity (Prieto-Carrón, Thomson, and Macdonald 2007), while homosexuality remains entirely taboo and potentially dangerous in many circles.

Poverty cuts across the cleavages of race, ethnicity, and gender. Among the upper classes and state officials, many mistrust the poor, viewing them as irrational and unpredictable; as a force of latent danger to order and stability that must be contained. As much as the rights of the poor are increasingly protected through the law and they are the target of any number of participatory decision-making projects and anti-poverty strategies, they are simultaneously excluded from society through the practical criminalization of their status. Formal rights are met with the dual pressure of exclusion from the neoliberal economy and the neoliberal state's desire to control nonconforming societal sectors. With few employment opportunities, the poor are forced into the informal economy, while the state deems their lives and activities unsightly and seeks both to police them and to remove their homes and work from urban cores to peripheries (Müller 2016). In any interaction between police and persons who appear – through physical characteristics, language and demeanor, location of encounter, or clothing – to be members of groups or classes deemed less worthy, the balance of power remains

with the police and results in brutality and impunity (Brinks 2007). The system of generalized exclusion also renders the poor, and other subaltern groups and identities, particularly vulnerable to the criminal and quasi-state actors responsible for much of the direct contemporary violence.

Beyond the domestic forces at work, transnational flows also enable the operations of contemporary violent actors. The transnational dimension exists along three axes: crime in the form of drugs, weapons, and gangs; business; and migration. As is frequently emphasized by Latin American and Caribbean leaders, the demand for drugs was, until recently (Gootenberg and Campos 2015), primarily based in the Global North, and the failure of tough on crime policies to limit that demand has resulted in escalating levels of violence in parts of the Global South. The transnational flow of drugs and weapons infuses existing conflicts, old alliances break apart, and shifting trade routes open new geographic zones of activity. Colombian guerrillas have come to rely on the drug trade for financing (Eaton 2006), Brazilian gang conflicts have turned into outright warfare since their activities expanded into drugs and are supported by weapons acquisitions (Gay 2012), Jamaican garrisons are marked by trafficking (Levy 2013; Campbell and Clarke, this volume; Sives 2002), and parts of Mexico have turned into war zones as the federal government sent in the army, resulting in the fragmentation of existing gangs (Morris 2013). The Mara Salvatrucha gang, which has its roots in poor neighborhoods of Los Angeles, operates across Central America, Mexico, and the United States, and is involved in human trafficking and drugs, among a wide range of criminal activities (Perez 2013; Nagle 2008). Migrants attempting to reach the United States or Canada are often caught up in the violence and forced into drug trafficking or sex work, injured, or killed (Jacome 2010; Slack and Whiteford 2011).

Traditional rural conflicts over land have also been affected by transnational processes. Despite land reform in many of the region's countries, land concentration and exploitation of rural workers continue to be problematic (Lapegna 2016; Kay 2001; Hammond 2009; Slave Nation 2005). Commercial farmers are increasingly driven to produce monocultures for export according to methods promoted by international giants such as Monsanto and Cargill. The new impetus toward land concentration is accompanied by the noxious effects of agrochemicals on rural populations (Lapegna, this volume). Land grabbing is also a feature of extractive industries, where increased demand and commodity prices in international markets motivate mining companies to expand the number and

*How Violence Varies*

13

scope of their projects, resulting in the escalation of conflicts with local, particularly Indigenous, populations (Bebbington and Bury 2013). Since the state appears incapable of curbing illegal activities in either rural or urban settings, property owners and professionals in fear of the damage caused by gangs, criminals, squatters, and people claiming their legitimate rights hire private protection or organize paramilitary forces. The latter also operate on the margins of legality, often using excessive force, and contribute to the cycle of violence (Grajales 2011; Civico 2012; Gay this volume).

But, the socially, politically, and economically marginalized are not just victims of brutality. They are also perpetrators. In an ethnographic study of a violent neighborhood in Buenos Aires, Auyero and Berti (2015) argue that the existence of people living in dangerous places becomes infused with violence. They are vulnerable because of larger, structural factors, but also because of their immediate surroundings, in which they could be robbed, assaulted, or killed at any time, and where they constantly fear for loved ones who are, or could become, involved with gangs or addicted to drugs. In their generalized state of powerlessness, they resort to brutality. Partner and parental violence, robberies and shootings – these are ways of solving problems and exerting some form of control over what are experienced as otherwise uncontrollable situations.

To be sure, there are peaceful zones in Latin America and the Caribbean. In terms of homicide statistics, Argentina, Chile, Suriname, and Cuba are categorized together with the United States, some Eastern European countries, India, and a handful of others, as low range countries by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2013). The Chilean government has created some effective anti-crime policies, notably through locally oriented community policing programs (Dammert and Malone 2003).<sup>3</sup> Although police killings of civilians occur, as well as routine forms of repression, especially of protesters and of the Mapuche (Bonner 2014), Chile is the region's most secure country, and surveys show much higher rates of trust in the police, which are regarded as honest and well-trained, than in other countries (Dammert and Malone 2003). At the subnational level, there are also communities that have been able to minimize crime. Initiatives involving citizens, state officials, and civil society organizations, in and outside the community in question, seem to be particularly effective (Arias 2004; Arias and Ungar 2006).

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that citizens in Chile, and other relatively secure countries and areas, do not necessarily *feel* safer than their counterparts elsewhere (Dammert and Malone 2003).

However, the reverse phenomenon also exists – there are violent enclaves in the peaceful countries (see Auyero and Berti 2015). Overall, and despite peaceful areas, violence and insecurity are widespread and an issue of primary concern to citizens and policy-makers.

Included in many accounts of how violence plays out, are discussions of the social, economic, and political networks of its perpetrators; of how violence is embedded in networks. It is the connectivity of perpetrators to political and economic power and/or to marginalized communities that allows them to act relatively unhindered. How these people are connected is very much a place-based phenomenon.

#### EMBEDDEDNESS

Society is built on networks through which individuals establish and maintain contact with others and generate trust, so that behavior and its consequences are ‘embedded’ in the relationships that characterize their context. Networks are personalistic (i.e. not formally defined) connections that may span in any direction, including parties of relatively equal status or crossing power hierarchies. Clientelistic links within networks are exchanges of resources for political support involving parties of unequal status (see Hilgers 2011). The webs of linkages among actors who know each other closely or loosely, or barely at all but are connected through common contacts, are scaffoldings of trust that give societal enterprises their characteristics and allow them to function. In some instances, that which the networks are intended to accomplish becomes institutionalized. Trust then flows through the law and the formal structures of the state, obviating the need for personal connections to ensure the functioning of those undertakings. In others, the state and its formal rules are incapable of outperforming interpersonal ties, which remain central to societal organization (see Tilly 2005; Migdal 1988; and Granovetter 1973). Where this is the case, the state and informal networks do not just exist in parallel. They weave together. Agents of the state simultaneously occupy official positions, acting according to the rules and requirements of their professions, and are part of the informal networks that rival their formal positions. Personalistic webs permeate Weberian rational legalism, with actors loyal to both, in a neopatrimonial system (see Erdmann and Engel 2007). What is constructed under the scaffolding of neopatrimonial ties may have positive or negative effects for the participants and society at large, but – either way – it depends on the connections among the constructing stakeholders. We focus on the negative potential of networks,

without losing sight of their meaning beyond the illegal and violent acts that are enabled by them.

Granovetter (1985) argues that market exchanges function because economic behavior and institutions are embedded in social relations. Markets and firms are not Hobbesian jungles filled with cutthroats acting only to maximize their gains because personal connections oblige actors to take account of each other's needs, lest they be spurned at the country club or ridiculed in coworker gossip. People who know each other, have dealt with each other before, and will likely work together again in the future, build networks of trust that constrain opportunism because such behavior would endanger the long-term relationship. Granovetter's overarching concern is why firms and markets are not chaotic, but he does point to the malefic potential of trust relationships, which can be exploited to bamboozle auditors or cover the tracks of embezzlers. Whether order or disorder ensues depends on the "details of social structure" (493).

In his analysis of drug trafficking and democracy in Brazil, Arias (2006) tells us that violence is predicated on the networks criminals build with state and civil society actors, merging illegal and legal activities so that criminals are not only protected by their access to official power and their rootedness in local communities, but that the legal elements to which they are attached may largely obscure the illegal operations. At the same time, reciprocal links with civil society mean that civilians keep quiet about illegal activities and that, based on the resources criminals provide in return, they can be mobilized against the state's seemingly arbitrary incursions into poor neighborhoods. The result is perverse forms of state power and social capital that "can have the effect of radically altering governance and warping democratic systems" (52).

We focus on the negative potential of networks, but go beyond Arias' understanding of them as links that propagate violence because we see them as ambiguous. Networks are a pervasive phenomenon of regional social, economic, and political structures. Networks create security in unregulated informal markets (Portes and Haller 2005); allow for savings and loan opportunities in poor communities (Hellman 1994); provide access to the state for poor individuals and groups (Auyero 1999a); generate reliable voter pools for political parties (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007); and produce trust for business deals (Teichman 2001), political recruitment (Camp 1980), and policy-making (Acosta 2006).

Structural and new forms of violence are embedded in these networks. Structural violence is part and parcel of their existence, because they are simultaneously in- and exclusive. Those enjoying social status are

inherently part of circles of privilege that tap into all domains of power, while those in the lower classes may gain clientelistic privileges through connections with powerful patrons or their brokers, but only if they provide some form of political or status support in return, conforming to expectations of ‘good’ behavior. The dynamics of the clientelistic relationships are contextually dependent. In authoritarian environments, patrons use the coercive power of the state to elicit the desired response from clients, while the expansion of democratic institutions restrains the use of force and patrons instead use threats of resource withdrawal to motivate client response (Fox 1994). The rise of armed, non-state actors as patrons has added another dimension, reinserting coercion into the relationship, but in a form autonomous from the state (see Gay, this volume; and Arias 2006).

The new sources of direct violence that we study are also tightly bound up with the state, formal political structures, and the networks that pervade them. To be sure, the armed gangs of Arias’ study that connect with webs of legitimate power are behind a great deal of the region’s violence. But legitimate power is, itself, often a source of violence other than that of the Weberian monopolistic sense. The congressional representative whose *fazenda* is worked by slaves and protected by a militia (Slave Nation 2005), or the governor who condones police brutality because it is not politically expedient to risk a police revolt (Müller, this volume), have a more equivocal status than drug traffickers. Their activities produce direct violence through security measures and labor conditions, and indirect violence through the system of racism, poverty, and inequality fortified by their decisions and lifestyles. Yet, they operate from within legitimate political organs and many of their activities are inspired by the legal purposes of those organs. Large parts of these networks, and the nodes in them, thus exist beyond the strategic objective of hiding criminal activity. This ambiguity suggests that these are neopatrimonial settings, where rational-legal systems and personalism overlap and intertwine.

The importance of embeddedness is apparent at all analytical levels. In a region where a small minority still holds much of the land, big landholders and transnational extractive companies in rural areas, particularly those far removed from major political centers, act with relative impunity vis-à-vis peasants, the landless, and native communities. Crimes include murder by gunmen in the employ of landowners and businesses, threats, beatings, and rape. Landowners and business managers are part of the political and economic elite – they are politicians, judges, and/or investors,

or have patronage and friendship ties to networks of such people. Their links to local and national governments and their economic heft – including ties to supranational economic entities and flows – mean that their human rights transgressions often go unpunished (MST 2012; Lapegna 2016; Carroll 2011; Kay 2001; Bebbington and Bury 2013). The chapter by Lapegna in this volume shows that the violence experienced by the rural poor also has more insidious aspects. Argentine peasants suffer economically from agribusiness land concentration and physically from herbicide use, and, if they mobilize to contest the situation, they risk their lives. But they are also caught in the politics involving global agribusiness, federal governments working to strengthen democratic institutions without damaging nationally important economic interests, and provincial governments trying to stay in power. Because of shifting alliances and networks among these actors, protection of peasant rights and responsiveness to their demands are conjunctural. And when peasants are continually told that mobilization puts them at fault for violence and that they are not educated enough to understand the effects of the chemicals, they come to believe this discourse.

Local violence can be affected as much by the absence of national power as it is by its presence. As the state has withdrawn from local politics for reasons including democratic decentralization, neoliberal reforms, and conflicts with guerrillas and paramilitary forces, the drug trade has expanded. In some instances, the traffickers become intermediaries between their communities and external politicians and are used by the latter to court the vote (Arias 2006). The line between drug dons and politicians may become fuzzy, as traffickers sometimes run for political office (Sives 2002) and politicians collaborate with criminal groups (Eaton and Prieto in this volume). Insurgent groups with particular ideological and political goals also sometimes use the drug trade to finance themselves and to force state retreat from their territories (Eaton 2006). Non-state armed actors are often embedded in their communities through clientelism, so that important sectors of the citizenry consider them to be doing some important work, despite the violence they generate. For example, in Sinaloa, Mexico, 43 percent of citizens think the gangs create progress in their communities, 46 percent think they generate employment, and 29 percent think they fund more public works than the government (Parametría 2011).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> At the national level, the responses to the same questions are 33%, 41%, and 34%, respectively (Parametría 2011).

Often, state presence and absence are intertwined in armed forms of clientelism. With democratization, the heavy-handed state repression of the general population receded, but economic problems intensified with neoliberal policies. Uneven institutional reform, alongside economic need, allowed pre-existing armed actors to expand their clientelistic roles and new ones to enter the market (Arias 2006; Leeds 1996). Gay's chapter in this volume traces the evolution of Rio de Janeiro's drug gangs from the Brazilian military regime's prisons to the favelas, where a democratization period respite from police repression allowed them to expand the drug and weapons trade and then use their arms and resources to establish themselves as local power-brokers able to deny entry to all but colluding politicians. In Kingston, Jamaica (Campbell and Clarke, this volume), competing political parties directly created inner-city garrison communities. The parties built social housing complexes in poor, black neighborhoods, filled them with their supporters, and made armed youths responsible for guaranteeing unanimous voting for the patron party, in return for public jobs, resources, and judicial protection. The result was spiraling violence and communities blocked to state intervention.

Police agents are also part of exchange networks, within the state and with criminal organizations, as a result of which they engage in corruption and violence and/or mask such activities. Members of the police forces are often linked with criminal groups, such as drug traffickers, and help them to achieve their goals – through direct involvement or collusion – leaving citizens with little recourse when they are the victims of violence and other crimes (Gay 2012; Arias 2006). The police are also frequently violently abusive of poor communities stigmatized as fomenting criminality and enjoy impunity because of their links to other power holders – including elected politicians and members of the judiciary. The latter either turn a blind eye as long as they feel that the police adequately protect their own families and property, or feel relatively powerless in the face of the enormous undertaking of police reform (Müller 2016; Cruz 2009; Levy 2009).

Gay's chapter also adds to this side of the story: violent police retaliation, with impunity, in the favelas; the “taking back” of the favelas with permanently established police units that come to arrangements with the gangs; and the development of militias – private security units that take ownership of favelas and whose leaders (police officers, firefighters, military personnel, etc.) are networked into the state. The role of non-state security units is particularly striking in Colombia, where paramilitary factions have outright taken power of local government in several departments and used their position to control the vote and

negotiate with national level legislators (Eaton and Prieto this volume). In his discussion of Mexico City policing, Müller (this volume) argues that the police force's role of ensuring public security gives it leverage over attempts at reform. The city's first democratic government realized that the public chaos likely to result from a police force refusing to work because of forced reform would be a political death-knell. Closing its eyes to cronyism and protectionism within the police allowed the latter to expand informal repression and clientelism vis-à-vis the public in the neoliberal era.

Petty criminals rarely enjoy direct links to powerful agents of the state, but are embedded in their own communities. They share the gains of their activities with their families and, though they may be violent vis-à-vis each other, they also attempt to ensure security for non-gang members of their neighborhoods. Their neighbors are unlikely to cooperate with agents of the state attempting to control the criminals (Rodgers 1999), particularly since police violence and corruption give community members good reason to mistrust representatives of the law more than the delinquents they know (Müller 2012; Cruz 2009).

Small-time criminals can, however, develop into national – and even transnational – threats. In El Salvador (Rivard Piché, this volume), local criminals and small gangs existed during the civil war of the 1980s, but organized and gained in strength after the war ended. Demobilized fighters, marginalized poor communities, a weak public security system, and U.S. attempts to control gang violence on its territory through deportation, combined to create a situation of unemployment, alienation, and lawlessness, in which experienced gang members found willing recruits. They built two broad networks of opposing gangs – the MS-13 and Barrio 18 – that imposed a non-state, armed public order on their territories, which competes with state order. This has now turned San Salvador into the most violent city in the world (see Muggah 2016).

Because many of the perpetrators of the new Latin American and Caribbean violence are sub-state actors, embedded in their communities, in regional contexts, national power networks, and transnational economic and criminal dynamics, it is important to disaggregate data to try to understand the dynamics of violence.

#### SCALING DOWN, UP, AND ACROSS SPACES AND IDENTITIES

Many political scientists and sociologists approach their research through national comparisons, seeking solutions to policy or institutional conundrums in one country by looking to another, or shedding light on practical

problems by holding them up against normative solutions arising from processes experienced elsewhere. Thus, Dahl's (1971) distillation of practicable democracy to eight principles based on Northwestern experiences led to countless evaluations of Latin American and Caribbean politics and society enlightened by these works (such as the transitology literature, including O'Donnell and Schmitter 1996). Yet, national-level factors such as regime characteristics help little in explaining violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, which should, according to normative notions, be decreasing as democracy expands. Brazil, for example, is a democracy with relatively well-protected civil and political rights and liberties (Freedom House 2014), but it remains among the world's most violent countries.

Arias and Goldstein (2010) have argued that one way to explain the apparent dichotomy between democracy and violence in the region is the fact that its democracies are inherently violent, built on the state's use of force to maintain stability and on civil society's use of force to make itself heard. In theorizing inductively, the violent democracies perspective goes a long way toward explaining the coexistence of pluralism and violence in the region, but we would like to take this idea further because, as indicated by the homicides presented for the Brazilian example (above), the way in which pluralism and violence coexist is uneven.

Scholars have approached unevenness from different perspectives. Many comparative political scientists are scaling down from the national level in order to better control their variables and code their cases. They saw that neoliberal reforms and democratization decentralized economic and political power to subnational regions and municipalities, increasing the likelihood that markets and governance at the national and subnational levels, and among subnational locations, differ significantly (see Macdonald and Luccisano 2012). These researchers have sought to identify local units of analysis with similar or different characteristics to compare and draw generalizable conclusions, often using quantitative methods or formal models to nest local findings in broader comparisons (Snyder 2001; APSA CD 2012). Firmly inscribed in the comparative politics trend to analyze institutions that began in the 1980s, these scholars are generally concerned with the evolution, change, and interaction of the ideas and organizations that characterize societies and structure choices and decisions (Hall and Taylor 1996; Schmitter 2009).

One of the most important research areas of this new scaling down is subnational authoritarianism. Scholars of democratization processes have

*How Violence Varies*

21

theorized that enclaves of authoritarian rule continue to exist at local and regional levels long after civil and political rights and freedoms were entrenched in law and, at least minimally, in practices at the national level. They have found that subnational politicians and administrators use the formal institutions of democracy – elections, devolved financing, legislative representation of regional interests at the national level, and so on – to fortify their power, and that of the local elites they protect, against opposition forces. National political leaders turn a blind eye if they depend on the legislative support of the subnational authoritarians (Gibson 2005; Durazo Herrmann 2010, also the chapters by Eaton and Prieto, Durazo Herrmann, Fournier, and Lapegna in this volume).

This type of work often encounters two problems. One is the difficulty of identifying the borders of a local unit of analysis: where, for example, does a city or a region begin and end and what actors are to be considered as internal or external players (Moncada and Snyder 2012)? The other, related, issue is the Weberian assumption of power and violence located in the state. In Latin America's and the Caribbean's violent democracies, state power is actively and violently contested by non-state and para-statal actors who demand citizen loyalty (see Gay, Campbell and Clarke, and Rivard Piché in this volume). These groups are as much an aspect of subnational politics and governance as the actors formally linked to parties, the state, and state institutions (see Migdal 1988).

Anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists whose research is driven by the desire to understand processes affecting, and developing from, lived realities have long considered alternate constructions of local power. Their richly detailed analyses have allowed us to picture the lives of their subjects, while showing us how these lives link into more abstract social and cultural processes, sometimes all the way up to the global level (e.g. Portes 1972; Portes and Haller 2005; Auyero 1999a; 1999b, 2000; Auyero and Berti 2015; Gay 1999; Freeman 2000; Shefner and Fernandez-Kelly 2006). But, even those who study the local level tend to relate violence to general factors such as inequality and poverty, which cannot always explain what is happening. In the Brazilian case, for example, poverty and inequality have been decreasing, but violence has not. We have to look at particular local configurations and how these are inscribed into regional, national, and transnational dynamics.

Arguing both for the existence of local uniqueness and against the instinct to delimit places for study by drawing physical borders or searching for coherent communities, Doreen Massey has written of a “global

sense of place” (1994: 156).<sup>5</sup> As technology has increased the speed at which capital, goods, services, and people move around the world and implant themselves in different locations, space is compressed and the meaning of place changes. Massey reasons that the identification of geographic locations with coherent communities has probably never been accurate because individuals (women and men, for example) are located in, and experience, their contexts differently. The conflation becomes increasingly problematic as the interconnections of the world’s places and people grow. She argues for weaving together the global and the local by imagining place as uniquely “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself” (1994: 154). We, thus, have to scale not only down, but also back up, and across at all levels.

Policing is a specific policy area that demonstrates the importance of multi-scalar analysis (and response). Violence and crime in the Americas are affected by transnational flows of arms, drugs, and migrants, and by national and subnational histories, political institutions, economic structures, and cultures. They also play out at all three of these levels. But, much of what directly affects citizens occurs at the neighborhood level, structuring people’s daily lives. Central American and Caribbean gangs, for example, have transnational organizational links and illegal business dealings reaching into the United States and Canada and they establish non-state forms of social control on local turf (see Rivard Piché, and Campbell and Clarke, both in this volume). The scale of some of these problems is vast and demands national and international policing collaboration and financing, but it is also local, requiring decentralized responses. As Durazo Herrmann and Müller (both in this volume, see also Ungar 2013) show, centralization and decentralization of control over policing have different advantages. Centralized control arguably restrains police corruption and clientelism, as officials enforcing regulations are physically and institutionally removed from mutually imbricated local political, law enforcement, and criminal networks and their links to transnational crime. It also has the potential to contain the political and repressive powers of subnational authoritarian enclaves, and to optimize the use of funding and expertise. On the other hand, decentralization may improve accountability and monitoring when citizens are able to participate in creating

<sup>5</sup> We thank Jill Wigle for pointing us to Massey.

policing strategies, as citizens are closer to the institutions regulating policing and decision-making bodies have better knowledge of local situations and needs. Since police (and other forms of) violence are high on the political agenda and there is still little knowledge of what kinds of policies are successful, directions change often. Latin America is not only “a cemetery of success stories” (Carrión, cited in Sabet 2012: 64), but also the site of policy chaos based on which it is difficult to generalize. Community policing is a case in point.

Decentralized community policing became a popular alternative as criticisms of centralized, *mano dura* policing increased. In programs rolled out across the Americas, individual officers and teams are made responsible for preventive work in particular neighborhoods, collaborating with residents to increase security, trust, and accountability. However, community policing is more a philosophy than a uniformly applicable model, so that there is no single standard (Brogden and Nijhar 2013). It also becomes nationally and locally differentiated based on particular problem combinations, including legislative amendments, (insufficient) funding packages, varying support with electoral turnover, the structural complexity of each country’s police forces, resistance within the police, and entrenched public mistrust of police (Ungar and Arias 2012, see also Bonner 2014; Sabet 2012). Some small, geographically targeted programs do seem to make a difference, but usually do not last long enough to become well established, studied, and known (Ungar and Arias 2012). Studying policing in violent, high crime societies should be an exercise in tracing multi-scalar networks.

Adding to this complexity is the question of identity. Following Massey, we argue that the subnational is not only to be defined in terms of the physical boundaries that make up cities and regions or the political delimitations that describe which areas fall under whose jurisdiction. These elements of space are important, to be sure, and form an integral focus of our analysis. However, identity is equally important in shaping the reality of the subnational.

To go back to the Brazilian example of variations in violence, homicide and general experiences of violence differ not only across subnational locations, but also based on identity. Blacks suffer disproportionately from unemployment, low wages, incarceration, and police repression, and death rates are significantly higher for them than for whites. Members of the black population concentrated in poor neighborhoods remark that the state is more interested in ensuring security, especially for white business owners, in their communities than in providing much needed services

such as health care and public transportation. In the city of São Paulo, data from the first decade of the 2000s show that blacks are 70 percent more likely to die violently than whites, and in 2010, blacks constituted 31 percent of the state's inhabitants but 51 percent of its prison population. Those who are killed are overwhelmingly men in their teens and early twenties: in 2011, 20 percent of homicide victims were young, black males killed by the police. Black women are less likely to be murdered or imprisoned than their male counterparts, but suffer differently – they have the highest unemployment rates (25%), and lowest wages (30% of those made by white males) (Amparo Alves 2014; see also Costa Vargas and Amparo Alves 2010; Willadino and Barbosa 2013). Although the national government touts equality in all its forms and has, in fact, put in place a number of policies to ensure equity, policy plays out differently in practice in any number of subnational locations (Chamley 2011).

Feminist scholars have argued for some time that power is organized around intersections of identity. Acker (1999: 51) writes, “a woman who is Black (White), Spanish (English) speaking, and a doctor (waitress) does not experience herself in disjointed segments of gender, race, ethnicity, and class; rather, all these elements are produced and reproduced within the same everyday experiencing of her life” (see also Gabriel 2001). Young, black, Brazilian men do not experience democracy in the same way as black/white/yellow/pardo/Indigenous women or as non-black men.<sup>6</sup> Feminist scholars have highlighted the importance of understanding the specificity of violence against women as a manifestation of structural processes of subordination that are officially or unofficially sanctioned at the local, national, and transnational levels (Stephen 2016: 161). Widespread beliefs about the inferiority of women (commonly referred to as *machismo* in Latin America) are linked to a culture of violence and discrimination that contribute to episodes of violence against women. It is important to recognize that this violence is not limited to the private sphere, but is perpetuated by state actors who are complicit in violence against women because of their failure to take victims' charges seriously and to hold the perpetrators of violence accountable (UN Women 2015: 4, 14).

Depending on the other aspects of their identities – poverty, migrant status, type of employment (especially sex work) – women often feel that

<sup>6</sup> Black, white, yellow (Asian), pardo (mixed), and Indigenous are the color/race categories used by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics).

they have no recourse at all. State complicity and gender biases among police and judicial officials mean women are unlikely to report rapes and other forms of gender-based violence, contributing to the difficulty of relying upon official statistics to understand the extent of the problem. Globally, men (especially young men) are more likely to be victims of homicides, while women are more likely to suffer violence at the hands of an intimate partner. Violence is an everyday reality for many women of the region. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) up to 40 percent of women in the region have been victims of violence at some point during their lives. Experiences range from occasional acts of sexual aggression to long-term, chronic situations of intimate partner abuse, but all women suffer from constant fear of sexual abuse, whether at the hands of a partner or by stranger in the street (ECLAC 2009). According to UN Women, a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds in São Paulo, Brazil's largest city (cited in *The Economist* 2013). Femicide has become rampant in Central America and Mexico since the early 1990s and estimates are that over 1000 women annually are victims in Central America alone (Prieto-Carrón, Thomson, and Macdonald 2007).

Many perpetrators of femicide are active in criminal gangs and, while their other activities are the source of much state attention, officials tend to ignore gender-based violence. Often, the victims are blamed for putting themselves in harm's way through their actions, or elements of their being, such as working, migrating, and 'provoking' men (Prieto-Carrón, Thomson, and Macdonald 2007). In the emblematic case of the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, the state government of Chihuahua was deeply implicated in the suspected cover-ups and impunity that accompanied the outbreak of violence against women. As this and other cases show, the perpetrators of the violence may be linked to powerful allies, within the state, in criminal cartels, or both. Mexican feminist activists targeted both the state and federal governments to respond to the violence, and over time both levels of government enacted legal and institutional reforms to respond to the murders, but, as with other cases of violence in Mexico, prosecution of cases remained limited and impunity continued to prevail, particularly at the state level (Staudt and Mendez 2015).

In short, intersections of individual characteristics are meaningful for embeddedness. We can visualize neopatrimonial connections as untidily constructed webs that map the links among actors, groups, and institutions, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. Nodes and lines in the

webs represent individuals and the connections among them. Nodes have social (job, group membership) and identity-based (race, gender, ethnicity) characteristics. Any individual node may be characterized by employment in the formal or informal economy, in the private or public sector, in legal or illegal enterprises; being a sender or recipient of remittances; membership of non-governmental organizations, governmental associations, and political parties; candidacy for, or election to, political office. Through direct or indirect contact with other nodes, they are connected to the groups, organizations, and institutions to which the others belong, in various locations and at different levels of analysis. The lines between nodes carry values. Some are formal, institutional ties, some purely personal connections, and others combine the two. But the character of the connections is also affected by identity-based information. Parts of this information are inherent and (not) self-identified, other parts are socially constructed and (not) accepted by the individual, but sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, skin color, ethnicity, income, employment status and location, and property status, are tags that give meaning to the relationships between nodes.

## METHODS

Our aim has been to include studies of cities and subnational regions from across Latin America and the Caribbean, to analyze them from the perspective of multiple disciplines, and to collect data using a qualitative, fieldwork-based, approach.

While it is not possible to include all relevant cases in a single volume, we have chosen cases to represent different geographic regions, government structures, economies, and levels of violence. In this, our purpose is to draw out the common story told by the similar and different cases, and to emphasize its methodological conclusion: that subnational context is crucial to understanding violence. To summarize some of the case characteristics, we have included the Southern Cone (Brazil and Argentina), the Andean region (Colombia), Mesoamerica (El Salvador and Mexico), and the Caribbean (Jamaica). There are federations (Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico), and unitary states (Colombia, El Salvador, and Jamaica). Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia are the region's biggest economies, while El Salvador and Jamaica are among the smallest. El Salvador and Jamaica are, overall, among the most violent countries of the region, while Argentina is one of the least violent. Colombia's internal conflict dates to the 1960s, making it the longest in the hemisphere, while Mexico's

war on drugs is recent, dating to 2006. The subnational areas of analysis vary as much as the countries in which they are contained, ranging from agricultural towns and suburbs (in Argentina), to major cities and their neighborhoods (Brazil), capital cities and their neighborhoods (Mexico City, Kingston, San Salvador), all the way to the provincial level (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia).

The areas of analysis include two categories: cities and regions. Cities are spaces in which a number of the factors characterizing contemporary violence – poverty, inequality, alienation, modernity, social control – come together. Here, these factors can be studied at close range, lending themselves to the ethnographic and space-based research more often done by sociologists and geographers than political scientists. The regional studies exist at a higher level of analysis, dealing with the impact of institutions on patterns of violence and violent actors' relative freedom of action, toward both the lower, local, level and the higher, national, one. This is more typically the domain of the political scientist. The two types of studies provide different perspectives on linking structural and physical violence and allow us to connect broad networks of power with local realities.

As a conversation among political scientists, sociologists, and geographers, the book is also intended to advocate for a rapprochement of the disciplines, which have much to gain from each other's insights. Political science tends to study society from its governing structures downward, and sociology and geography tend to do the reverse, starting with society and moving up, but, together, they give a more comprehensive picture (Arias and Goldstein 2010). Political scientists bring institutional insights to the analysis. Violence is structured by the configuration of national, regional, and local state institutions, the links among them, and the nature of their interactions with citizens. Geographers and sociologists add their understanding of lived realities because violence is also structured by the characteristics of the actors involved. Race, gender, age, living situation, and location play roles in how violent one's life is likely to be and what kind of protection and justice one may expect from the state's institutions. Our cross-disciplinary perspective highlights the importance of a methodology that scales across spaces and identities.

Data collection is an additional problem in the study of violence. As discussed above, data on violence are not readily available, driving many to use homicide rates as a proxy – at their peril. Daudelin's chapter in this volume demonstrates how statistical analyses of homicide rates run into trouble by drawing misleading conclusions based on problematic assumptions and incomplete data, including the use of national level, aggregate

statistics in single years or over short intervals. Echoing Daudelin, Gaëlle Rivard Piché<sup>7</sup> explains that she focuses more on trends in the numbers than on the numbers themselves because even “official” data are often “cooked” (see also UNODC 2013). During recent fieldwork in Haiti, for example, officials were unable to tell her how the UNODC came up with its homicide rates, which apparently did not originate from MINUSTAH. Daudelin’s critique also points to the importance of qualitative analyses of the lived experience of violence. In this sense, his chapter provides the entry point for the subnational case study and comparative work in the other chapters, which use homicide statistics as indicators, but dig into more comprehensive data collected through fieldwork.

Fieldwork on sensitive topics in precarious situations does present its own complications. Robert Gay says, “unfortunately, getting access to data on the lived experiences of violence is simply not a matter of showing up and showing a questionnaire or microphone in people’s faces. It takes networking, patience, courage and a certain amount of stupidity, which we all could talk about.” Markus Michael Müller adds that doing this sort of research is a “methodological challenge because there is no canon on how to go about it.”

The primary problems include getting access – first to the right people and then to their information – and maintaining safety. Access can be difficult in any work involving ethnographic interviews and participant observation, but even for short interviews with set questionnaires (see O’Reilly 2012). According to the formal ethics requirements imposed by universities, researchers are obligated to immediately disclose their topic and goals, and subjects have to provide consent, ideally with a signature. If researchers were to follow this protocol to the letter, they would likely find few subjects, and even fewer in contexts of violence and insecurity. When the topic involves actions or experiences of violence and networks of power, subjects may be loath to meet with the researcher not only because they do not want to reveal sensitive information, but also because they, legitimately, fear repercussions – if not on their lives, then certainly on their reputations. Researchers thus have to juggle formal requirements, common sense field ethics, and subject safety, as well as their own security, as they gather material (Hellman 2015; Rojido and Cano 2016).

<sup>7</sup> This section draws on personal conversations between Hilgers and the contributors to this volume: with Rivard Piché, Müller, Daudelin, and Gay in New York, May 2016, at the annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association; and with Durazo Herrmann, Eaton, Prieto, Clarke, Lapegna, and Gay per email in July and August 2016.

*How Violence Varies*

29

In the early 1960s, Colin Clarke's ability to dig deeply into Jamaica's poorest areas and the revolutionary political opposition was gained through contacts willing to vouch for his trustworthiness (see Clarke 2016). Müller began his fieldwork on policing in Mexico City by trying to access his subjects directly – going to the neighborhoods of Tepito and Iztapalapa to talk to residents and ask for interviews with law enforcement officers – but found that nobody was willing to engage with him. He then chose an indirect route and gained access through colleagues who had contacts, as well as through making conversation in the street with police in his own neighborhood, and snowballing. Pablo Lapegna “gained entrance” to one group by doing activist sociology, but thereby complicated his access to others. Peasant militants contacted his organization of activists, leading Lapegna and two colleagues to travel to the peasants' hometown to make, and then screen, a documentary with their help. This gained him a positive reputation among the peasants, but simultaneously made it difficult to approach politicians and agribusiness personnel.

Even if subjects agree to a meeting, they may not reveal much; building trust to create a willingness to disclose meaningful information is key. In Robert Gay's case, thirty years of doing research in Rio's favelas have turned his subjects into a second family.<sup>8</sup> Some have told him things about their experiences with drug dealing and criminal gangs that they have never shared with anyone else (see Gay 2015), cautioning him that certain subjects were strictly off the record, lest the leaked information get them killed. Such fear can remain among a population long after the immediate threat is eliminated. It took some time for Juan Diego Prieto to convince residents of Valledupar – the birthplace of the infamous Colombian paramilitary leader Jorge 40 – to talk to him, although Jorge 40 was imprisoned and extradited to the United States, and his forces demobilized, years earlier.

Researcher safety is also an issue (see Rodgers forthcoming). Guidelines for staying clear of danger do exist (see Sluka 1995), but not all problems can be foreseen or controlled. When Rivard Piché felt threatened in El Salvador, it was in unexpected circumstances and not by members of the gangs she was researching. At an Organization of American States event with the Mara Salvatrucha about the gang truce, the national police decided to crack down on the gang members in attendance – despite the local police's knowledge and tolerance of their presence – creating

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of longitudinal ethnography and trust in dangerous contexts, see Rodgers forthcoming.

mayhem. On another occasion, a United States Agency for International Development official sexually harassed her. Müller was also physically attacked, on his first foray into Iztapalapa, by a group of young men who decided he did not belong. For his part, Durazo Herrmann emphasizes the importance of a “safety network” of people who knew his police interviewees in Bahia, as well as when and where his meetings were taking place. Although the officers chose to speak with him (after his contacts had vouched for him) and were given the ethics assurance of having the power to withdraw the data after the interviews (which one individual did), the mood and body language during the meetings were so tense that he realized he would never feel safe if he approached potential interviewees without a ~~middleman~~. Eaton also refers to a feeling of unease and mentions the need to walk a fine line between eliciting as much information as possible and making himself vulnerable to Colombian paramilitaries.

Fieldwork in violent contexts also has indirect effects, sometimes akin to post-traumatic stress (Huggins and Gleebeck 2009). Rivard Piché, Lapegna, and Müller all describe a sense of paranoia while conducting research. Rivard Piché was “hyper-sensitive” to her surroundings and to how she was being perceived while in the field. Lapegna explains that the experiences and warnings of rural Argentine social movement members rubbed off on him: because they are persistently harassed and surveilled by agents of the state, he, too, came to believe he was being followed. Müller developed what he labels a “persecution complex” from witnessing everyday violence and recurrent police abuses. He also describes his struggle with observing a great deal of violence in the compressed period of fieldwork, when there is no time to work through the emotions, and finding ways to talk about it afterwards.

Finally, researchers cope with feelings of shame and questions about who benefits from their work (Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Buckley-Zistel 2007). Gay mentions a permanent feeling of guilt about leading a privileged life, while the people on whose stories he has built a career will never make it out of the favelas. And Lapegna says, “when it comes to the ‘slow violence’ that goes with the quotidian exposure to agrochemicals, you feel powerless. . . . At some point, you also feel a bit parasitic, in the sense of hearing people’s suffering, using that for your research . . .” Such reflections can have a positive impact, when they make researchers careful not to color their analyses with outsider judgments of their subjects (see Gay 2005: 168–169). They can also lead to attempts to give back, as in Lapegna’s activism.

The kind of research undertaken for this volume is not easy to do. But it counters some of the problematic and superficial assumptions and conclusions associated with quantitative analyses using homicide statistics.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This collection is designed to bring together insights from scholars engaged in in-depth research of the nature, causes, and consequences of violence at the sub-national level from across the Americas. Chapter 1, by Jean Daudelin, examines some of the methodological challenges involved in studying violence. Daudelin provides an overview of the competing definitions of violence, and some of the problems associated with the common practice of using homicides as a proxy for crime and violence. He also highlights the problems of treating homicides as a homogeneous variable – as if all homicides were the same in their causes and patterns. For example, as he shows with Brazilian statistics, while male homicide rates are highly volatile, those for women are much more stable over time. We therefore need, he argues, gender-specific theories of homicide that are attentive to the differential character of homicides affecting men and women. The chapter provides statistical evidence to support the volume’s argument about the importance of sub-national analysis of crime and violence, as well as valuable suggestions for how this work should be tackled. The chapter is an important argument for the need for intellectual and methodological rigor in examining levels and causes of violence, and casts doubt on many of the existing studies of the phenomenon, particularly those that rely on methodological nationalism.

The methodological chapter is followed by a group of chapters focusing on the urban dimensions of violence and clientelism. Chapter 2, by Markus Michael Müller, sheds light on a dimension of violence in Mexico that is often overlooked in sensationalist accounts of cartel violence – the role of the police as perpetrators. In his analysis of Mexico City, Müller demonstrates that democratization coexists with and reinforces both clientelistic and violent practices. Much research on the role of the police focuses on their interaction with external patrons and clients, but Müller analyzes *internal* dynamics. Even under the governments of the left-wing Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), ostensibly committed to expanding democratic institutions and participation, reform efforts have maintained intact the internal clientelist relations of power, resulting in the perpetuation of extralegal forms of police violence and repression. Müller contests the idea that the “deepening” of the rule of law will

necessarily result in the reduction of clientelist relations. He shows how the city government's support for neoliberal urban development strategies has led to the criminalization of poverty and the targeting of the poor by violent police behavior. At the same time, he argues, the resilience of clientelist relations may be one factor that has sheltered Mexico City from the more extreme forms of violence that have been carried out in other parts of the country by both official and unofficial actors.

In Chapter 3, Robert Gay examines the sources and characteristics of urban violence in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The prison system under the authoritarian regime, uneven urban geographies and levels of state presence, lax policing during democratization, and changes in the regional drug trade that made Brazil a transshipment point for cocaine, gave rise to the armed *Comando Vermelho* and allowed it to implant itself in the city's favelas. The gang's splintering into several factions then resulted in turf wars and the militarized response by Rio police took the character of indiscriminate and ineffective crackdowns. Favela "pacification" through the implantation of specially trained police units, the *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* (UPPs), as of 2008, is designed to put the communities back under state control. While the government has proclaimed that the UPPs have been a success, Gay raises important concerns about cost, corruption, and political will. He also argues that privatized security in the form of exploitative militias is, in practice, more extensive than the high profile activities of the UPPs. The result is the proliferation of violent actors, without serious efforts to address the inequalities that give rise to violence.

Yonique Campbell and Colin Clarke examine the intersections of violence and clientelism in the case of garrison communities in Kingston, Jamaica in Chapter 4. They trace the historical roots of violence, arguing that the spatialized forms of racial and class hierarchies imposed under colonialism have been translated into the violence of garrison governance. After independence, national political elites from both dominant parties competed to win political support through clientelistic practices. The garrisons emerged, under the control of local bosses or dons, each tied to one of the parties and supported by what the authors term "criminal/political gangs." Violence was thus mobilized along with political favors, like housing allocation, to shore up support for political elites. The dimensions of political control shifted beginning in the mid-1980s, as neoliberal structural adjustment programs shrank state resources and gangs gained some resource independence through activity in the international drug trade. The chapter examines the case of the Tivoli Gardens garrison, which

was created by Jamaican Labor Party leader Edward Seaga, and ruled by the powerful don Christopher ‘Dudus’ Coke until his extradition in 2010, resulting in the eruption of urban warfare. Through testimonies from local residents, the authors show how the absence of human rights, state legitimacy, and provision of human security by the government has led citizens to turn to local power brokers in search of security, order, and a sense of belonging. Like Gay’s chapter, this case illustrates the futility of responses to violence based on repression and privatization of security.

Like Campbell and Clarke as well as Gay, Gaëlle Rivard Piché studies non-state forms of order in her analysis of the 2012 El Salvador gang truce in Chapter 5. In 2011, El Salvador was designated the second most violent country in the world, based on an average homicide rate of 70.2 murders per 100,000 people. Yet in 2012, homicide rates dropped with a ground-breaking truce between the two leading gangs, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 (La18). The truce was brokered by a Catholic bishop and a former FMLN congressman, the leftist political party that had gained power in 2009 for the first time since the end of the deadly civil war between the FMLN guerrillas and the Salvadorian government. Based on extensive fieldwork carried out in poor urban barrios of San Salvador, Rivard Piché examines the mechanisms that facilitated the truce at the local level, specifically in the barrio of Ilopango, the first peace zone. Her study reveals the relationship between local cliques of the gangs, municipal politicians, and regional representatives of the national police. The truce opened a space for dialogue between competing actors at the local level by reducing uncertainty, improving communication, and offering guarantees regarding rivals’ behavior through third parties. Behind closed doors, government actors were able to use the truce process to negotiate with gang leaders. Although the truce eventually broke down and violence again escalated, the process may provide useful lessons about how peace can be brokered in a political context where other avenues are blocked.

In Chapter 6, Lucy Luccisano and Laura Macdonald examine why Mexico City has been relatively exempt from the escalating violence seen elsewhere in Mexico over the past decade. The authors agree with Müller that democratization and the politics of successive center-left PRD governments have in some ways reinforced the clientelistic practices of earlier PRI governments. However, they contend that these practices, combined with the expansion of progressive social policies and innovative local programs designed to improve citizen security, can reduce crime and violence.

The chapter reviews the social and citizen security policies adopted by successive PRD mayors since 2000, and argues that, while PRD politicians may be motivated by semi-clientelist concerns, increased state presence in homes and neighborhoods through extensive social policies may improve state surveillance but also build levels of social capital and social trust. Also, PRD governments have adopted new neighborhood improvement policies that draw on the social capital of earlier grassroots community organizations and, to some extent, reverse the top-down dynamic typical of traditional clientelism by promoting participation. Although these policies were accompanied by surveillance and the criminalization of poverty, especially in the city's historic center, as discussed in Müller's chapter, the outcome was a lower level of crime and violence than experienced elsewhere in the country and earlier in the city's history.

The next section of the collection includes a series of studies that examine the nature of, and approaches to, violence in regional units – whether departments, states or provinces. The chapters help illuminate how violence differs even within the same country, and how subnational variety exists in both federal and unitary states. Chapter 7, by Kent Eaton and Juan Diego Prieto, examines the interplay of subnational and national politics in a unitary state, Colombia. The authors try to explain why violence and violation of human rights at the subnational level coexist with formally democratic practices at the national level. The chapter compares the divergent responses of the northern departments of Cesar and Magdalena to the “*parapolítica*” scandal that rocked Colombian politics beginning in 2007. This scandal involved trials of politicians who were convicted of illicit ties with paramilitary groups involved in violence against Colombian citizens. Regional elites in Colombia used paramilitary allies to undercut the democratizing and decentralizing reforms of national political actors. Paramilitary actors were able to leverage their influence with subnational and national elites to gain protection from national-level legislative proposals for extradition and demobilization that would have undermined their power. However, while both Cesar and Magdalena were ruled by the same paramilitary faction and experienced high levels of violence and paramilitary political intervention, there was a meaningful transfer of power in Cesar, but the traditional power bloc remained in place in Magdalena. Eaton and Prieto examine possible explanations for these divergent trajectories, and conclude that the key difference between them was the arrival in Cesar of an ideologically moderate rival force that was independent from the entrenched power bloc. Although Cesar's shift is limited and fragile, the case illustrates the

importance of attention to the distinctive character of subnational politics and their implications for gradually reducing levels of violence and authoritarianism.

In Chapter 8, Pablo Lapegna analyzes the impact of agribusiness on poor populations in three Argentine provinces – Santiago del Estero, Formosa, and Córdoba – focusing on non-institutional dimensions of violence and subnational authoritarianism. Since the adoption of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, the soybean agro-industrial complex has expanded rapidly, with negative social and environmental effects. In response, oppositional social movements have emerged among rural, and especially Indigenous, populations, and been repressed. Lapegna's chapter analyzes the uneven geographies of these economic shifts in the three provinces. In one, Córdoba, civil society is relatively strong and the political system is relatively open and democratic, so social movements have successfully mounted opposition to the effects of the agricultural boom. Santiago del Estero and Formosa, in contrast, display higher levels of authoritarianism and weaker civil society, and social movements have not been able to push for meaningful changes.

Chapter 9, by Hugues Fournier, complements Lapegna's study with an institutionalist approach to a comparison of the Argentine provinces of Jujuy and Tucumán. Argentine homicides have been low since the fall of the military dictatorship and formal democratization at the national scale in 1983. However, authoritarian practices have remained in place in many of the country's provincial regimes, and central governments have had trouble enforcing democratic practices at the subnational level. In line with our argument about the importance of a broad definition of violence, Fournier contends that it is important to look beyond homicides – particularly to political violence. He identifies three explanatory factors for provincial political violence: the structure of subnational elite domination; the interdependency between federal elites and subnational authoritarian elites through clientelistic mechanisms that allow the latter to remain in power; and the economic context, which affects federal transfers and, therefore, the character of federal relations. The similar provinces of Jujuy and Tucumán have followed different paths since democratization. In Jujuy, the power of traditional elites was challenged by the Argentine economic crisis of the late 1980s, leading to the emergence of civil society contestation. In Tucumán, the Peronist party became hegemonic. Fournier argues that the difference is caused by varying trajectories of the Peronist party and its relationship with subnational elites, as well as differences in the impact of the economic crisis. This case reminds

us of the important role played by the federal state in perpetuating authoritarianism, clientelism, and violence at the subnational level.

Chapter 10, by Julián Durazo Herrmann, examines the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia, an authoritarian enclave where subnational democratization lagged behind that of the federal state. Like Müller, Durazo studies the role of police forces as agents of state violence, but he examines how they are embedded in external clientelist networks. He draws on the concept of social domination (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1985) to show how the impunity of police forces helps insulate existing power structures. Since the transition to democracy, state level regime change has depoliticized the police and human rights training has been introduced, but the police continue to exercise social control, especially over poor populations. Elections have resulted in the alternation of power since 2006, but, even under a centre-left *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) governor, police violence and clientelism remain tools used to preserve existing power relations. Durazo's study shows how both clientelism and state violence have been able to adapt to new political rules, and illustrates the difficulty of thorough political reform.

Finally, Hilgers and Macdonald's conclusion brings together the themes regarding the causes of, and possible solutions to, violence discussed throughout the collection. The chapter begins by outlining lessons for understanding the long-term causes of violence, which often result from perverse consequences of earlier policies. Elements that reappear consistently in the contributions are the nature of neoliberal economic restructuring, the unintended effects of democratization, and clientelism. The chapter then uses the studies compiled in the volume to outline some of the failures and successes of anti-violence policy. The primary conclusion here is to advocate caution: *mano dura* policies seem only to cause further problems, while more complex programs show some positive results, but policies that work in one place may be less effective in others. The consideration of particular intersections of structures, institutions, and cultures with people and places thus applies not only to the search for the cause of violence, but also to that for solutions.