Civil War and the Politics of Difference:

Paramilitary Violence Against LGBT People in Colombia



Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the variation in paramilitary violence against LGBT people during the Colombian Civil War. It questions both *why* these groups get targeted and *how* these groups get targeted with an analytical focus on violence 'characteristics', particularly brutality. This thesis pursues an inductive research design in that the presented theory of anti-LGBT violence comes from a historical comparative analysis of the phenomenon through two case study sites in Colombia that differ in the form of anti-LGBT violence utilized by paramilitaries. I use research from political theory, psychology, sociology, as well as sexuality and gender studies to deepen understandings in political science of the relationship between social transformation and violence during civil war by revealing the processes through which violence tied to wartime logics has socio-political effects.

I argue that armed actors collectively target LGBT people through brutal violence when attempting to exert social control through a socialization process that I call abjection. Brutality against LGBT people becomes a low-cost way to impose new social rules in accordance with their ideology, redrawing the community's boundaries. This violence against a marginalized minority has a unique impact because the extremeness of the brutality sparks the attention of the broader population, but its targeted nature makes it less threatening and more easily justified through a moral framing. Ideology, thus, is a requisite for social control efforts through anti-LGBT violence, as without ideology, the violence will be harder to frame and legitimize in a moral context. The characteristics of this violence vary depending on the capacity of the armed group to embed with the local population. I theorize anti-LGBT violence as part of a broader phenomenon of violence against social difference that warrants attention from scholars because of how it challenges assumptions about the relationship between wartime logics and social structures of marginality.

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List of Abbreviations

ACCU	Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (Campesino Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá)
ACDEGAM	Asociación Campesina de Ganaderos y Agricultores del Magdalena Media (Campesino Association of Cattle Ranchers and Farmers of Magdalena Medio)
ANUC	Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (National Association of Campesino Workers)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
AUC-BCB	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - Bloque Central Bolívar (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia – Central Bolívar Bloc)
AUC-HMM	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - Bloque Heroes de los Montes de María (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia – Heroes of the Montes de María Bloc)
AUC-MM	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - Bloque Magdalena Medio (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia – Magdalena Medio Bloque)
AUC-PB	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - Bloque Puerto Boyacá (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia – Puerto Boyacá Bloc)
BACRIM	Bandas Criminales (Criminal Groups)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CINEP	Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (Center for Investigation and Popular Education)
CONVIVIR	Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada (Cooperatives of Private Security and Vigilance)
CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center for Historic Memory)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
HRW	Human Rights Watch
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (*Travesti*)
MAS	Muerte a Secuestadores (Death to Kidnappers)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RUV	Registro Único de Víctimas (Unique Victim's Registry)
TPC	Texas Petroleum Company
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United National High Commissioner for Refugees
UP	Union Patriótica (Patriotic Union)
US	United States

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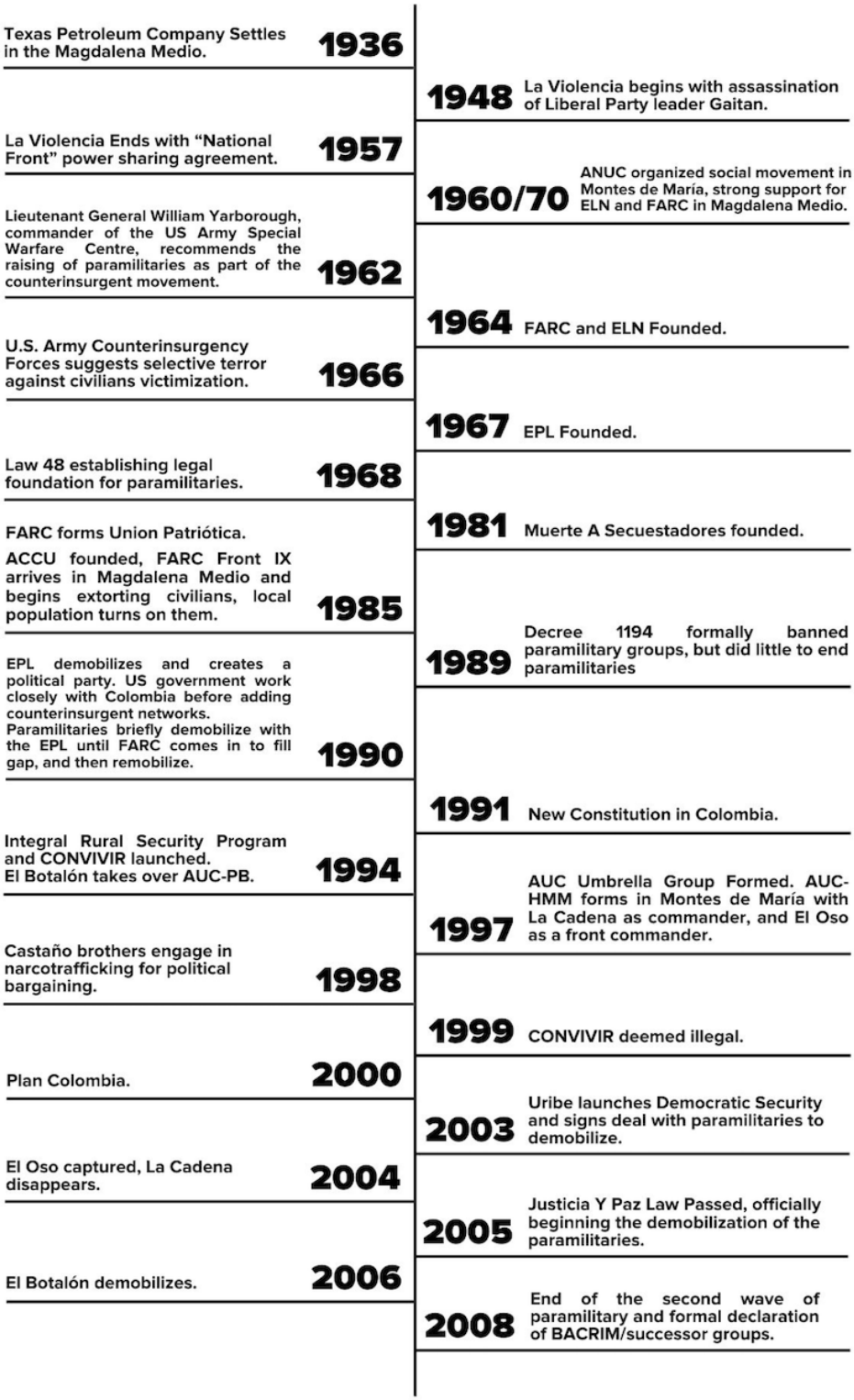
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Map of Colombia



Timeline


Texas Petroleum Company Settles in the Magdalena Medio. 1936
1948 La Violencia begins with assassination of Liberal Party leader Gaitan.
La Violencia Ends with "National Front" power sharing agreement. 1957
1960/70 ANUC organized social movement in Montes de María, strong support for ELN and FARC in Magdalena Medio.
Lieutenant General William Yarborough, commander of the US Army Special Warfare Centre, recommends the raising of paramilitaries as part of the counterinsurgent movement. 1962
1964 FARC and ELN Founded.
U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Forces suggests selective terror against civilians victimization. 1966
1967 EPL Founded.
Law 48 establishing legal foundation for paramilitaries. 1968
1981 Muerte A Secuestadores founded.
FARC forms Union Patriótica.
ACCU founded, FARC Front IX arrives in Magdalena Medio and begins extorting civilians, local population turns on them. 1985
1989 Decree 1194 formally banned paramilitary groups, but did little to end paramilitaries
EPL demobilizes and creates a political party. US government work closely with Colombia before adding counterinsurgent networks.
Paramilitaries briefly demobilize with the EPL until FARC comes in to fill gap, and then remobilize. 1990
1991 New Constitution in Colombia.
Integral Rural Security Program and CONVIVIR launched.
El Botalón takes over AUC-PB. 1994
1997 AUC Umbrella Group Formed. AUC-HMM forms in Montes de María with La Cadena as commander, and El Oso as a front commander.
Castaño brothers engage in narcotrafficking for political bargaining. 1998
1999 CONVIVIR deemed illegal.
Plan Colombia. 2000
2003 Uribe launches Democratic Security and signs deal with paramilitaries to demobilize.
El Oso captured, La Cadena disappears. 2004
2005 Justicia Y Paz Law Passed, officially beginning the demobilization of the paramilitaries.
El Botalón demobilizes. 2006
2008 End of the second wave of paramilitary and formal declaration of BACRIM/successor groups.

Chapter 1 The Puzzle of Anti-LGBT Violence

"*Pueblo pequeño, infierno grande*" – Proverb[1]

"*Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance*" – Hannah Arendt[2]

1.1 Introduction

In a small mountain town off the Colombian Caribbean coast, Andrés*[3] arrives home to find a note taped to his door. The note requests his attendance at a farm outside his town, San Onofre, the following Sunday, 11 May 2003. Sweat forms on the back of Andres' neck as he rereads the note, which warns of 'tears of blood' should he not attend. The farm belongs to the dreaded paramilitary commander, Marco Tulio Pérez Guzman, alias *el Oso* ('the bear'), and is a feared location among locals for its associations with torture and disappearances.

That Sunday, Andrés shows up at the assigned time, fearing the repercussions of refusal. Upon arrival, he sees a few of his friends, which makes his stomach turn. These friends are all gay or transgender, which Andrés knows is no coincidence. Life for gay and transgender people had become markedly worse since the paramilitaries arrived in the 1990s. Public acts of brutality and cruelty against this population had become routine in town and sexual violence was often meted out as punishment for transgressing arbitrary social rules established by the paramilitaries. Andrés soon learns that he will have to box his best friend, Felipe*, another gay man, in front of fellow townspeople and the paramilitary commander, Rodrigo Mercado Pelufo, alias *la Cadena*

[1] ('Small town, big hell')
[2] (1970, 55-56)
[3] Names with asterisk (*) are pseudonymized and story drawn from reports (CNMH 2011, 2015; Fernández 2017), as well as testimonies, witness interviews in 2022, and expert interviews in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

('the chain'), whose birthday was to be celebrated that day. As Andrés gets into boxing gear, he overhears a comment from another paramilitary: "*this will be good for him, it will 'fix' him*", that is, restore his masculinity.

Andrés and Felipe stare at each other in the improvised boxing ring as the rest of the town watches, consuming the scene. They start swinging at each other hesitantly. They are both warned that either they swing harder or face a worse consequence. The next time, they aim with full force.

During the Colombian Civil War (1958-2016)[4], the tensions felt by the LGBT community in San Onofre were experienced by many other LGBT communities around the country. A few hundred miles down the Magdalena River, another community was feeling the pressure. Just before the boxing matches were to begin in San Onofre, the locals of Puerto Boyacá were pulling the body of a young transgender girl out of the river. This girl, Luz*[5], was known to the community and had been missing for a few weeks.

The finding of her body surprises few. For the past year, at least, Luz had been receiving warnings from a local paramilitary front to leave. The threats came in a myriad of forms. Sometimes pamphlets would be distributed throughout town that called for a list of undesirables or *desechables* ('disposables') to leave; people were named along with their associated

[4] Standard dates for the current period of the Colombian conflict have been 1964-2016, but in the wake of the final report of the Truth Commission (2022), the initial start of the war has now been acknowledged as 1958. This change reflects the increasing recognition between the recent conflict and its historical antecedent, *La Violencia.*
[5] Name with an asterisk (*) is pseudonymized and story drawn from reports (CNMH 2017, 2019), testimonies, expert interviews in 2020 and 2021, and court cases (Jimenez López 2018).

infraction. Luz's name appeared, her crime: "*being a faggot*." Other times, known associates of the paramilitaries would come up to her with a warning, "*leave town or suffer the consequences*."

During especially tense periods, Luz might have left Puerto Boyacá for a nearby city, like Bogotá, but with limited family and employment opportunities, she always returned to her hometown. Though Luz received support from family and friends, her hometown could not protect her from being murdered. When they found Luz's body in the river, the local population knew what had happened to her. Leaving bodies, sometimes dismembered, in rivers was a way for paramilitaries to deny a dignified burial for those whom they believed were not worthy of such treatment. Finding Luz's body after threats for being transgender had only one interpretation by locals: she was killed by paramilitaries because of her gender identity.

At the height of their power in the 1990s and early 2000s, paramilitaries waged a violent campaign against civilians throughout Colombia. Under the guise of counterinsurgency against leftist rebels, these paramilitaries went after marginalized populations with dogged determination. Some paramilitary groups, though not all, went after LGBT populations. And those that did, varied in how they targeted the groups. In San Onofre and the surrounding region of Montes de María, the paramilitaries committed acts of horrific brutality against LGBT populations. Public forms of torture, such as the above-mentioned boxing match and other spectacles of violence, happened with enough frequency to establish a national reputation for this armed group in the region. The violence was spectacular in its cruelty and brutality, but it also appeared as illogical and random. The population recognized this violence (to an extent) as

castigation for being LGBT but could not predict its occurrence nor the reasons behind it. In Puerto Boyacá, on the other hand, paramilitaries targeted LGBT populations in a more private and systematic manner that was also brutal, but still intelligible. The paramilitaries publicly justified this violence as the establishment of a moral order in their war against subversion. Their established pattern of first threats, then disappearances, and finally dumping of bodies in the river became tied to a national phenomenon known as *limpieza social* ('social cleansing').

To date, there has been limited consideration of dynamics of anti-LGBT violence during civil war within the literature of political violence and the broader discipline of political science. The limited literature that exists focuses on the *why* behind its occurrence and not necessarily on the *how*. In only focusing on explanatory arguments, this existing literature fails to account for variations in this violence. Broader scholarship on other forms of collective violence, including genocide, ethnic cleansing, and political cleansing, offers some possible explanations for variation but they alone cannot account for the targeting of a social group with no ties to the conflict. Further, neither the existing literature on anti-LGBT violence during civil war nor on collective violence can account for the presence of such brutality during the Colombian conflict. These questions are important not only to understand what happened to many LGBT people during the Colombian conflict, but also to further expand our understanding of how social groups, beyond LGBT people, at the margins of society become targeted by actors central to the conflict. As such, in this thesis, I ask what explains the variation in how LGBT groups were targeted by paramilitaries in Colombia's armed conflict? And in exploring this question, I address two others: why target a social group with no clear tie to the conflict? And why utilize such brutal forms of violence? To answer these questions, I explore two case studies of

paramilitary groups that both targeted LGBT people— but in different ways— during the height of paramilitarism in the country's conflict (1994-2008). To develop these case studies, I rely on archival material, government victimization data, and fieldwork in Colombia to inductively advance a theory of anti-LGBT violence during civil war.

1.2 Argument in Brief

I argue that armed actors collectively target LGBT people through brutal violence when they attempt to exert social control through a socialization process that I call *abjection*. Brutality against LGBT people becomes a low-cost way to impose new social rules in accordance with their ideology that redraws the boundaries of the community. This violence against a marginalized minority has a unique impact because the extremeness of the brutality against a visible minority sparks the attention of the broader population, but its targeted nature makes it less threatening and more easily justified through a moral framing. As such, ideology is a requisite for social control efforts through anti-LGBT violence, as without ideology, the violence will be harder to frame and legitimize in a moral context.

The characteristics of this violence vary depending on the capacity of the armed group to embed with the local population. When the armed actors are able to socially embed with the civilian population, achieving high levels of social and moral cohesion, the armed actor can frame this violence as a legitimate form of service provision that reinforces their ideology and presence in the community. This violence is brutal, but it also follows an intelligible logic that demonstrates restraint in its target. I refer to this form of anti-LGBT violence as *social cleansing*. In this context, social cleansing becomes a destructive, protective, and normative form of collective

violence that paramilitaries use to instill a moral order that securitizes a town against 'subversion' and legitimizes their presence in coordination with much of the local community. With limited capacity to social embed, the armed actor will not be able to frame this violence as a service provision and instead overcompensate with an expressive and cruel spectacle that attempts to repress the population into submission through humiliating, stigmatizing, and traumatizing violence that occurs in the public space. This violence will often extend to other groups, expanding the realm of targets in a manner that is hard to predict. I refer to this anti-LGBT violence as *social brutalization*. The targeted population is not necessarily 'cleansed' but rather allowed to live in the area in a markedly diminished way. It is a different form of social control that does not legitimize the paramilitaries and though it may transform the social environment, it is not necessarily in their favor.

Brutality serves as a key mechanism for anti-LGBT violence because of how it transforms existing social networks in relation to efforts for social control. Brutality produces a semiotic impact that captures the attention of a population. In the face of brutal violence, I argue that witnesses undergo a first form of abjection, *a personal abjection*, that is disgust at a disturbing situation, such as seeing a corpse, which forces them to recognize their own mortality. This disgust serves as a form of rejection that allows the witness to reaffirm their sense of self: even after seeing death, they are still alive. When brutal violence is targeted against a marginalized population, such as LGBT people, that disgust can be operationalized through moral frames that dehumanize the victims and legitimize violence against them. Brutal violence against LGBT people can thus facilitate an association between immorality and the violent victimization of the population, in effect blaming them for their own demise and lowering the potential repercussions

of this violence. In this framing, these groups are 'amoral' and 'disgusting' in their behavior. They meet horrific violent ends that could have been avoided had they acted 'better.' Their difference puts a target on their back that 'moral' people do not have to worry about. This moralizing based on a rejection of the group facilitates a second form of abjection, *a social abjection*, that cleaves the targeted groups from the broader polity, reinforcing their difference. The process of social abjection presents a vicious cycle: these groups get targeted because they are marginalized, and their targeting further marginalizes them. However, through this process, a form of civilian socialization takes place where new social networks are formed between the armed actor and the broader population, and a social cleavage is reinforced between the targeted minority and broader population.

This thesis pursues an inductive research design in that my theory of anti-LGBT violence comes from an analysis of the phenomenon at the national level in Colombia as well as an exploration of sub-national variation in cases that differ on the dependent variable, the form of anti-LGBT violence. I use research from political theory, psychology, sociology, as well as sexuality and gender studies to deepen understandings in empirical political science of the relationship between social transformation and violence during civil war by revealing the processes through which violence tied to wartime logics has socio-political effects. I theorize anti-LGBT violence as a form of social transformation often committed through a broader targeting of social minorities that can produce new social and political formations in a contested territory. Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008, 540) has identified how war can transform "social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level…leav[ing] profound social changes in their wake." She notes how during war

> political mobilization, military socialization, the polarization of social identities, the militarization of local authority, the transformation of gender roles, and the fragmentation of local political economies reshaped a wide range of local social networks, destroying some, breaking others into subnetworks, and creating new ones (2008, 551).

The impact that acts of violence have during war are largely connected to the social cleavages that are mobilized during war. But there is still little understanding of the social effects of particular acts of violence, including specific repertoires or characteristics of violence (Wood 2008; Ellis 1995, 2001). An armed actor's presence in a contested territory can invert social norms if they begin to enforce norms in new ways. Sexual violence and other acts of egregious violence that transgress social norms can have a residual impact of wearing down norms that prevent violence or promote resistance (Arjona 2016; Carpenter 2006; Koos & Linsday 2022; Kreft 2019; Stallone 2021; Zulver 2022). In this transformation, civilians begin to act differently in relation to each other and armed actors.

Anti-LGBT violence, as well as other collective targeting of social minorities, facilitates a social transformation that can legitimize the perpetrator as well as reimagine a contested territories' body politic or 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006). In Colombia and Peru, scholars have noted how social cleansing normally preceded acts of political cleansing (Gutiérrez-Sanín 2015; Hristov 2009; Steele 2017; Wood 2008). Social cleansing may be more popular and less costly than political cleansing among civilians, but it also may not be more effective in achieving wartime goals focused on neutralizing threats from rivals. Understanding anti-LGBT violence as a mechanism of social transformation helps scholars think through the relationship between violence against social difference and the ideological foundations of wartime strategy. Of note, however, is that much violence against LGBT people cannot be explained with this argument which centers a transformative ideology tied to wartime logic. Much violence against LGBT

people results from societal anti-LGBT prejudice and bigotry that happens even during times of peace. I refer to this phenomenon as *social prejudice* and while I recognize it as a form of anti-LGBT violence, I exclude it from my analysis as it is not tied to the transformational ideologies of armed actors and thus it is divorced from wartime logics.

This theoretical argument applies to armed actors of any ideology (across the political spectrum) that incorporate social transformation as part of their political project. In this dissertation, I focus on acts of anti-LGBT violence by a conservative, state-aligned armed group— the Colombian paramilitaries— in order to inductively build this theory. As such, I present this dissertation as an exercise in inductive theory building. From the case of Colombia, I build an analytical framework for understanding variation in anti-LGBT violence and also present an explanation for the ubiquity of brutality in this particular form of violence, tying both to armed actor social control efforts. As such, this dissertation is very much what Jonathan Leader Maynard (2022, 26-27) describes as part of broader cannon of work that advances "complex, context-sensitive, historically detailed and interpretively rich theories of political violence." I do not present my theory as law nor is testing it inherent to the research design. I follow Jeffrey Checkel's (2017, 593) guidance in building new theory, which focuses on advancing well-specified arguments, which do not necessarily foreclose other possible arguments, from a systematic and rigorous review of empirical material. It can thus be considered a form of 'grounded theory' (Charmaz 2014), where an inductive and iterative process of exploring the data leads me to present an analytical account for the occurrence of an identified socio-political phenomenon.[6]

[6] My sources of data include 55 semi-structured interviews with government officials, academic experts, social leaders, members of civil society, UN officials, community witnesses; archival material such as court documents, government reports, historical construction documents, media coverage; and a government database of recognized

1.3 Key Terms

In this dissertation, when discussing people with non-hegemonic sexualities and gender identities (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans*, among others), I use the well-established acronym LGBT.[7] In other contexts, I use the word 'queer' as an adjective and summative term to describe people with non-hegemonic sexualities (gay, lesbian, bisexual, among others).[8] At times, trans might be written with an asterisk, such as trans*; this writing is common in the scholarship of Latin America, as there are multiple forms of transgender identities that reflect the cultural diversity of the region. When discussing violence against this community, I predominately use 'anti-LGBT violence' as opposed to the more established term 'homophobic violence.' I resist using 'homophobic violence' because I believe it is not properly inclusive of transphobia. When speaking specifically of prejudice or violence against LGB persons, I will use the term 'homophobia.'[9] Likewise, when speaking of prejudice or violence against transgender persons, I

victims of violence in the conflict, entitled *Registro Único de Víctimas* ('Unique Victim's Registry'). Chapter 3 provides more detail on my engagement with these data sources, which are furthered detailed in Appendix I.

[7] I do not use the more inclusive and also well-established 'LGBTQIA' (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual), as I did not encounter enough data to include analyses of violence against intersex or asexual people. While I use the term 'queer' in reference to sexual orientation, I have decided not to use it within the acronym but instead as a complement. For more work on analyzing prejudice against intersex people, known as *endosexism,* see the work of Carlos Zelada (2018).

[8] Queer has a second usage, when used as a verb, 'to queer', which describes an epistemological approach that centers the perspectives of those with non-hegemonic sexualities and gender identities.

[9] I recognize that the concept of homophobia is deeply contested. Adam (1998) creates a typology of three main forms of understanding prejudice against same-sex attraction: homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity. Adam, building on Kitzinger (1987), rejects the term homophobia as a representative term of discrimination against queer/trans people. Adam situates homophobia in the field of psychology and argues that this phenomenon is not based on an "individualist" *phobia* or fear, but prejudice. Heterosexism builds on this concept, taking a more sociological stance that considers the structures and ideologies that produce and perpetuate these beliefs. Akin to racism or sexism, heterosexism centers the prejudicial rejection of homosexuality. A post-structural reading of the phenomenon produces the concept of heteronormativity, which argues that the prejudice and discrimination experienced by the queer/trans people are the result of disciplining norms produced through discourse in society that centers the heterosexual subject. For this project, heterosexist might be the apt description; however, as much of the violence in this study occurs against trans people, it still reads as incomplete.

use the term 'transphobia.'[10] I define this violence as targeted violence against an individual because of their perceived sexuality or gender identity. As such, even if an act of violence is against a person who is actually heterosexual or cis[11], as long as the intention for targeting them was based on their *perceived* sexuality and gender identity, I consider it homophobic or transphobic, and thus, anti-LGBT. I also describe this phenomenon as 'LGBT victimization'. As I will expand in my theory chapter, a key indicator of whether an act of violence was targeted on the basis of sexuality or gender identity is the typical threats that precede the victimizing act as well as pejorative language used in relation to the act.

I recognize anti-LGBT violence as part of a broader category of violence against social minorities, which I label 'violence against social difference'. I define this phenomenon as the infliction of intentional harm against a person because of their association with a particular social group. A key concept here is the idea of 'a social group.' Iris Marion Young (2011, 43) defines a social group as "a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. A social group is defined not primarily by a set of shared attributes, but by a sense of identity." This definition allows for an inclusive conception of the term that provides space for people to self-identify with a broader collective, and could thus include LGBT people, ethnic or religious groups, as well as worker and class-based identities. But for those who are identified externally as a result of their behaviors, such as those who are

[10] I find it important to separate homophobia and transphobia because the prejudice can result from different logics. Bettcher (2017) breaks down this tension to note that anti-homosexual beliefs are often based in moral belief, while anti-transgender beliefs are often based in metaphysical belief. In other words, a person rejects the queer person because they condemn their lifestyle, while a person rejects the trans person because they reject the possibility of being transgender. These tensions, as they relate to anti-LGBT violence, should be explored further, and will be incorporated in my own future work of this subject.

[11] 'Cis' means having a gender identity that matches one's gender-assigned-at-birth. Put colloquially, cis means 'not trans.'

unhoused or drug dependent, this self-determinative stance may not be sufficient for their inclusion. As such, I would add two further definitions that comes from refugee studies scholarship, where courts have had to define 'social groups' for the purposes of adjudicating asylum claims based on the Refugee Convention, which requires refugees to have "membership in a particular social group" (UN General Assembly 1951). First, the 'immutable characteristic' definition defines the social group category as "a group of persons all of whom share a common, immutable characteristic. The shared characteristic might be an innate one such as sex, color, or kinship ties, or in some circumstances it might be a shared past experience such as former military leadership or land ownership" (*Matter of Acosta* 1985). The second, the 'social perception' definition defined a social group as "a collection of persons who share a certain characteristic or element which unites them and enables them to be set apart from society at large" (*Applicant S v MIMA* 2004). These two further definitions allow for the incorporations of experiences as grounds for inclusion as well as those who have characteristics or behaviors that set them apart from society. As such, I propose an expanded version of Young's definition of a social group to be *a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. A social group can be defined by a set of perceived shared attributes, as well as a sense of identity.*

Violence is another oft-occurring phenomenon with a multitude of conceptualizations. In this study, I adopt Kalyvas' (2006, 19) definition of violence as "the deliberate infliction of harm on people." I use the Colombian government definition of sexual violence, which identifies "violence against sexual liberty and integrity," as an act that "corresponds to forms of sexual violence committed during conflict that includes, at least, the following: rape, sexual slavery,

forced prostitution, forced sterilization, forced abortion, among others" (Unidad de Víctimas 2015). I also separate violence and conflict as separate concepts. As noted by Cynthia Cockburn (1999), violence differs from conflict as conflict, which can be understood as a disagreement between two sides, can occur without the use of force. Violence, however, requires the use of force. Both conflict and violence relate to power and in practice many acts of political violence and armed conflict are indistinguishable, particularly when it comes to vulnerable populations including women and LGBT people, among others (Moser & Clark 2001). Violence can be conceived of as an outcome of a process or a process in and of itself. In the vein of many other scholars, in this project, I conceive of violence as a dynamic social process (Feierstein 2014; Fujii 2009). Verdeja (2012) argues understanding violence as a dynamic process allows for a nuanced analysis of the phenomenon as both strategic and ideological.

There are four other key terms that require clarification because of their existing ambiguity in the literature of political violence. Rather, there are two sets of two terms that have become muddled in their differentiation: *cleansing* and *displacement*, *cruelty,* and *brutality*. As Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2017, 21) write, "Imprecise statements may conflate variables that are conceptually very different." Thus, in order to pay attention to both variation in repertoire and form, these terms require further clarification. For the first two terms, cleansing and displacement, the distinction has been well established by Abbey Steele (2017). Though concerning the forced migration of a collective, the concept of cleansing differs from displacement. Displacement is a broader phenomenon that encompasses the forced removal of a person as well as a population from a given area due to coercive forces. An individual can be displaced in the face (or threat) of selective violence and a group can flee a given area because of

indiscriminate violence. Cleansing, on the other hand, is the intentional displacement of a collective as a result of wartime strategy. A distinction between the two concepts would be that displacement is incidental to an act of violence, while cleansing itself is a repertoire of violence by armed groups.

There is less agreement on the difference between cruelty and brutality— as such, I will attempt to differentiate them. To date, 'cruelty' is a familiar, yet ambiguous term. Given its common usage in English language parlance, particularly in its adjectival form 'cruel,' it often escapes definition in civil war studies literature. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as, "delight in or indifference to the pain or misery of others." In his research on the civil war in Sierra Leone, Kieran Mitton (2012, 106) recognizes the problems with the term cruelty when he presents his own definition, "Cruelty itself may be a subjective term, but is understood here as the deliberate infliction of pain and suffering as an end." Mitton's definition of cruelty works well in the study of civil wars because it builds on the term's established meaning to make sense in violent contexts. To increase the utility of the term, I argue for a slightly expanded definition in dialogue with the political theorist Judith Shklar's (1982) definition: *cruelty is the intentional infliction of pain and/or suffering*. In this definition, intent is a key characteristic of cruelty. And while acts of cruelty intend to cause pain or suffering, they are not necessarily always violent.

Similar to cruelty, 'brutality,' and its adjectival form of 'brutal,' are used often in civil war studies literature without a definition—perhaps again because of its popular use in common parlance. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'brutality' as "inhumanity, savage cruelty." Scholars often use the term 'brutal' to mark exceptionally excessive forms of violence or for

comparative purpose. Jeremy Weinstein (2006, 18) defines brutality by its associated repertoires and their relation to instrumental and communicative logics: "behaviors, including amputation, rape, abduction, and pillaging, that often accompany rebel attacks but are above and beyond what is required to send a signal of the costs of defection." Dara Kay Cohen (2016, 11) and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2014) have both noted how sexual violence during war is often more brutal than its occurrence during peacetime. Other scholars also question the perceived uniqueness of this brutality of wartime rape in relation to armed actors' pleasure and eroticism (Baaz & Stern 2018; Boesten 2014).[12] Laia Balcells (2017:4) observes that violence in rebel-controlled area during the Spanish Civil War was "overall more brutal" than violence in government-controlled areas. Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg (2018, 7) question how "to explain the brutality" of anti-Semitic programs in Poland during the Second World War. Alexander Downes (2007, 428) studies the effectiveness of "brutal interdiction policy" by the British during the Second Anglo-Boer War. In building on the work of Downes and his own work, Benjamin Valentino (2014, 96) also identifies that "Less frequently, but often even more brutally, civilians may be targeted in interstate wars." These citations all reveal how scholars use the concept of brutality to mark a uniqueness of the violence, but rarely do they define what that term means, instead relying on the reader's own lexicon, and alluding that brutality might mean 'excessive violence.'

A starting point for a potential definition of brutality comes from engagement with the concept of *brutalization*. Mitton (2015) discusses the 'process of brutalisation' in the Sierra Leone Civil War, which he identifies as how acts of 'chaotic violence' desensitize combatants and encourage

[12] In the study of ethnic violence, John Mueller (2000) makes a similar argument that much intercommunal, and indeed brutal, violence during ethnic conflict results from sadistic pleasures of opportunistic individuals.

them to commit more violence. Kalyvas (2006) also describes the process of 'brutalization' through which combatants become more prone to violence. Brutalization goes undefined, but its use as a breakdown of psychosocial mechanisms of control reveal an underlying assumption in the term—brutality, like cruelty, is a qualifier for violence that is tied to the social world. As such, a definition of brutality would be *a violent action that transgresses established socio-cultural norms for a given context*.[13] And thus, brutal violence becomes a form of violence that transgresses established socio-cultural norms, including established standards of harm. With this conceptualization, a combatant killing an enemy with a gun would not be considered brutal, as such violence might be considered an acceptable standard of harm during war. But a combatant torturing an enemy and then killing them with a gun would be considered brutal as even in the 'rules' of war, there is a near universal norm against torture. Importantly, with this definition, brutal violence does not require lethality. Thus, wartime rape can be understood as 'more brutal' than peacetime rape if its occurrence transgresses more norms of physical, emotional, and sexual integrity. Additionally, this definition does not require brutality to be intentional, which separates the concept from cruelty. If someone were hit by a train, their death may be considered brutal (relating to shared norms of physical integrity of corpses), but it would not be considered cruel. If someone else tied that person to the train tracks, then the death would be considered a murder that is both brutal and cruel.[14] Cruelty, thus, becomes derived from the perpetrator's interest in

[13] This definition is quite similar to Lee Ann Fujii's (2013, 410) definition of 'extra-lethal violence,' which she defines as "face-to-face acts of violence that transgress shared norms about the proper treatment of persons and body." Fujii's concept of extra-lethal violence does indeed encapsulate the concept of brutality, but I hesitate to adopt it for two reasons. First, I believe it is not entirely parsimonious, as it seems quite closely related to brutality, which is an already established term that only requires some conceptual clarification in order to be more useful. And second, the terms used (extra and lethal) ambiguously tie it to lethality, which makes it seem like another way to say 'overkill' when Fujii herself did not tie the concept to lethal violence (2017, 2021).

[14] Creating this distinction means that there would not be a name for a form of violence that is both brutal and cruel, unless one adopts Fujii's 'extra-lethal violence'. Scholars of violence in Colombia might also call this saevitious violence, based off the Colombian concept of *sevicia* (explained further in Chapter 5) but I am not sure of the

the affliction of harm for its own sake; whereas brutality contravenes norms or standards of harm, but can be inflicted for a number of reasons, including instrumental. This differentiation is important for how scholars characterize acts of violence especially in relation to responsibility and agency.

1.4 Existing Literature on Anti-LGBT Violence During Civil War

Though limited, the existing literature on anti-LGBT violence during civil war has provided insights into the causes and effects of this form of violence. The focus of this literature on ideology, regimes of gendered subordination, and prejudice have helped connect this violence to established logics of war (Loken and Hagen 2022). Additionally, much of these contributions have come from Colombian scholarship (Albarracín 2011; Gómez 2012; Serrano-Amaya 2018). This dissertation builds on this foundational work in an additive and validating manner by deepening the analytical understanding of the relationship between the dynamics, logics, and effects of anti-LGBT violence during civil war. It further provides a cohering framework to explore variation in the form of anti-LGBT violence as well as explain the presence of brutality.

Armed groups of all ideologies have violently targeted LGBT people and other social minorities, particularly in the 20th century. Some scholars have argued that this political intolerance to difference and marginality was associated with high modernity, where states and armed actors sought complete control over the political and social lives of subjects (Foucault 1978; Mann 2005; Scott 2008). This argument matches studies of fascism and ultra-right ideologies that

analytical utility of this concept. Both cruelty and brutality appear more useful as characteristic qualifiers used to compare forms of violence as opposed to repertoires of violence in and of themselves.

pathologized difference and pursued a politic of social purity. Renan Quinalha and James Green (2014) argue that the repression of sexual and gender minorities during the Brazilian dictatorship resulted from the belief that these populations were a danger to the far-right ideologies of the state.[15] The violent targeting of sexual and gender minorities occurs from leftist groups as well. Concerning Cuba, Lillian Guerra (2010, 269) writes that Communist leaders during the revolution demonized "homosexuality as an inherently counter-revolutionary condition" that threatened the revolution as an effort to discipline Cuban youth and produce loyal communists. As a result, LGBT people were removed from all public positions and queer men were placed into concentration camps where they were subjected to hard labor as a form of rehabilitation.[16] Guerra labels this official rejection of public forms of femininity as 'revolutionary masculinity,' which can be classified as an example of both normative and repressive violence. Joshua Tschantret centers the importance of revolutionary ideology as a reason for the violent targeting of that LGBT people during conflict: "[armed actors] face unique strategic incentive to target 'unreliable groups' and to demonstrate an ability to selectively punish potential dissidents by identifying and punishing invisible groups" (2020, 1459). He also notes that, similar to dynamics of ethnic violence, revolutionary governments, as well as armed insurgent groups, are led by people with exclusionary ideologies that identify queer identities as individualist and a threat to their collectivist project (Tschantret 2018, 2020). As such, the targeting of LGBT people reflects a relationship between the strategy of the war and a group's ideology and inherently ties questions of wartime politics with social environments.

[15] Similar arguments have been made in Argentina and Colombia (Serrano-Amaya 2018; Taylor 1997).
[16] Similar practices have been identified with leftist insurgent groups in Colombia (Fernández 2017, Villamil 2020).

Colombian scholars have identified anti-LGBT violence as a form of social control through gendered violence and subordination during conflict. In this framing, armed actors capitalize on existing prejudicial structures of gender and sexuality to commit gendered acts of violence in order to control local populations and establish legitimacy (Comisión de la Verdad 2022; Villamil 2020). In this argument, both acts of blatant homophobic violence as well as targeted sexual violence campaigns become 'corrective' measures against the transgression of social norms that then create hierarchies of gendered subordination and establish moral orders (CNMH 2015, 2019). Fernando Serrano-Amaya finds that paramilitary violence against LGBT populations reshaped social relations and produced new forms of governance. According to Serrano-Amaya (2018, 27), anti-LGBT violence became a strategy of war "to control populations in conflict zones through collective threats and the fabrication of an enemy within the community." Beyond the surveillance and targeting of these populations, Serrano-Amaya identifies how acts of collective targeting reshape community relations to diminish the opportunity for organizing. He also finds that this violence was associated with paramilitary territorial expansion and contestation. His findings reinforce the work of the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* ('National Center for Historic Memory', CNMH), which tied anti-LGBT violence with the establishment of a social order aligned with a new morality (CNMH 2015). The original CNMH (2015) report on anti-LGBT violence also recognizes the symbolic importance of brutality in establishing this new social order. These theories produce a 'social control' thesis that pervades not only academia, but also much of the jurisprudence in Colombia. In the few cases of homophobic violence heard thus far in Colombia's transitional justice tribunals, judges were persuaded by the arguments of prosecutors (and the *amici curiae*

submitted by human rights organizations) that argued the intentional nature of this prejudicial violence for reasons of coercive social control (Castellanos Roso 2014).

While the coercive 'social control' thesis of homophobic violence during civil war is persuasive (and this dissertation reinforces it), its explanatory potential is limited in terms of understanding variations in the form of this violence as well as the process of how violence against a social minority can have an impact on, or control, the broader population. Questions also remain about the ubiquity of brutality against this populations. These studies answer the *why* this violence occurs, as well as identify the effects of this violence, but they can be complemented through further exploration of the *how*. In many of these analyses, there is an opportunity to deepen current conceptions of this violence's coercive and transformative potential through a focus on both variation and form. Exploring these puzzles of variation and form related to anti-LGBT violence contributes to broader understandings of the impact and utility of certain forms of violence, thereby revealing new logics of violence during war. Additionally, the study of violence against LGBT people becomes an entry point to a broader consideration of violence against social difference and the politics of marginality during civil war.

1.5 The Analytical Contributions and Limits of the Current Literature on Civilian Victimization During Civil War in Relation to Anti-LGBT Violence

Violence against LGBT people relates to academic discussions on collective targeting, civilian victimization, and the logics of violence during war. These existing literatures help to explain many aspects of the puzzle of anti-LGBT violence during civil war but remain insufficient. In this section, I briefly identify the contributions and limitations of five existing 'subgroups' of the

literature of civilian victimization in relation to the puzzle of anti-LGBT violence during civil war. These subgroups include: the control-collaboration model literature, the principal-agent model literature, the socialization literature, the rebel governance literature, and the collective violence literature. Much of these studies are insights from civil war, which makes sense given the increasing prominence of civil wars since the mid-20th century, as well as the connection between civilian victimization and irregular civil war (Balcells & Stanton 2021). Insurgents often rely on civilian populations for protection, cover, and support, as such armed actors will attempt to 'drain the swamp' or remove a 'fifth column' by targeting civilians that are accused of being loyal to the insurgency (Bulutgil 2016; Kalyvas 2006; Mylonas 2013; Steele 2017; Valentino 2014; Wickham-Crowley 1990).

A key factor to understanding the logic of violence in civil war is the level of contention and armed actor control in a given territory. Stathis Kalyvas (2012) refers to this dynamic as the 'control-collaboration model,' which conceptualizes a logic of violence as an interaction between civilians and armed groups. Through this model, armed groups have a range of options through which to engender civilian support, access information, and prevent defection. Violence, in comparison to other options, is costly and most effective when it is selective, meaning targeted toward a specific individual. At times, armed groups seeking to coerce local populations, but without the information necessary to selectively target individuals, will rely on costly indiscriminate violence which can allow territorial domination but will likely limit the support of the local population (Downes 2006; Kalyvas 2006). Ideology and pre-war social structures play an important role in whether armed actors target civilians and how they engage with local communities (Bulutgil 2016; Gutiérrez-Sanín & Wood 2014; Staniland 2014). The control-

collaboration model helps identify the level of contention in a landscape as an important variable for the logic of violence, thereby explaining paramilitary anti-LGBT violence in areas of contention or expansion, but the presence of brutal anti-LGBT violence in relatively uncontested territories remains a puzzle.

Principal-agent arguments center the role of leadership, such as commanders, in shaping dynamics of violence, whether by encouraging lower-ranking combatants' violent behavior or being unable to stop them. Jeremy Weinstein (2006) notes that armed actors that draw on social endowments, such as political grievance or ideological cause, violently target civilians less than actors that draw on economic endowments, such as natural resources. In the former, such social endowments normally foster support from sympathetic civilians and attract voluntary recruits from the local population, establishing a social network between armed actors and civilians. In the latter, economic endowments foster fewer relations between armed actors and civilians and may rely on either forced recruitment or recruit individuals with economic goals that care little for social causes. Amelia Hoover Green (2018) further argues that strong leadership can also restrain the levels of violence from combatants. On this issue, Elisabeth Jean Wood (2009) finds that leaders may not be able or willing to risk restraining their combatants, thereby tacitly permitting certain repertoires of violence, such as sexual violence. These principal-agent explanations help to explain variation of anti-LGBT violence, but the ubiquity of this brutal violence by paramilitaries—even in areas where the groups enjoy high social endowments and have strong leaders— still puzzles.

Socialization arguments consider how the culture within armed groups relating to leadership, fellow combatants, and the broader community impact the occurrence, variation, and form of violence. When groups active in a certain area are comprised of local people, they are far less likely to commit acts of violence against civilians, normally because of social networks and local accountability (Carey & Mitchell 2017; Fujii 2009; Goodwin 2006). Further, the capacity of leadership to prevent or encourage violence within armed groups will also impact the dynamics of violence against civilians (Hoover Green 2018; Wood 2009). Amelia Hoover Green (2018) identifies education as an important socialization process that can impact how armed groups utilize violence. Leadership may encourage the targeting of civilians for reasons internal to the armed groups. Kieran Mitton (2015) finds that commanders in Sierra Leone encouraged brutal and horrific forms of violence in order to desensitize combatants to violence. In her research on gang rape during civil war, Dara Kay Cohen (2016) explores how armed actors, intentionally or not, utilize sexual violence as a way to promote combatant socialization and intra-group cohesion. Regina Bateson (2017) has analyzed how Guatemalan military socialization efforts were effective towards civilians, who accepted extralegal security patrolling as a way to prevent crime—even after the end of the civil war. Bateson's work importantly reveals how socialization during war occurs within and across group boundaries. These arguments help center the importance that social relations within (and between) groups have on patterns of violence but have limited explanatory power to explain the variation in public elements of this anti-LGBT violence, both the spectacular nature of this violence in some parts as well the public legitimization campaigns that precede and succeed their occurrence.

Rebel governance strategies, that is how armed actors attempt to exert control over a territory, can also partially explain how armed actors utilize violence against civilians, particular in their attempts to install a social order (Arjona 2016; Stewart 2018; Wood 2008). Zachariah Mampilly (2011, 5) notes how some non-state armed actors attempt to reproduce the state— providing public goods and "devot[ing] substantial resources to creating a façade of statehood." Ana Arjona argues that these groups can instill order by either attempting to work with existing local civilian governance structures (aliocracy) or build their own (rebelocracy). According to Arjona (2016), their use of violence depends on these political relations. Beyond building or coopting political institutions, rebels attempt legitimacy with communities they seek to govern through a myriad of approaches. Timothy Wickham-Crowley (2015) conceptualizes this relationship as a 'social contract' between civilians and rebels which violence violates. Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín (2015) notes, however, that when violence is deemed legitimate or provides security, it can lead to increased public support for rebel governance. Selective coercion can produce local community support and more effective rule when it aligns with community's notions of safety and justice. Other scholars have also looked at how armed actors coopt culture narratives, symbols, or values to promote local support (Hurd 2008; Mampilly 2015). Armed actors produce order through different forms of control that range in coercive and persuasive effect. The analytical insights from the literature on rebel governance that connect logics of violence with the imposition of social order contribute to conceptualizing anti-LGBT violence as a form of social control. Still, however, questions persist on the puzzle of brutality as well as variations in the characteristics of violence beyond its occurrence.

In the current literature of political violence, anti-LGBT violence has a strong connection with other forms of group-selective violence. Civilian victimization becomes more complicated when individuals become targeted because of their perceived membership in a group, as this disrupts the clear binary of selective and indiscriminate violence central to the command-collaboration model. The intentional targeting of social groups is well documented in conflict as most evident by scholars of ethnic and religious violence. The targeting of an entire ethnic group extends beyond our understanding of selective violence but is not properly represented by the concept of indiscriminate violence because in targeting a specific group, this violence is discriminate. Steele (2017, 12) refers to this group-selective violence as "collective [violence] to make a sharper distinction between random and nonrandom violence." She also delineates the conceptual line between target and scale, "in the case of collective targeting, the proportion of the population targeted depends on the group-level trait on which the targeting is based. It may encompass an entire community or be limited to a narrow profile, such as profession" (2017, 12).

Group-selective violence can still follow the logics of the control-collaboration model, often in the middle ground between selective and indiscriminate violence when it comes to strategy and risk. Groups, similar to individuals targeted by selective violence, can be targeted because of their perceived affiliation with a given armed actor or because of their assumed threat. Group-selective violence can be costly in a manner akin to indiscriminate violence. Stathis Kalyvas (2012, 660) notes, "violence targeting individuals on the basis of collective profiling…will tend to be counterproductive, leading civilians to seek protection from the rival group, provided this option is available." It is in this consideration of collective violence, that questions emerge about

the relationship between the collective victimization of marginalized social identities, such as LGBT people, in wartime dynamics of violence.

Violence against LGBT people can be considered a form of discriminate, group-selective violence, sometimes called categorical violence. Within group-selective violence, Scott Straus (2015) identifies exceptional logics related to the most prominent example, genocide, and the broader category of mass categorical violence. According to Straus (2015, 54), mass categorical violence is about "sustained, coordinated, group-selective, widespread violence, primarily orchestrated or at least condoned by states." Straus notes "genocide is not coercive but rather terminal" (2015, 25). In recognizing these specific intentions behind genocide, Straus (2015, 91) identifies five different logics of group-selective violence: normative, protective, predatory, repressive, and destructive. Mass categorical violence is most likely to occur during war and the logic through which groups become targeted, and how they become targeted, is a dynamic combination between strategy and ideology (Harff 2003; Leader Maynard 2022; Straus 2015; Valentino 2014; Verdeja 2012). Strategy underscores a rationalist approach to conceptualizing group-selective violence as a strategy of war. The activating of a boundary or cleavage can be a mobilizing mechanism through which political elites either seize or consolidate power through the elimination of political rivals. From the perspective of strategy, elites promote this discriminate violence against civilians for political or material benefit (Balcells & Stanton 2021; Brass 1997; Valentino 2014). Ideology, on the other hand, plays a role in identifying the goals or aims of a political group as well as the constructing of a certain social identity as a worthy target and the escalation of strategy to the point of extermination. In this sense, a range of social identities can become salient during crisis and ideology and pre-war social structures play an

important role in which social identities become securitized (Bulutgil 2016; Fujii 2009; Valentino 2014). Jonathan Leader Maynard (2022) helpfully identifies a way to establish a connection between these two camps, noting that the concepts are intertwined because ideology operates in a strategic environment, and as such, ideology confluences with strategy.

To date, most studies of group-selective violence in the political violence literature have focused on ethnicity, religion, and political opinion, but there has been little consideration of discriminate violence against other marginal social identities (Gutiérrez-Sanín & Wood 2017). Much of this collective violence has related to concepts of demographic engineering, such as genocide and cleansing. Cleansing is a specific form of group-selective violence that focuses on ridding a physical territory of a specific group often achieved through violence or associated threats. The logics that lead an armed actor to target a group for cleansing are similar to genocide, a mix of strategy and ideology influenced by pre-war social structures, but in this setting, the armed actors settle for displacement as opposed to extermination (Bulutgil 2016, Steele 2017). Cleansing becomes a strategy of war as a means to clear territory in order to gain access to resources or to 'drain the sea' and remove a problematic population (often assumed to be loyal to a rival group). Studies of mass ethnic violence (genocide and ethnic cleansing) identify two social considerations to understanding this specific form of violence: war as a strategic environment and war as a transformational force. In these approaches, ethnic cleansing can be conceived as both a strategy of war as well as a consequence of war. In other words, this variation of violence can make sense in terms of wartime strategy as well as become more salient as a result of existing wartime dynamics (Bulutgil 2016).

Despite the prominence of the concept of ethnic cleansing, cleansing occurs beyond ethnic groups and can occur at both a large-scale national level directed by the leadership of a state as well as at a smaller regional level organized by local armed actors. Through her analysis of patterns of violence in Colombia, Abbey Steele (2017, 36) argues for a more inclusive concept, entitled 'political cleansing,' which "captures the broader phenomenon of the expulsion of a particular group from a territory," that can encompass other forms of collective targeting. Steele finds that collective targeting and political cleansing by armed groups occur during attempts at contested territorial conquest as well as whenever there is a perceived association between a given identity and a rival group. In the case of Colombia, Steele documents how counterinsurgent paramilitaries targeted civilian supporters of a local political party affiliated with the leftist insurgency. She finds that paramilitaries collectively targeted these civilian, with the help of other loyal civilians, as a way to overcome the identification problem of separating civilians from insurgents during territorial conquest. By accepting support for a political party as proxy for support for insurgency, the paramilitaries were able to displace loyal civilians and transform the make-up of the contested territory in their favor. In providing more analytical attention to the displacement of civilians during civil wars, Steele's work connects collective targeting to dynamics of violence in non-ethnic wars, while also establishing displacement through cleansing as an intentional act of political violence as opposed to a consequence of war.

These logics relate to anti-LGBT violence in Colombia, where it is often tied to the concept of social cleansing.[17] These logics, however, do not map perfectly onto dynamics of violence

[17] The term 'social cleansing' has been contested by scholar and activist communities in Colombia for reasons tied to its indeterminate uses and problematic associations (particularly the term 'cleansing'). The prominent report by the National Center of Historic Memory (CNMH 2015) on social cleansing in Colombia is entitled *Limpieza Social: una violencia mal nombrada* ('Social Cleansing: A Poorly Named Violence'). In conversations throughout

against LGBT populations or other forms of violence against social difference. While marginalized social identities can become the focus of collective targeting— such as when these identities are perceived as loyal to insurgents— the relatively weak social positioning and overall precarity of LGBT people in Colombia suggests a different logic is at play. While it is possible to securitize social difference and construct the marginal as a threat in need of elimination, it is unlikely that social cleansing can become a similar strategy of territorial control as Steele illustrates with political cleansing and others demonstrate with ethnic cleansing. By nature of their marginality, LGBT people are less likely to have power or property in a given region and their displacement would likely have less of an impact on the composition of a territory. These groups are not nations-in-waiting nor are they potential fifth columns. Given that armed actors spend time and resources collectively targeting these groups, their removal must relate to wartime logics, but understanding the role of this form of collective violence in conflict requires further analysis.

In this dissertation, I contend that the logics of violence against LGBT people will relate to other populations, as well as reveal subtle assumptions in the established literature of political violence. I thus focus on the collective targeting of LGBT people as a starting point to highlight how violence against social difference can relate to wartime logics. Furthermore, the study of

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Colombia, I encountered little consensus and many opinions on what 'counts' as social cleansing. In this dissertation, I use the term and define it as *the collective targeting of a social group to either encourage displacement, diminish the visibility of said minority, or curb a behavior*. As such, in this conceptualization, it becomes both a physical, in terms of people present in a territory, and figurative, in terms of visible behaviors observed in a territory, phenomenon. This definition ties it to broader debates in the literature on ethnic and political cleansing (Bulutgil 2016; Mann 2005; Steele 2017). 'Social' cleansing becomes an apt term to define this form of collective violence for two reasons. Akin to ethnic and political cleansing, it is a targeting based on a collective defined by a 'social' identity. Further, in line with Fujii's (2008, 17) definition of social violence as a form of violence "oriented toward others", 'social cleansing' is a violent phenomenon that had as much to do with the targets of the violence as well as the broader community. Social theorists consider the addition of the adjective of social to reflect the intersubjective nature of a phenomenon (Hedstrom and Swedberg, 1998).

anti-LGBT violence as just one form of violence against social difference is analytically productive because it challenges three assumptions in the literature of collective violence: first, that research on other collective identities, such as ethnic violence, can sufficiently explain this variant of collective violence; second, that research on gender-based violence, including sexual violence, can appropriately encompass cases of anti-LGBT violence; and third, such violence is not necessarily a result of war dynamics, but rather a continuation of normative anti-LGBT violence experienced during peace that is perhaps further escalated by war.

1.6 Paramilitarism in Colombia & The Puzzle of Anti-LGBT Violence

This dissertation presents a theory of anti-LGBT violence through an inductive study of the phenomenon during the Colombian civil war.[18] The Colombian civil war was marked by high levels of civilian victimization, particularly inflicted by government-aligned paramilitaries in the name of counterinsurgency (Hristov, 2009). Paramilitaries in the Colombian conflict pursued counterinsurgent tactics through the targeting of individuals, whom they viewed to be aligned with the guerrillas. At times, this targeting went beyond the individual and became collective, particularly during election periods when support for an individual party or participation in a labor union could serve as a proxy for support of insurgency (Steele 2017). It is in this landscape that the violent victimization of LGBT populations produces a puzzle. LGBT populations were not affiliated with a certain ideology, nor were they inherently tied to a certain cleavage of the conflict. Yet many, if not all, paramilitary groups specifically targeted them in a brutal manner. The ubiquity of their targeting proved to be unique in the broader landscape of civilian

[18] Chapter 4 of this dissertation presents a detailed history of paramilitarism in Colombia as well as a broader introduction to dynamics of anti-LGBT violence in Colombia.

victimization by paramilitaries. Thus, while the form of this violence varied, its occurrence did not. In such a contested landscape, why would paramilitaries expend time, energy, and resources to target a social minority with no clear ties to the conflict? Why did this violence vary in its characteristics? And why did it utilize so much brutality?

Colombia has experienced war for the better part of 66 years. Ten years of civil war, known as *La Violencia*, starting in 1948 between the liberal and conservative parties produced a power-sharing agreement that provided a tepid peace. Frustrated with an elite agreement that failed to consider large swaths of the rural *campesino*[19] population and repressed their mobilization efforts, leftist groups took up arms and declared war against the state in 1964. These groups found refuge in the jungle and mountains, among some sympathetic poor rural populations. To wage their war against the state, they targeted politicians and government institutions, financing their efforts by taxing landholders, trafficking drugs, and extorting members of perceived elite agrarian classes through kidnapping ransoms (Gilbert 2022; Salinas & Lancheros 2008).

In the wake of the terror spread by guerrilla insurgency, armed self-defense forces began to appear around the country in the 1980s. Both an urban and rural affair, these groups were often financed by local business and political elites. Charged with protecting both the local population and their business interests, these groups quickly transitioned from a defensive to offensive posture. They operated, at first, with the tacit approval of the state, but as time went on, this tacit approval became thinly veiled collaboration. At the time, the United States government provided advice to the Colombian government on counterinsurgency, which included the creation of

[19] *Campesino* is the Colombian Spanish word for agrarian peasant. Given that 'peasant' can be read as a pejorative in English, I follow Teo Ballvé's (2020) example and use the word *'campesino*.'

civilian defense forces, or paramilitaries, to destroy the 'political institutions' of insurgency, meaning local collaborative civilian populations. These paramilitaries then became tasked with protecting the parts of the country where the state had limited reach, namely rural and poor areas.

As noted in the previous section, studies of civilian victimization help explain why paramilitaries targeted civilians as a strategy of war. However, they are limited in their capacity to explain variation in how the paramilitaries target highly visible, marginalized populations with no clear ties to wartime cleavages in brutal ways. The puzzle becomes even more interesting in Colombia, where much of the existing literature on logics of violence has ignored a social politic related to sexuality or gender identity. From the perspective of rationalists, the brutal collective victimization of sexual and gender minorities is puzzling because it cannot be fully explained by the established logics of violence of this war. These groups were not obvious threats to armed actor control; yet they were repeatedly targeted. One could argue that given the marginalization of LGBT populations, this violence was low-cost and thus easily pursuable in highly homophobic environments, but even if there was a low-cost to this violence, it still had an impact for which paramilitaries in contested environments had to account.

It becomes even more difficult to explain this puzzle when considering its variation. While anti-LGBT violence became a standard act of paramilitaries throughout the country, in some places, the extremeness of this violence, its public nature and cruelty, became notable in comparison to other cases. To date, if anyone with a professional knowledge of the war in Colombia is asked about anti-LGBT violence, they will most likely be able to tell you the actions of one specific paramilitary group whose behavior precluded them from amnesty in transitional justice processes

and produced an infamy for their cruelty against LGBT populations: the paramilitaries of Montes de María.[20] Despite being unable to account for the form of this violence, its occurrence is not surprising. As the scholarship of gender-based violence during war argues, war exacerbates existing social structures, particularly those relating to gender, and a homophobic and patriarchal society will inevitably worsen violence against LGBT populations. But this violence did not appear in a random manner, and its predominance in a country as diverse in culture and people as Colombia hints at a wartime logic that merits further investigation. Even if these people were despised, they were still human, and their deaths, and public suffering, must have had an impact on the communities in which they lived— even on people unlike them.

Colombia serves as a productive case study country because of the nature of its conflict. A six-decade, asymmetric war between multiple leftist guerrilla groups, conservative paramilitary groups, organized criminal groups, and state forces contributed to a multi-front war with high regional and temporal variation in conflict dynamics. Additionally, akin to other insurgencies, civilian victimization became a pattern of violence adopted by all parties to the conflict, but most predominately the counterinsurgent paramilitary forces. And within these forces, an intolerance to social difference became a characteristic adopted by most units. In this dissertation, I focus specifically on paramilitary violence because the performative, public nature of paramilitary targeting provides a clear way to conceptually distinguish between civil war violence against LGBT people from general wartime violence in the country as well violence that results from anti-LGBT social prejudice separate from wartime logics. Additionally, the autonomous nature of paramilitaries and their near-ubiquitous presence in contested territories allows for an

[20] Various interviews, experts, government officials, international organization members, journalists, and NGO workers, 2020 and 2021, *see* Roa Avendaño et al. 2014.

exploration of variation within-group and sub-nationally. While the arguments of this thesis could apply to leftist groups in the country[21], I chose to study one group in order to follow and identify these logics of anti-LGBT violence more closely.

1.7 Thesis Organization

In my next chapter, Chapter 2, I present my theoretical framework. This theoretical framework, which I refer to as a 'theory of anti-LGBT violence', is presented in three parts, or levels of analysis. First, I start at a 'macro-level' and attempt to connect anti-LGBT violence to wartime logics as a foundational step in establishing a theory of anti-LGBT violence. To do so, I start by conceptualizing 'queer difference' as it relates to studies of collective violence. Recognizing this difference emphasizes how current approaches are limited in their potential to explain anti-LGBT violence. I then introduce an approach to recognizing acts of anti-LGBT violence as a matter of politics by focusing on interventions from the criminology literature on hate crime and overkill. In the second section, I develop a meso-level theory by presenting a typology of anti-LGBT violence which focuses on two factors: transformative ideology and social embeddedness. In presenting these factors, I inductively build off empirical examples from my research Colombia as well as literature in civil war studies in order to establish my theory. This typology identifies three forms of anti-LGBT violence: social cleansing, social brutalization, and social prejudice. From there, I conclude with a consideration of anti-LGBT violence at the micro-level through a presentation of brutality as a social mechanism. In conceptualizing brutality as a social mechanism, I relate acts of brutality with my theory of anti-LGBT violence through a process that I recognize as 'abjection.'

[21] A point that I will return to in the Conclusion of this dissertation.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I introduce my research design. I start by presenting the process of this research, or rather, the context that produced this project in its current form. I then introduce my methodological approach which focuses on paired historical comparison of two case study sites in order to inductively build theory. I conclude with a consideration of research ethics with a particular focus on how to study and present violence against marginalized communities.

Chapter 4 presents the history of paramilitary violence in Colombia as well as the entity of the phenomenon of anti-LGBT violence during the Colombian civil war. This history and context chapter helps to answer a foundational question of the project: is anti-LGBT violence during war a matter of politics or is it just an exacerbation of existing social prejudices? In the chapter, I argue that violence against LGBT people became a distinct phenomenon tied to the logics of war. To defend this argument, I present a brief history of the Colombian context and an overall summary of the dynamics of violence against LGBT people with a particular focus on how the paramilitaries publicly promoted a strategy of anti-LGBT violence in line with their wartime goals. I build on existing Colombian historical academic scholarship as well as historical sources on the subject, while also presenting unique government data on violent victimization that comes from my own analyses. I use this chapter to situate readers in the contextual history of the Colombian conflict, while also rejecting a frequently encountered doubt in my research project: that this phenomenon is more tied to social prejudice than political violence. I conclude with a presentation of the process of anti-LGBT violence and how it relates to the proposed theory in Chapter 2.

Next, I explore the social mechanism of brutality in Chapter 5 through an analysis of media coverage of anti-LGBT violence. In this chapter, I ask 'what can brutal forms of violence do that other established forms of violence cannot?' Building on rhetoric studies approaches in political science, as well as political theory, psychology, and anthropology, I demonstrate the broader interpretation of anti-LGBT violence in the community at the national level in order to highlight both the socio-political impact of this violence as well as the importance of brutality in these acts of violence. To do this, I review media coverage of LGBT violence at the height of the conflict. In analyzing the discourses around disgust, hate, and eroticism, I argue that brutal violence produces a stigma that can legitimize the act of violence against the person and reify their exclusion from the social body. I refer to this process of exclusion, abetted by violence, from the broader community, as social abjection. I conclude by stating that whether strategic or not, armed actors must deal with the aftermath of the stigma that their violence produces.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I present my two case study sites. For each case study site, I process trace along the guidelines of my proposed theoretical framework, using a mixture of historical and legal documents, along with expert and witness interviews. Chapter 6 is a case study of anti-LGBT theory by paramilitaries in Puerto Boyacá and the Magdalena Medio Boyacense. This region was a conservative heartland that birthed paramilitarism in the country. The paramilitary unit of focus was well embedded in the population and attempted to reinforce a social structure that already excluded LGBT people. To achieve these goals, they established a moral order based on an anti-subversive conservatism that cleansed the population of all undesirables in a form violence that I label social cleansing. This violence was brutal, necroviolent, and predictable. Chapter 7 focuses on anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries in San Onofre and the Montes de

María, a region renowned for its leftist activism. The paramilitaries attempted to seize control and transform the region from a perceived guerrilla sympathizer hotbed to a 'respectable community' aligned with their anti-subversive conservative vision of Colombia. However, the paramilitaries were only able to embed themselves with the local elites and not the broader population, which they perceived to be aligned with subversion. As such, the paramilitaries attempted to destroy the existing social fabric of the community in order to weave a new one through a form of violence that I call social brutalization. This violence was brutal, spectacular, unpredictable, and notably sexual in nature.

In my conclusion, I pursue a historical paired comparative analysis of two case study sites, which both exhibited forms of anti-LGBT violence in variate ways, to underscore that variation resulted from the different social conditions of paramilitarism in the respective regions. I build on this comparison in order to review my theory of anti-LGBT violence during civil war. This theory builds on my empirical chapters to argue that anti-LGBT violence has a transformative impact on the community where it occurs because of how brutality facilitates a process of social abjection that socializes civilians against the targeted social minorities. In the conclusion, I argue that while this starting theory might not be able to explain every case of anti-LGBT violence, it helps make sense of the patterns observed in Colombia. I further reflect on both the scope conditions and generalizability of my proposed theory by applying it to a broader universe of cases, including other armed actors in Colombia and elsewhere. I also lay the groundwork for future research on violence against social difference and future research avenues of this own study. The dissertation reinforces a focus on violence against social difference during civil war as a way to further understand violence as a dynamic social process

Chapter 2 A Theory of Anti-LGBT Violence

"*Violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark*" – Judith Butler[22]

"*You destroy what you think is difference"* – Barbara Kruger[23]

In this chapter, I develop a theory of anti-LGBT violence. I start at the 'macro-level' of theorization with a conceptualization of anti-LGBT violence as tied to wartime logics. From there, I proceed to 'meso-level' theory and introduce a typology of anti-LGBT violence. After presenting and explaining this typology in detail, I follow with 'micro-level' theory with a consideration of brutality as the key mechanism in this form of violence. Together, these three levels of theorization present a theory of anti-LGBT violence to be further explored in the rest of the dissertation.

2.1 Recognizing the Wartime Logics of Anti-LGBT Violence

To establish a connection between anti-LGBT violence and logics of civil war, I explore the concept of 'queer difference' in considerations of collective violence as well as analytical approaches to recognizing acts of anti-LGBT violence as political violence. This section presents two foundational claims of this thesis. First, that violence against LGBT people during civil war is of importance to the broader literature of political violence studies because of how it complicates existing understandings of collective violence by centering a unique social group as

[22] (2004, 36).
[23] (1981).

the unit of analysis. In recognizing the analytical potential of exploring logics of violence against a social group whose structural marginalization differs from other oft examined social groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities, I reinforce the potential of scholarship that conceptualizes violence as a social process. Second, that anti-LGBT violence can be studied as a matter of politics when analyses take into consideration the broader context and interpretation of the violence.

2.1.1 Conceptualizing Queer Difference in the Studies of Collective Violence

To establish the relationship between how and why anti-LGBT violence during civil war happens, I build off the work of Daniel Feierstein (2013) and Lee Ann Fujii (2009) to understand acts of violence as dynamic and transformational social processes. By understanding genocide as a dynamic, social process, Fujii (2009, 17) conceptualized its associated events as "a temporal and spatial unfolding of ambiguous actions, shifting contexts, and actors with multiple and contradictory motives." Feierstein's (2013, 14) conceptualization of genocide as a social practice "composed of shared beliefs and understandings as well as shared actions" mirrors this interpretive understanding of violence. This focus on violence *as a process* allows for a consideration of violence's changes and impacts in a given context in addition to explorations of causal mechanisms. I add the concept of *transformation* to these scholars' focus on dynamism in order to underscore that processes of violence are transformational of broader social and political landscapes. In her latest work, Fujii (2021) explores how public acts of violence transform witnesses and perpetrators, and through this dissertation I contend how brutal violence can also transform victims as a result of wartime logics.

Key to understanding the collective victimization of LGBT people as a process of violence is delineating how the concept of sexual orientation and gender identities differs from other forms of group identity. In exploring anti-LGBT violence against LGBT people during civil war, I engage with the concept of 'queer difference,' or how the social structures of sexuality and gender identity differ from other more studied social structures such as ethnicity. Scholars have long identified identity as a relational concept— one's sense of self is often tied to their understanding of the 'other' (Berger 1966). This relational conception of identity is even more tense when considering sexuality because of sexuality's unique characteristics. Sexuality, understood as the associated identity of one's sexual desire, is a fluid concept with no obvious 'visible,' 'physical,' or 'material' characteristics. Additionally, sexuality is not 'passed on' from one generation to another in a predictable logic. Religious and ethnic minorities are part of a community and culture by birth. LGBT youth are not born to LGBT families nor into an established community: any family could produce LGBT kin. In its ontological association with a social practice that defies prediction or certain recognition, sexuality and gender expansive identities reject fixed constructions and requires a certain cultural context for its legibility (Gómez 2013; Sedgwick 2008; Young 2011). Cultural context matters because in given contexts, non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities are conceptualized as behavior, thus impacting how people relate morally to the phenomenon. An identity might be recognized as fixed and intractable, whereas a behavior can be modified through punitive enforcement and disciplinary action. As Iris Marion Young (2011, 60) notes, "Homophobia is one of the deepest fears of difference precisely because the border between gay and straight is constructed as the most permeable; anyone at all can become gay, especially me, so the only way to defend my

identity is to turn away with irrational disgust." This intersubjective, performative element of sexuality, which also relates to expansive gender identities, defies standard notions of ethnic identity, which are normally defined by legible immutable characteristics and cultural heritage. Sexuality and expansive gender identities, in their unpredictability and instability as a concept, produces a unique logic that is separate from ethnicity or other identities.

As opposed to being seen as a unitary subject or monolithic community, as members of ethnic communities often are, LGBT people are individualized, sorted by their intersecting identities (of race, gender, class, disability, amongst others) and punished differently. Sexuality and gender identity as social structures further differ then from ethnicity in their intersubjectivity (Sedgwick 2008). When someone reveals themselves to be of a certain ethnic group or religion, the person receiving this information is not often impacted personally on an ontological level. When someone 'comes out' as LGBT, they are actualizing their self-understanding and making a claim of recognition to another person. That person must then make a series of calculations with personal effect: they must decide whether to believe the person, then they must decide whether to accept the LGBT person's claim or to reject it for a host of reasons connected to a broader cultural script. In making this decision, the person receiving this information must think about the implications of their response: they must ask themselves how having an LGBT person in their life will impact people's perceptions of them. By accepting this person or allowing a public association, might they be viewed as less moral? Might there be consequences?

War exacerbates these tensions of social difference. Given that pre-war social structures impact dynamics of violence, variations in these pre-war social structures will further affect violence

against social difference (Boesten 2014; Bulutgil 2016; Straus 2015). When an identity becomes securitized as a threat, civilians with relations to those identities must make a choice. Here, again, forms of collective targeting will vary depending on the affiliated structures of identities. Ethnic groups might leave en masse, but families with a known insurgent, a public supporter of a certain political party, or an LGBT person will have a different risk calculation. Conversely, the selective or public targeting of someone from one of these backgrounds will have different interpretations based on the cultural context. In Colombia, given the association of LGBT people with moral indecency, drugs, and HIV/AIDS, their collective targeting was witnessed as a 'necessary evil' in many communities and sometimes even requested by local elites (Manrique 2020; Taussig 2005). The fact that armed actors central to the conflict performed this violence throughout the country, with variation depending on certain contexts, demonstrates that this violence was closely tied to the local logics of war and not simply an escalation of pre-war generalized societal violence. This relation between anti-LGBT violence and wartime logics is further reinforced through the numerous documentations found that have revealed that the order to target LGBT populations often came from paramilitary commanders (Castellanos Roso 2014; Comisión de la Verdad 2022; CNMH 2015; Gónzalez 2014). These dynamics suggest a different relation to collective targeting than is currently established in the literature. I rely on these differences to establish violence against LGBT people as an intensive, yet low-cost, and highly symbolic form of violence that can socially transform a local environment.

A focus on the violent victimization of sexual and gender minorities reinforces the social elements of violence. Peter Berger argues that "identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world" (1966,

111). According to Berger, identity consists of collective meanings that are attached to different societal institutions. The 'distribution of knowledge' in society allows for one's identity to be read and understood by another. This intersubjectivity of LGBT identity has unique impacts tied to existing structures of power (Mason 2003). Dissimilar to ethnic identities, sexual orientations and gender identities can be ontologically rejected and dismissed as behavior. After rejection, an LGBT person's claim of recognition is denied, and their non-hegemonic identity is replaced with a hegemonic identity. However, they are not necessarily cut off from the other person, as this LGBT person maintains other identities that this other person still accepts. Though the LGBT person's self-understanding is denied, they can still be part of an intimate community and thus their vulnerability to violence is impacted by the salience of these other social ties during conflict. Violence related to their sexual orientation and gender identity could target them for extermination or cleansing from a region or it can be used to reform them and make them no longer act out these social claims (Butler 2002; Foucault 1978, Villamil 2020). Violence then becomes a way to reject an individual's claims for socio-political recognition (Feinberg 1970).

A further complicating factor in investigating collective violence against LGBT people is that it occurs in both peace and war times and often relates to the social claims (or visibility) of these populations. As a result, this group-selective violence can appear as if it is a continuation of the anti-LGBT violence experienced during peace. Distilling the wartime logics surrounding anti-LGBT violence and other discriminate violence against socially marginal collectives requires an in-depth consideration of how this violence occurs in a broader context of war. A deeper consideration of the form of this violence helps to reveal new mechanisms that rely on socio-political meaning: a focus on the brutality of this violence, its dehumanizing potential, and the

cultural associations can all help identify new logics (Fujii 2017; Mason 2003; Milillo 2006; Milton 2015; Straus 2015). This continuum of anti-LGBT violence between peace and war parallels the literature on violence against women during and after war (Boesten 2014; Cockburn 2004; Enloe 1989; Moser & Clark 2001) as well as broader theorization of wartime gender-based violence (Loken & Hagen 2022). In this literature, scholars have looked at how women become uniquely targeted by armed actors for reasons attached to strategy, ideology, and social control. In considering the social processes of anti-LGBT violence, I build on the literatures of gender-based violence and violent performance to argue that symbolic violence against a physical body can be a stand in for 'the social body' (Fujii 2021; Taylor 1997). In these contexts, violence against LGBT people or women becomes interpreted as violence against an entire people (Yuval-Davis 1997).

This reading of anti-LGBT violence as a norm-enforcing violence tied to logics of morality and security is not dissimilar to existing studies of gender-based violence during war, or more specifically, violence against women. Scholars of gender-based violence have identified how war exacerbates existing patriarchal social structures, leaving women more vulnerable to violence. They document how in highly violent contexts women are expected to act in a certain way associated with their gender and those that deviate from the norm can become targeted. This violence is often prejudicial and punitive, and at times, it can be securitized. As seen in the Argentine military dictatorship, women activists were viewed as dangerous and in need of punishment/repression (Taylor 1997; Treacy 1996). These punishments were often sexual in nature and thus relating to one of the most commonly studied forms of gendered violence: sexual

violence (Cohen 2016; Nordås & Cohen 2021; Wood 2006, 2009).[24] Similar to anti-LGBT violence, the impact of sexual violence is intersubjective, impacting both individual and community, and thus the strategic potential of both forms of violence by an armed actor depends on its context (Boesten 2014; Carpenter 2006; Cohen 2016; Koos and Lindsey 2022; Wood 2006, 2018; Zarkov 2001). Both forms of violence can be perpetrated as an act of punishment against those deemed 'troublesome' (Goldstein 2003; Stefatos 2016). Different from anti-LGBT violence, however, sexual violence is often a costly strategy of violence that strains relations between the armed actor and civilians. Thus, exploring these differences is key to understanding how variant forms of gendered violence contribute to different logics of collective violence.

Central to these performative acts of violence is the public process of identifying an enemy. Carl Schmitt (2005, 2007, 2008) centered the construction of enemy and violence in both his definitions of politics and war. To simplify Schmitt's arguments, politics is the process through which one identifies an enemy and war is when violence against enemy can be justified. Studies of identity and conflict attempt to elucidate this process of identifying an enemy and unpack how it escalates to violence. But in some cases, it is an act of violence that identifies or produces someone as the enemy. To Iris Marion Young (2011), the marginalization of certain groups is not always intentional but is established through practices of exclusion, often violent. She argues that prejudice-based violence and identity are endogenous in that once a social group becomes associated with stigma as a result of violent exclusion, violence against them becomes easier to justify. In the Colombian context, Andrés Fernando Suárez (2007, 2022) has noted how paramilitaries utilized brutality during massacres as a way to associate the targeted population

[24] A growing literature has also begun to explore and recognize the under-reported phenomenon of conflict-related sexual violence against men, (*see e.g.*, Schulz 2018, 2020 and Schulz & Touquet 2020).

with the enemy. Suárez recognizes brutal massacres as communicative acts that not only intimidate but assign guilt to the targeted victims.

Anti-LGBT violence, then, not only results from stigma but can produce it as well. María Mercedes Gómez (2013) conceptualizes this dual nature of anti-LGBT violence in her concept of prejudice-based violence, which she identifies as both hierarchical and exclusionary. These acts not only reject difference, Gómez argues, but also reinforce it. An act of violence based on sexual prejudice identifies the LGBT people as an 'other' and subjects them to a subordinate status as 'lesser.' Violence is further constitutive in constructing an 'us' and 'them'. Given the insecurity of war, civilians might take comfort in their inclusion in the 'us' or the homogenized group 'protected' by an armed actor. In this sense, during war, violence committed against LGBT people operates at both an expressive and instrumental level. Its target could be as important as its witness. Akin to other forms of categorical violence, this violence has a social impact: as it occurs in a territory with an armed group presence, civilians might begin to act differently. Violence creates terror and civilians will change their behavior to avoid it. Yet, the change in behavior from civilians depends on both social structure and identity group targeted (Ellis 1995, 2001). In accounts of social cleansing, townspeople might feel tense but unless they are directly related to an identified deviant group or have someone in their family considered part of those groups, they know they will be okay (Taussig 2005).[25] Thus, collective targeting against the socially marginal is not always terror producing— in fact, it can be comforting. Iris Marion Young (2011) notes that an element of the oppression produced by prejudice-based violence is in

[25] Sometimes families might even accept the violence of a member if it can be viewed as legitimate. In an ethnography of a small, conservative town in Antioquia, Melissa Ponce explores how families have come to accept the death of their loved ones, at the hands of paramilitaries, because of their drug use (Hristov 2009).

its toleration by the broader community. She argues that this violence could legitimize an armed actor's presence in a community or monopoly on violence. Indeed, with the right framing, it can even be considered a public service.

2.1.2 Identifying Anti-LGBT Violence as a Matter of Politics

In this conceptualization of anti-LGBT violence, a central question is related to intent; that is, how do we know the source of this victimization not only resulted from prejudicial belief but was a matter of politics? To defend these assertions, I rely on insights from the criminology literature on hate crimes and overkill (Dugan & Chenoweth 2020; Hall 2014; Perry 2001, 2003; Solarina et al. 2019; Tomsen 2013). These literatures demonstrate that there are core themes which criminologists use to recognize prejudice in violent acts. The first theme is premeditation. Premeditation, as defined as the prior planning of an episode of violence, can provide important context to underscore the crime (Solarina et al. 2019). Visible acts of premediated anti-LGBT violence often included threats or other public displays of prejudice that could be ideologically or strategically rooted (Dugan & Chenoweth 2020). Less visible acts of premeditation might be personal communications, documents which might reveal prejudice or intention to harm, or prior acquisition of the murder weapon (Hall 2014; Perry 2001, 2003). A second theme is repertoire or characteristic of violence. As noted by criminologists, many acts of gender and prejudice-based violence involve certain repertoires of violence associated with sexuality and intimacy, as well as certain characteristics such as brutality (Chopin & Beauregard 2019; Solarina et al. 2019). Acts of anti-LGBT violence often include genital mutilation, overkill, and semiotic harm as seen through signs left on bodies or necroviolence (Bell & Vila 1996; Tomsen 2013). A third theme is

familiarity. A feature of many acts of anti-LGBT violence (as well as overkill and gender-based violence) is that they are perpetrated by familiars of the victim (Solarina et al. 2019; Tomsen 2013). Anti-LGBT violence requires this familiarity to begin with because the perpetrator must know the sexual orientation and gender identity of the victim, which is not always obvious.

The three themes show up in different ways within this project. And thus, though prejudice is a core analytical concept in identifying bias or *selectivity* in victimization, the concept works in different ways depending on the context. When looking at the Colombian government data on acts of violence, the inclusion of any LGBT identities in the database before 2014 is a result of the recognition of anti-LGBT bias in the act of violence, as the data had to be retroactively added to include LGBT identities, which were not part of the dataset until 2014. As such, I operate with confidence that the LGBT victimization identified by the government, through extremely underreported, is a violence predicated on the victim's LGBT identity.[26] I also worked with another dataset of 752 acts of violence that I collated from 16 NGO and government reports on LGBT violence with another researcher, Ila Axelrod Zelmanovitz. Given that these reports document in detail acts of LGBT victimization that we then code, I know enough context to recognize the elements of anti-LGBT violence. In other parts of the project, I utilize other data that further detail the episodes of violence. Where possible, I try to reveal how anti-LGBT bias (using the three aforementioned categories) played a role in the perpetration of this violence. Of course, these tellings of events require a level of interpretation that I attempt to triangulate with varied data sources, a technique inspired by Jana Krause's (2018) work on intercommunal violence. Using

[26] Mauricio Albarracín (2011) identifies three challenges to collecting data on anti-LGBT wartime violence in Colombia: 1. Survivors may not report (or reveal to data collectors) the violence as a result of fear, shame, or stigma; 2. Socio-cultural justifications for this violence may hide the role of homo/transphobia in the victimizing act; 3. Socio-cultural conditions impact the form of this violence, affecting its expression and visibility.

multiple data sources that reveal similar dynamics is my way of accounting for the inadequacy of any singular source to 'prove' these dynamics.

The study of anti-LGBT violence exceeds conceptual binaries established in the study of conflict. The actions of LGBT victimization by paramilitaries straddle distinctions between selective and indiscriminate violence. They are discriminate in that they target specific individuals with the aid of information from the community, but they are indiscriminate in that these individuals are targeted because of their identity within a collective group. Paramilitaries purposefully target individuals who are LGBT because informants identify them or because they did not conform to expectations of gender and/or sexual in public. Still, these people are not targeted for any specific reason other than being LGBT. As such, anti-LGBT violence acts as both a repertoire of violence (or a specific form of violence), as well as an indiscriminate form of collective violence against a specific group, who is often targeted because they are viewed as deviants outside the desired moral order of the paramilitaries. An analytical focus on anti-LGBT violence, then, has the potential to complicate how we conceptualize violence: not only in terms of who is targeting, but also in terms of how. These tensions relate to the aforementioned broader ontological challenges in conceptualizing anti-LGBT violence. LGBT people may be conceived of as their own community, but they are not insular or cohesive like a traditional ethnic group, thus they can never be truly purged from a community. Though the processes that *otherize* LGBT people might be similar to ethnic groups, the logics sought to target them thus differ.

Recent research on sexual violence during war provides a good example of how dynamics of anti-LGBT violence can be better investigated. Though rape increases during wartime, sexual violence

is not a given in civil war and there are variations of how it occurs. Elisabeth Jean Wood (2018) asks *when is rape rare?* and creates a conceptual binary between these variations focused on intent: sexual violence in conflict can either be considered a top-down strategy of the war (labeled as a 'policy') or it can be a tolerated behavior that results from armed leadership not wanting (or able) to curb it (labeled as a 'practice'). Such an approach implies that the internal 'rules' about sexual violence within the armed group will impact its occurrence. These differentiations could apply to anti-LGBT violence and certainly did during the Colombian civil war, as will be documented in the following empirical chapters. The utility of anti-LGBT violence in winning over or scaring a population depended on the form of the violence as well as the local social context.

The public nature of sexual violence during war has been the focus of many scholars. During wartime, gang rape is the most commonly reported form of rape during war (Boesten 2014; Bourke 2007; Theidon 2009; Wood 2003), which Dara Kay Cohen (2016) attributes to its use as a socialization tool for armed groups with low intragroup cohesion. In other words, these acts become tools through which armed actors can bond—especially important for groups with forced and child conscription. The role of public violence in forging social ties with the broader community has also been identified elsewhere (Fujii 2009, 2017; Goldstein 2003; Hoover Green 2018; Kalyvas 1999; Weinstein 2006).[27] This dissertation then builds on this previous research to understand how public acts of anti-LGBT violence can potentially foster cohesion between perpetrators and witnesses through processes of socialization.

[27] An interesting paper by Karen Franklin (2004) considers these previous two points on the different socialization processes of violence to argue that gang rape against women and gang anti-LGBT violence committed by young men are similar practices of male social bonding based on the subordination of women and LGBT people.

2.2 A Typology of Anti-LGBT Violence

In this section, I attempt to develop a theory of anti-LGBT violence by presenting a typology of its variation. I identify three variant forms of anti-LGBT violence: *social cleansing*, *social brutalization*, and *social prejudice*. I argue that these three forms of anti-LGBT violence result from two factors of the armed actor: the presence of a transformational ideology and their capacity to socially embed.

Throughout the Colombian armed conflict, LGBT people became the targets of violence from all parties to the population as well as local civilians. The most prominent victimizer of this community, as well as all civilians more generally, were the paramilitaries (Comisión de la Verdad 2022). The paramilitaries sought both geographic and social control through collective violence, which included the violent victimization of LGBT people as well as other social groups, through a process known as social cleansing. Through acts of collective violence, paramilitaries could achieve geographic control by taking over the physicality of a region and controlling the presence of populations within its territory, as well as their behaviors and movements. Collective violence tied to a social politic of anti-subversion also facilitated paramilitary efforts of social control by dictating a moral order, or the realm of appropriate behavior in order to control the actions of populations within its territories. Paramilitaries would argue for the need to 'cleanse' a town and rid it of 'subversives' whom they perceived as aligned with leftist guerrillas. Anyone who went against their moral social code, which included such trivial behavior as men having earrings or women wearing miniskirts, would be identified as deviant and threatened. Álvaro Camacho (1990) referred to the paramilitary violence utilized to

construct a moral order as a 'moralistic violence.' Robert Wuthnow's (1989, 145) work on moral orders helps to conceive of moral orders as the performative element of ideology:

> The idea of ritual being a symbolic-expressive aspect of social life suggests an analog for understanding the social role of ideology. If the moral order consists of definitions of the manner in which social relations should be constructed, the signals concerning these definitions need to be sent—signals that social relations are indeed patterned in the desired manner and that actors can be counted on to behave in expected ways.

Without this moral order, then the discursive and ideological politic of 'cleanliness' purposed by the paramilitaries would not be effective. Despite a unified strategy of collective targeting, the characteristics of this violence varied, in terms of *who* was targeted and *how*.

I typologize the different forms of anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries in order to present a beginning theoretical framework to understand both the phenomenon itself and its variation (see Figure 1). In line with Ana Arjona's work on wartime social order (2016), I recognize typology as an effective form of theory building. Similar to Arjona's typology (2016), my typology of anti-LGBT violence has three identified variations; yet I focus on only two variations as the third serves as a 'null case', which I identify as removed from wartime logics. I argue that two factors influenced how paramilitaries utilized anti-LGBT violence in their social control efforts during wartime. First, their adoption of a socially transformative ideology that attempted to impose an anti-subversive conservative ideology that sought to orient the population away from communism through a focus on social purity and moral orders. And second, their capacity to socially embed themselves in a manner strategic to local political cleavages that aligned against 'deviant' populations, such as LGBT populations. When able to embed, the paramilitaries publicly manipulated local prejudices through acts of violence in a manner that legitimized their presence and attempted control over a territory. The cohering frame for their violence was an

alleged war against subversion and deviancy which was an expansion of their broader political project against leftist guerrilla insurgency.

The process of anti-LGBT paramilitary varied based on the specific paramilitary group, but there were standard elements. First, the paramilitaries arrive in a town and then would ban a list of behaviors, such as being outside of one's home after a given hour, that they viewed as 'subversive,' thus introducing a moral narrative into their presence. Second, the paramilitaries would threaten transgressors of this behavior—at a public level (often through pamphlets or public notices) and at an individual level (through targeted threats). Then, if the targeted individual did not leave or change their behavior, they would be targeted with brutal violence that had a semiotic element. The violence undertaken by the paramilitaries would range from corrective (and not lethal) to exterminatory (lethal). In its aftermath, there was a public justification of this violence based on the assumed moral code.

The form, dynamics, and logics of anti-LGBT violence thus varied based on the paramilitary group. In this theory of anti-LGBT violence, I argue that these variations in wartime logics resulted from differences in their capacity to socially embed. I further argue that a starter condition for whether this violence is tied to wartime logics, however, was whether the group pursued their transformative ideology in the locality under its control. During the temporal period of focus during this study, this was near ubiquitous in paramilitary groups who were 'aligned' with the State and against the guerrilla. As a result, targeted violence against LGBT

populations did not exist without the presence of a socially conservative ideology.[28] The second condition, which I refer to as social embeddedness, had an impact on which forms of violence were strategically effective (if at all). Social embeddedness had two elements—the relationship between the armed actor and local civilian populations (social cohesion) as well as the popularity of the imposed social reforms (moral cohesion). When the social cleavages were more horizontal – that is, where paramilitaries, local elites, and the broader populations could be aligned against a common enemy (namely guerrillas) – this violence was often controlled, effective, and supported. Where social cleavages were more vertical as in a locality where paramilitaries and elites were aligned, but not necessarily with the broader population, the violence was often much more extreme, repressive, and unpopular. This moral element of this cohesion related to how the collective targeting efforts of these armed groups were perceived. Paramilitaries sought to build on existing social structures of prejudice in order to legitimize their presence and justify their violence. As such, social embeddedness impacted whether the broader community was convinced of the moral imperative of the paramilitaries' violent interventions. Targeting might still take place if there is a social fracture between the local population and the paramilitary, but it would likely be more indiscriminate akin to another paramilitary pattern: massacres to encourage mass displacement (Steele 2017; Suárez 2022).

As noted in this presentation of variation, paramilitary war on social deviancy extended beyond LGBT people—other targets included 'misbehaved' women, drug users, sex workers, the mentally ill, and ex-criminals (Gallego-Montes 2020). But LGBT people were targeted routinely

[28] In one of my field sites today, though violence has returned with the arrival of narco-traffickers, the LGBT community is no longer as targeted, which I believe is because these organized criminal groups do not seek transformative social change as their violence is not tied to a political effort (Ritholtz and Stallone 2022).

throughout the country and their targeting could be considered unique in relation to their unique social positioning. The ideology of the paramilitaries upheld a moral purity seen in other forms of anti-subversive conservativism in the region. This ideology conceptualized non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities as behaviors (*i.e.*, choices), as well as identities, that were associated with vice which could begin a slippery slope to support for subversion. As a result, they developed an ideology that forbade expressions that contravened expectations of appropriate behavior for one's gender: men could not have long hair or wear earrings; women were not allowed to show their midriffs or wear miniskirts. Same-sex relations were banned, and transgender people were threatened to not present themselves in a manner related to their gender identity. Relating to social embeddedness, given that LGBT people were already marginalized from the community, they could be targeted in an easily justified manner that was not alienating to the broader community. In their targeting, the paramilitaries could show their power, and potentially endear themselves to the community. Their status as an existing and visible minority meant that violence against them was 'low-cost' and could be explained, legitimizing the presence of the paramilitaries.

Other social groups such as women or drug users might similarly satisfy the conditions of this framework, but not as easily as LGBT people. Collectively targeting women comes at a high cost for any armed actor, particularly if lethal violence is used, and so while collectively targeting 'inappropriately behaved' women may be a possibility, it requires much more public explanation to get the same legitimizing effect of anti-LGBT persecution, which would still include many women considered 'deviant.' Further, while targeting drug users might satisfy similar conditions, the social embeddedness of the drug user, who could be sympathized or protected by family

members who recognize their suffering, resulted from a different social structure and prejudice than LGBT people, which might mean that the violence against a drug user might be considered costlier or more unpopular to the broader community than violence against LGBT people. Given their political project of a Colombia aligned against 'subversion', in communities where they could embed, paramilitaries had to be careful not to alienate the broader community and risk them withdrawing support.

Paramilitaries, who could socially embed, pursued anti-LGBT violence in order to achieve social legitimacy and transform their local environment in order to gain control over the population and territory. Anti-LGBT violence utilized a brutal form of targeted violence in order to legitimize paramilitary presence, consolidate social networks between the combatants and civilians, and stigmatize a deviant population deemed outside the boundaries of the new polity aligned against subversion. This framing, which I label *social cleansing*, can explain the occurrence and form of anti-LGBT violence in my first case study site of Puerto Boyacá, which became the model of paramilitarism in the country. But it cannot explain the occurrence and form of anti-LGBT violence in my second case study site of San Onofre, which became a location infamous in the country for the atrocities committed by paramilitaries. In accordance with this framework, I argue that anti-LGBT violence reached new extreme (and unique) levels, which I call *social brutalization*, in San Onofre because the paramilitaries were unable to embed effectively with the civilian populations. In Puerto Boyacá, the paramilitaries were able to embed themselves in an environment where the cleavage was 'horizontal', meaning that local elites and broader populations aligned with the paramilitaries against guerrilla groups. As a result, many of these community members ended up joining in and participating in many acts of social cleansing. In

San Onofre, the social cleavage was 'vertical', meaning that local elites aligned against the broader population. As a result, community members ended up being perceived as guerrillas along with LGBT populations. Thus, without the capacity to embed in the community, the paramilitaries instead amped up collective and repressive violence in order to facilitate a social transformation in line with their nation-building project.

		Social Embeddedness	
		High	**Low**
Transformative Ideology	**Yes**	Social Cleansing	Social Brutalization
	No	*Social Prejudice*[29]	

Figure 1: Typology of Anti-LGBT Violence

Social cleansing had a transformative impact on locations where it occurred.[30] In the wake of such violence, its targets would either be displaced, killed, or silenced. Given their use of moralizing narrative frameworks, the violence against the population would often be justifiable to the broader public, who accepted it as a 'necessary evil, aiding in the legitimization of the armed actor. And as a result of the morally justified violence, which was brutal in nature, its

[29] As explained further on the next page, for theories relating to the logic of anti-LGBT violence during war, anti-LGBT violence resulting from social prejudice becomes a 'null' category, beyond the scope of this dissertation. As conceptualized, its occurrence does not directly relate to more collective logics of this violence, but instead relates to an individual's actions as a result of their social prejudice. This recognition does not deny the importance of social prejudice to studies of civil war, but rather connects this socio-political phenomenon to a separate logic of wartime violence.

[30] Social cleansing has a close relationship to political cleansing and one can shift into the other as the strategic environment during war transforms the goals of the group. The Sendero Luminoso in Peru transitioned from popular acts of social cleansing, including of LGBT people, to more lethal targeting of political cleansings of local leaders, which greatly diminished their popularity (Degregori 1999, Theidon 2012; Wood 2008).

victims would be stigmatized by the broader population. These impacts contributed to a process of social abjection, where norms of inclusion and community would break down and be rearranged. In this process, certain identities became cleaved from the body politic, facilitating a displacement that was both physical and social. This form of social cleansing represented a logic of violence that was destructive, protective, and normative. Its violence, though brutal, was comparatively restrained in its targeting and private in its actual occurrence. It sought and succeeded in 'cleansing' a social group from a region either through their forced disappearance (lethal killing), their displacement (after threat), or their abandonment of public space (by isolating at home).

Social brutalization was a separate form of anti-LGBT violence that took on a spectacular nature noted for its cruelty. The armed groups sought to enforce a moral order through collective violence that could solidify their control, but the resultant dynamics appeared different. Here, the violence was still brutal, but it was remarkably public, often humiliating or stigmatizing, more expansive in the range of repertoires, and more sexual in nature. The targeting was less restrained as people felt they could be targeted at any moment and the range of people targeted by this violence expanded to include many cis and heterosexual women. As a result, the socio-political impacts of the violence changed as well. In these cases, the violence was not predictable enough for people to be able to assess their risk of victimization, nearly everyone felt they could be targeted at any moment The paramilitaries committing this distinct form of violence appeared to be letting people live, but in a diminished way. As such, the violence followed a separate logic to social cleansing. This violence was predatory and repressive.

Beyond these two forms of anti-LGBT violence, there is a third form that I label *social prejudice*. Social prejudice recognizes that this community experiences high levels of violence around the world.[31] As such, not all acts of anti-LGBT violence will be tied to wartime logics, even in times of war. To differentiate violent acts of *social prejudice* from *social cleansing* and *social brutalization*, I center the concept of ideology. Without a transformational ideology, these acts of violence do not carry the same political meaning for the perpetrator and the broader community. They will be harder to frame as a matter of politics and thus not as closely related to wartime logics. Of course, as noted by much research on gender-based violence during war, violent acts of social prejudice might be exacerbated by war and thus, occur more frequently. With that said, I recognize the logics tied to this violence as separate from those produced by a transformative ideology. As such, anti-LGBT violence committed by the paramilitaries in Colombia, which I root in an anti-subversive conservative ideology, exists between *social cleansing* and *social brutalization*.

2.2.1 Transformative Ideology

A key factor for understanding variation in anti-LGBT violence is a radical ideology that desires a transformation of an existing social landscape. In this sense, ideology plays a key and central role in this form of violence. Without a desired ideological shift, there is no mobilizing narrative for the armed actors to adapt. Nor is there a desired goal, or national project, that would allow for this framing narrative to mobilize armed actors at a national scale throughout the country. I use the term socially transformative in reference to Theda Skocpol's work on revolution, where she

[31] Particularly in Latin America, which is regularly described as the most violent region in the world for LGBT people (Sin Violencia LGBTI 2019).

identifies the difference between political and social revolution in that political revolution seeks to create a new political institution while social revolution seeks to change society's structure (Skocpol 1979).

The paramilitaries were not revolutionaries in the Skocpolian sense, given that they sought to maintain the current political status. However, they did seek transformative social change through the imposition of a social conservativism that reconfigured society. During the Colombian conflict, the paramilitaries pursued an actual and ideological war against subversion. Subversion was understood as a term for the guerrillas and their communist insurgency. Importantly, when the insurgency began to escalate in the 1980s, a popular conception was that subversion was facilitated by deviancy. In other words, deviant behaviors began to be viewed as a pathway to subversion. As a result, deviant behaviors began to be policed and controlled. The ideological demands of the paramilitary project worked to establish a moral order in which social cleansing of those considered deviant became a strategy aligned with their national project.

This desired moral purity was a broader regional phenomenon with much of the military dictatorships of the region, set up by the United States via Operation Condor in the fight against communism, considering the social body of the national as proxy— and risk— for its political future (Lessa 2022; Sutton 2018). Diana Taylor has documented how the military junta in Argentina became obsessed with the behaviors of its citizens in its own ideological wars against subversion. The military junta violently repressed a series of behaviors that were not obviously tied to communism, but still perceived as potentially subversive, particularly those relating to gender. As Taylor (1997, 41) writes, "'women' were defined by moral values and their

adherence to or deviance from cultural norms." She adds that in this focus, motherhood took on a new social meaning. According to Taylor,

> It was not women who mattered but *mothers* who mattered, and not the well-being and advancement of individual mothers so much as the control of wombs. As in fascist Europe, nationalist aspirations for purity in Argentina were inseparable from the control of women and their reproductive role. The modern nation needed to modernize notions of female beauty and sexuality. The beautiful woman was increasingly portrayed not only as a good product of breeding, but as herself a good breeder (1997, 41).

As in Argentina, armed actors in Colombia became obsessed with the social life of civilians. The paramilitary war against subversion exceeded being a war of ideas, but also became a war of behavior.

Articulating an ideology of the paramilitaries is contentious. In my own conversations in Colombia, I discovered two camps of opinions: the paramilitaries did not have an ideology and were motivated by economic greed, or the paramilitaries were ultra-conservative fascists.[32] This dynamic relates to Paul Collier's (1999) chocolate eater maxim relating to armed actor ideology—if somebody says they are not a chocolate eater but still eats chocolate, then look at what they do and not what they say. This relates to the paramilitaries because though they repressed 'deviant' behavior, they were involved in much of it: narcotrafficking, murder, rape, soliciting and facilitating sex work, among other 'amoral' behaviors. But as Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2014, 213) note, "the chocolate eater metaphor has not been extended to its logical conclusion. If as a result of advertising, a person comes to not only endorse an image of himself as slim but to value that image highly, then this will affect his chocolate eating practices." As such, though the paramilitaries did not necessarily follow the rules of their ideology, they very much sought to publicly impose it. I thus contend that an 'anti-

[32] Interviews, experts, government officials, and NGO workers, 2020 and 2021.

subversive conservativism' ideology was fundamental to the paramilitary project, which sought to establish a certain social order in Colombia (even if they themselves violated it). I use the term 'anti-subversive conservative' because though there were fascist influences in the paramilitary ideology, they were not committed to autocratic regimes or against democratic ideals. In fact, though they participated in kleptocracy and clientelism, they did mobilize in favor of the political establishment in Colombia, which was a democracy (though one widely considered to be captured by elites) (Gutiérrez-Sanín 2019).

Though the paramilitaries were not fascist, there is an analytical utility in recognizing the fascist influences of their ideology. To start, they desired a subordinating social order where certain populations would be privileged over others. In this case, it was the good, anti-subversive Colombian against the bad, subversive communist elements. This ideology included an obsession with moral purity that was taken as representative of one's political beliefs—reminiscent of approaches in fascist ideology. Similar to many other fascist formations in the region, there was a strong influence of Catholicism, which not only meant a close (and controversial) collaboration with the Catholic Church, but also the adoption of certain Christian moral principles that further defined who would be deviant and merged the political and social worlds. This focus on eliminating deviancy further reflected an antagonistic form of politics akin to the ideas of Carl Schmitt (2005, 2008). Thus, while it cannot be said that the paramilitaries knowingly aligned with fascism, the fascist influences in their ideology produced a strategy of social transformation tied to anti-LGBT violence.

Thus, in this dissertation, I recognize ideology as foundational to the process of anti-LGBT violence. Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2014, 214) define ideology as "A set of more or less systematic ideas that identify a constituency, the challenges the group confronts, the objectives to pursue on behalf of that group, and a (perhaps vague) program of action." In this sense, they identify two approaches to understanding ideology: instrumental adoption and normative commitment. Both of these approaches recognize how ideology shapes armed actor behavior and strategy. Paul Staniland (2010) also observes how the instrumental adoption of ideology by armed actors results from specific social structures. This important analytical point is well articulated by Megan Stewart (2021, 21): "By ignoring the political and ideational motivations for governance – or viewing them through the lens of a broader military strategy – scholars fail to comprehend how rebel leaders conceive of and balance priorities on the military and political front." Jonathan Leader Maynard (2022, 4) adds that ideology is important for framing, arguing that "ideologies play a central role in determining both how people privately think about mass killings and how such violence can be publicly legitimated and organised."

Ideology plays a foundational role in *who* gets targeted and *when* in acts of collective violence. Scholars of genocide have documented how ideology can position groups as a threat that in the context of war escalate to an existential level, thus justifying extermination. Benjamin Valentino (2004) identifies how leaders will pursue mass killing in order to achieve a goal influenced by ideology, whether it be a transformed society or the removal of a threatening enemy. Scott Straus (2013, 2015) also identifies how leaders use ideology during genocide to frame groups as collective threats that require extermination during war as well in pursuit of a national project. These exclusionary ideologies, have a core role in the facilitating of collective violence. Roger

Petersen (2002) identifies how ideology might influence how individuals of a majority group channel resentment against collectives (in this case ethnic groups) of a minority group into acts of violence. While there has been debate on the ideological and strategic roots of mass killing, these studies show what Ernesto Verdeja (2012) calls a "dynamism" between ideology and strategy, where these two analytical concepts are endogenous.

While ideology can identify who gets targeted, it also has a role in facilitating restraint: *i.e.*, who does not get targeted. Jessica Stanton (2009, 2013) explores the exercise of restraint by armed actors, finding that military organizations with a political wing—and thus holding a political ideology—are more likely to demonstrate restraint. Victor Asal et al. (2013) similarly demonstrate how ethnopolitical groups in the Middle East are more likely to participate in certain forms of violent collective action, or none at all, depending on their ideological positions on gender. Further, ideology can dictate the internal social codes of groups themselves—how they conduct themselves, treat each other, and the broader population (Gutiérrez-Sanín 2008). One clear example of this intersection of ideology and restraint is in regard to sexual violence, where asymmetries in the use of sexual violence persist between groups in the same conflict (Cohen, Hoover Green, & Wood 2013). In these asymmetries, ideology might be the reason why armed actors commit or do not commit this type of sexual violence (Wood 2009). These arguments apply to the dynamics of sexual violence by paramilitary groups in Colombia, where some commanders forbade combatants to rape civilians, while others encouraged it.

Ideology can thus shape the organizational structure and behavior of an armed group (Gutiérrez-Sanín & Wood 2014; Leader Maynard 2019). Key to connecting armed group behavior to

ideology is the socialization process. Amelia Hoover Green (2018) argues that the socialization process can provide combatants with a group purpose, identity, and norms. According to Hoover Green, intense socialization can facilitate restraint by establishing norms against certain forms of violence. Richard Taber (2002) argues that ideology in the socialization process can increase the capacity of the group by improving the group's identity, morale, and collective responsibility, further facilitating restraint by tampering down on unruly individualism and other principal-agent problems. Ideology can interact with other material realities that influence violence and the socialization process, such as group rape as a means to combat cohesion in the wake of forced recruitment (Cohen 2016). Dara Kay Cohen (2016, 15) finds that ideology can overcome the need to use violence for socialization, noting that groups with a strong internal ideology, such as the FMLN in El Salvador, "contributed to the absence of rape." Similarly, Kieran Mitton (2015) find that commanders encourage the use of 'chaotic' violence in order to desensitize combatant, making them more prone to violence. Jeremy Weinstein (2007) also documents how groups with limited ideology will also turn to more intense violence. Ideology thus can become a way to encourage violence, identify its targets, shape its characteristics, and justify its occurrence.

2.2.2 Social Embeddedness

The second factor for understanding variation in anti-LGBT violence is the social embeddedness of the armed actor in a contested territory. I use the term social embeddedness in reference to Mark Granovetter's (1985) conceptualization of social embeddedness, which recognizes that an actor's behavior is impacted by their social relations. Lee Ann Fujii develops this concept to show how perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide were not "pure agents, unfettered by social ties

or structures," nor was the opposite true, that their social structure "determine[d] all" (Fujii 2009, 17). Instead, these were actors in complex environments where the realm of what was possible and prescient resulted from complex social relations. As Fujii notes,

> Social relations provide the immediate context in which people act and interact for, against, and toward others. Social relations thus provide the basis for locating agency at "neighbor" level. How these relations define and structure contexts, perspectives, identities, and actions allows us to situate actors and the different possibilities for acting in precise moments (2009, 18).

This factor recognizes anti-LGBT violence as a socially embedded phenomenon because of how it requires local civilian consent and collaboration. Civilian consent is required for anti-LGBT violence in the form of social cleansing because it is a slow, time-intensive process that requires the presence of the armed groups in town. It is also an information-heavy process, as it requires the knowledge to know how to target minorities that may only be visible with local knowledge. This requires a level of social intimacy between the armed actors and the civilian population. This reliance on civilians limits the types of permissible violence because the goal is to not lose the support (or cohesion) of the local population.

Throughout Colombia, paramilitaries attempted to socially embed themselves in varied social landscapes. The paramilitaries often were connected with local political and business elites, and at times, with the broader population. I refer to this arrangement as a 'horizontal social fracture' because the main cleavage of the town becomes anti-subversives and alleged 'subversives.' In other parts of Colombia, the main cleavage was between local elites and the broader population. These local elites and the broader population were diametrically opposed, and thus are what I refer to as a 'vertical social fracture.' Anti-LGBT violence, and social cleansing more broadly, would not be possible in this case because there would not be the same level of community participation. If social embeddedness is not reached, it is likely that the paramilitaries would not

socially cleanse because they are unable to embed with the local population. In this regard, they might rely on massive amounts of brutal violence in order to facilitate mass displacement or repress a population into submission. Such a logic is a well-known dynamic of paramilitary violence, particularly through their use of massacre.

This impact of social embeddedness is well established in studies of civil war. As Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín & Wood (2014, 218) note "rebels are much more likely to survive if they have some degree of social support." Social support is required for material reasons—armed actors require resources and recruits to function (Olson 1993; Weinstein 2007). But social support is also necessary for strategic reasons— the local population can provide key information needed to protect the armed group or to aid in selective and collective targeting (Kalyvas 2006; Lewis 2020; Wood 2003). This support might come naturally if the armed actors are composed of people native to the area and thus well-established in social networks (Carey & Mitchell 2017; Fujii 2009; Weinstein 2007). But armed actors might also seek to embed themselves through forms of service or clientelism, as the paramilitaries did (Gutiérrez-Sanín 2019). Local elites might have a role in facilitating the embedded nature of this armed group by mobilizing social networks in the face of a threat (Wood 2008). A wartime environment might also allow for the opportunity to settle both personal and political grievances (Balcells 2017; Kalyvas 2006). In Colombia, the raising of paramilitary groups and their spread throughout the country was often at the request of business and political elites targeted by guerrilla insurgents (Duncan 2006; Gutiérrez-Sanín 2019; Hristov 2009; Romero 2003; Ronderos 2014; Steele 2017).

The goal of social embeddedness for paramilitaries ties to their quest for control over local order. Ana Arjona (2016, 21) defines wartime social order as the predictability and understanding of new rules of behavior as set by the armed actor and accepted or followed by civilians. She argues that non-state actors seeking to establish long-term control in a given territory will pursue a social contract with the local population and then narrow or broaden their intervention based on the existing social and political structures. In her own conceptualization of variation of wartime social orders, armed actors will vary in the intensity of their control based on the strength of local political institutions. In accordance with this conceptualization of rebel governance, Jori Breslawski (2021, 453) identifies how "Rebels can control civilians solely with the use of violence, or rebels can create institutions to govern civilians under their control." The latter is known as rebel governance, which is defined by Arjona et al. (2015, 3) as "the set of actions insurgents engage in to regulate the social, political, and economic life of non-combatants during war." Megan Stewart (2021, 11) recognizes that key to these actions is the establishment of institutions of rebel governance, which she defines as "as the process of creating or controlling a constellation of interlocking institutions and programs beyond the provision of security." These institutions can be understood by their intensity and extensivity, with some requiring more resources and others having a broader reach respectively. Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín (2015) has observed how public security can be a legitimizing institution itself provided by militia in Medellín, who were seen (at first) as utilizing violence to maintain security and curb organized criminal violence in the city.

The social embeddedness of an armed group will thus have an impact on how it utilizes violence. Jeremy Weinstein (2007) uses the concept of 'endowment' to demonstrate how the level of

moral and social cohesion of an armed actor will influence its approach to violence. According to Weinstein, armed actors that draw on social endowments, fostering high social and moral cohesion, use less violence against civilians than actors that draw on economic endowments, such as natural resources with limited social and moral cohesion. In the former, such social endowments normally foster support from sympathetic civilians and attract voluntary recruits from the local population, establishing a social network between armed actors and civilians. In the latter, economic endowments foster fewer relations between armed actors and civilians and may rely on either forced recruitment or recruiting individuals with economic goals that care little for social causes. Social endowments might encourage restraint because these populations were already willing and open to collaborate (Kalyvas 2006) or because social networks set limits on the forms of violence that would be tolerated (Carey & Mitchell 2017; Fujii 2009; Hundmand & Parkinson 2019). Non-state armed actors that participate in acts of collective violence will sometimes have to both embed socially but also connect with governments if their goals are aligned (Staniland 2012). The paramilitaries throughout their history had such a relationship with the state and the military. Activists, analysts, and survivors all perceived a similar pattern where first the paramilitaries would arrive and utilize horrific acts of either collective or indiscriminate violence—often for days and with no intervention of the state—and then days later state forces would show up to 'seize control' of the area (Hristov 2009).

Key then to the concept of social embeddedness is the popularity of the imposed social reforms on the broader population, which I frame around the concept of moral cohesion. This moral cohesion between the armed actor and civilians is linked to social exclusion. For the term social exclusion, I build on the work of Iris Marion Young, who conceptualizes exclusion as "others

defined as different from one's self-conception" (2011 155). To Young, exclusion is an important concept in understanding homophobia because of how it is used to establish a "unified, orderly identity, and the dependent of such a unified identity on the construction of a border that excludes aspects of subjectivity one refuses to face." Thus, importantly to Young, exclusion is an intersubjective and productive process that establishes a unified in-group by producing a lesser, out-group. She ties this concept to oppression, which she defines as to "structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group" (2011, 41–42). Structural considerations recognize that the process of exclusion does not have to be intentional and could instead be created by socio-cultural conditions of patriarchy and cisheterosexism. The effects of structural processes of exclusion have been well documented by feminist scholars of violence and pre-war social structures are key variables in studies of ethnic cleansing (Boesten 2014; Bulutgil 2016; Cockburn 1991, 2004; Mann 2005).

For armed actors to achieve true social embeddedness, their imposed anti-LGBT violent must connect with a pre-existing social structure that is exclusionary. When the existing social structure has an out-group, they can be targeted in a way that is both easy to justify and familiar to those of the in-group. Jonathan Leader Maynard (2022, 7) refers to this legitimizing effort 'justificatory narratives for mass killing". Recent scholarship on dehumanization has found that it is less about reducing the victim to subhuman status than it is about creating the correct moral order that can justify violence against them (Lang 2020). Anti-LGBT violence thus operationalizes this exclusion for strategic and ideological ends. In Colombia, during the paramilitary incursion, throughout the country there was already existing prejudice and discrimination against LGBT populations, who did not begin to mobilize at a collective scale

until after the 1991 Constitution and did not receive rights-based recognitions until the early 2000s (Comisión de la Verdad 2022). As such, in collectively targeting this population, the paramilitaries sought to connect into a pre-existing social structure in order to gain social control. Existing discrimination meant that this violence had the potential to be legitimizing in that the paramilitaries were exacerbating prejudice that already existed. Further, it also meant that the violence was relatively low-cost as these groups were already excluded. Lastly, the violence was illuminating in that it demonstrated not only the power of the paramilitaries but also their knowledge and local support.

Scholars of gender-based violence have noted how war exacerbates the social structures that facilitate violence. In regard to this exacerbation of existing structures, Cynthia Cockburn (2004) labels this phenomenon the 'continuum of violence.' In this conceptualization of violence against women, the dynamics of violence are considered through time periods: pre-war, during war, and post-war. Cockburn argues that the reasons for this violence are the same—structural patriarchy— and it is the tensions of war that worsen this violence. Jelke Boesten (2017, 507) similarly connects pre-war, during war, and post-war social structures with patterns of sexual violence during the war in Guatemala, arguing "much of the scale and cruelty of these experiences was certainly exceptional and strongly conflict-related, [but] the script for these acts—immersed in racism and sexism...—predated the conflict." Julia Zulver (2022) similarly notes that many women mobilizing for rights in Colombia face the same types of threats in response to their mobilizing for gender justice today in a "post-peace accord Colombia" as they did before the peace accord.

This gendered violence during war has a socially transformative impact. Cynthia Enloe (1983) has argued that forms of gendered violence, such as sexual violence, increase during war as gender roles become moralized and reinforced while society reconfigures. Ophelie Rillon (2018, 139-141) recounts that during the Mali 1967 Active Revolution, political leaders sought "to moralize society, according to the model of the Chinese Cultural Revolution" and began policing the clothing and stylings of Malian youth, with a focus on Malian women. As the youth resisted, the policing increased and militias were raised to target "'enemies of socialism' [who] regularly endured beatings, torture, and rape." Similar events occurred in both the right-wing military dictatorship of Brazil and the leftist Cuban government in the 1960s (Guerra 2010; Green and Quinalha 2014, 2015).

Pre-war social structures are also important for how groups embed and whether their collective violence becomes identified as a strategy of the war. This violence can also be strategic particularly in relation to an existing exclusionary social structure that favors the targeting of certain civilians or collectives (Downes 2004). Scholars of ethnic cleansing find that pre-war social structures are important in dynamics of ethnic cleansing for both reasons of participation and targeting. Both Thomas Mann (2005) and Zeynep Bulutgil (2016) tie ethnic cleansing to nationalist projects associated with modernity. Mann (2005) argues that certain social structures might facilitate the participation of 'ordinary people' in acts of ethnic cleansing. And Bulutgil (2016) has noted how pre-war social structures will further impact public support for ethnic cleansing campaigns. As Scott Straus (2015) has observed, large-scale mass collective violence, such as cleansing, often requires the state in order to organize acts of that magnitude.

Paramilitaries often coordinated with state agencies like the military in their attempted mass displacement and political cleansing campaigns (Hristov 2009; Steele 2017).

These social structures contribute to what Donald Horowitz (2001, 326-373) refers to as "the social environment for killing." Or as Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg (2018, 16) explain "Would-be perpetrators may refrain from acting if they do not sense broader popular support for violent activity…. Pogroms occur when there are both perpetrators motivated to act and others who either implicitly or explicitly are willing to condone the violence." Lee Ann Fujii (2009, 2022) identifies how the acceptance of bystanders facilitates collective violence. And that through bearing witness to this violence, these bystanders become participants and accomplices. Additionally, community leaders play an important role in facilitating collective violence, such as religious figures, who can provide legitimacy to collective violence through a moral justification (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018; Longman 2010; Straus 2006, 2015). Iris Marion Young identifies how community apathy or support legitimizes collective violence:

> Group violence approaches legitimacy, moreover, in the sense that it is tolerated. Often third parties find it unsurprising because it happens frequently and lies as a constant possibility at the horizon of the social imagination. Even when they are caught, those who perpetrate acts of group-directed violence or harassment often receive light or no punishment. To that extent society renders their acts acceptable (2011, 62).

It is thus a result of embedding into exclusive social structures, that paramilitaries were able to collectively target LGBT people.

These social structures can further explain the form of violence against collectives such as LGBT people. As Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008, 541) notes, building off the work of Stephen Ellis (1995, 1999), "The social effects of a particular form of violence depend on the context; in particular, its meaning to social actors depends on the cultural setting." As such, exclusive social structures

provide a base for interpretations of violence. The public persecution of a very visible minority can be a low-cost way to signal to broader populations of the armed actors' violent potential and access to information (Soedirgo 2021; Tschantret 2020). Lucia Baca & Daniela Villamil (2020) describe the targeting of LGBT people in Colombia by armed actors as having a "ripple effect," where one highly semiotic act of violence against a visible minority can have a large communicative impact. In these contexts, the collective targeting of minorities serves as a 'canary in the coal mine' of armed actors' capacity to target and coerce; that is, when the LGBT population begins to suffer, it represents a context which may be dangerous for other community members as well. But this perceived danger can be less threatening when the violence is tied to a moral order and justified based on existing prejudices.

Further cultural contexts not only explain interpretations of violence but can help decipher its intent. The culture script around rape causes the shame associated with it to weaken the status of the victim in a deeply personal but also public way, as Schulz writes about male victims of sexual violence in Uganda (2018, 2020). Diana Taylor (1997, 152) notes that during the Argentine Military Junta female political prisoners were subjected to sexual violence in order to "to rehabilitate these women, while condemning their violation of acceptable social and gender roles." Katerina Stefatos (2016, 22) notes similar dynamics existed during the Greek Civil War, where "female dissidents constituted a double threat: first, to the nation, as political opponents of the regime, and second, to the moral and gender code." During these conflicts, politically active women were not only subjected to sexual violence, but also commonly labeled 'whores.' In constructing these dissenting women as morally loose, political actors 'otherized' them and attempted to legitimize a form of violence that reinforced this construction. Stefatos (2016, 25)

argues that similar dynamics occurred in how sexual violence was used against men, "In Greece, as elsewhere, the male body was disciplined by transforming it into a feminized vulnerable body through sexual torture." During the repression efforts of Latin American dictatorships in the late twentieth century, state prison guards made men wear dresses and beat them for 'being homosexual' (Treacy 1996). As seen in these analyses, acts of violence can both result from a group's constructions as an 'other' or reinforce this construction. In this context, anti-LGBT violence becomes an apparent tautology: it occurs to reinforce an existing difference.

2.3 Brutality as a Social Mechanism for the Processes of Abjection

In the contested landscape of civil war, brutal acts of violence initiate a transformative social process. In developing a theory of anti-LGBT violence, brutality serves as a mechanism that reorganizes social relations, breaks down social norms, alters local environments, and legitimizes new actors. Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008, 540) refers to these phenomena as the "social processes of civil war" or "the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level—that sometimes leave profound social changes in their wake." I label brutality as a mechanism of social transformation, through *the processes of abjection*, which I explore in detail in this section (see Figure 2).

In identifying brutality as a mechanism for social transformation, I am thus recognizing the generative potential of brutality to transform social relations. In this sense, I am following Alexander George and Andrew Bennet's understanding of a social mechanism:

> We define causal mechanisms as ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities. In doing so, the causal agent changes the affected entities' characteristics, capacities, or propensities in ways that persist until subsequent causal mechanisms act upon it (2005, 137).

David Waldner (2012, 7) refers to this conception of mechanisms as 'generative' in that they help produce different phenomena. Waldner's recognition of the 'generative capacity' of social mechanisms contrasts with more narrow conceptions of mechanisms which focus on their status as intermediate variables (*e.g.*, Gerring 2008). This more expansive conception of mechanisms allows the use of the concept in inductive and interpretive research. Here, I identify brutality as a generative social mechanism because it is a key element in the process of social transformation that impacts armed actor-civilian social relations during war.

Much of this transformation results from a change in the social and political composition of a contested territory. In a contested landscape, there will be an increase in polarization of local, public, and private identities, resulting in the flight of those fearful of the dominant groups (Wood 2003, 2008; Steele 2017). Sometimes this displacement might be intentional where those non-loyal to the armed actor would be threatened and removed through a process of political cleansing (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018; Steele 2017). This segregation occurs at the political, social, and personal level, as individuals perceive a new formation of threats in a changing local landscape (Balcells 2017, Kalyvas 2006). When armed actors seek to takeover a territory, they might attempt to take over political institutions and replace political leaders with their loyalists. Lee Ann Fujii (2009) documents how during the Rwandan genocide, political leaders in favor of Tutsi extermination were brought in by the ruling regime to replace political leaders who refused to participate in the killing. Elisabeth Jean Wood documents how these political replacements can have social effects: "Where armed actors displace civil authorities, a common result is a

generational inversion of authority, by which I mean armed youth supplanting traditional elders and local authorities" (2008, 550). The replacement of regular authorities with armed actors impacts traditional social norms, especially those that can constrain violence, which has further deleterious impacts.

Considering the impact of highly symbolic violence on the social body underscores the importance of social identities in the study of conflict. In a religious conflict, the killing of a priest or the leadership of a church will have a different social impact than the killing of a member of a church (Straus 2015). Violence thus has a central role in this transformation, particularly in ideological wars that center on the composition of the social body. In these types of wars, the polarization of certain identities reflects broader social cleavages in conflict (Gould, 1999). Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2015) recognized that these social cleavages can be exacerbated during war through the mechanism of boundary activism, where certain cleavages become more prominent for political purposes. During war, these cleavages can be assumed by local actors who use them to justify violence more related to local grievance than national politics (Kalyvas 2006). Such violence does not only produce fault lines in the community but can also produce new conceptions of the community. René Girard (2007) argues that scapegoating through violence can promote peace in the community by mobilizing a fractured population around a common enemy. The productive potential of violence to foster unity and reorganize social ties is a central theme in studies of lynching in the United States (Alexander 2020; Fujii 2021; Ore 2019; Wood 2011). Michelle Alexander (2020) argues that anti-Black lynching and the related Jim Crow legal regime were used to promote an inter-class white supremacy that could mollify any class-based solidarity between poor white and Black

populations. Further, Ersula Ore (2019) finds that the public lynching of Black men produced a white civic agency among participants and witnesses predicated on ethnic exclusion. Beyond ethnic violence, scholars of witch-hunts further tie this collective violence to both modernization and transitions in socioeconomic regimes. Silvia Federici (2004) finds that elites encouraged witch-hunts in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to target dissenters to their modernization efforts related to market capitalism, land privatization, and new religious orders. Michael Taussig (2010) similarly finds that belief and rejection of mysticism and associated violence in South America becomes heightened during transitions between different socio-economic regimes. Performative, brutal violence then becomes a mechanism to facilitate social transformation as well as reconfigure societal boundaries. This research complements the work of scholars of ethnic cleansing who have tied its occurrence with modernism (Bulutgil 2016; Mann 2005)

Daniel Feierstein argues for the consideration of genocide and other forms of collective violence as social practices that can reconfigure society. Feierstein explains that,

> Annihilation has been used to destroy and reorganize social relations…It influences the ways in which different social groups construct their identity, the identity of others, and the otherness of the Other, thus shaping the way that groups can relate to themselves and to one another (2014, 1).

In this sense, acts of collective violence serve as "a mechanism capable of destroying and reorganizing the fabric of entire societies" (Feierstein 2014, 2). Using the case of the Nazis in Europe and the Argentina Military Junta, Feierstein further delineates these mechanisms in two ways: first, violence destroys social relationships by villainizing or annihilating certain parts of the population and, second, the terror produced through genocide practice establishes new models of identity and relations between survivors. Feierstein (2014, 19) summarizes these dynamics as the perpetrator seeking to "to destroy

structures of social relationships within the state, in order to substantially alter the life of the whole." In a similar argument to Diana Taylor (2001), Feierstein (2014, 20) notes how the use of repression was not just for political means, but also social ones, the military junta in Argentina "sought to radically transform morality, ideology, the family, and other institutions that regulate social relationships…. eliminat[ing] anybody who embodied an alternative way of constructing social identity."

This transformative use of violence, however, was not tied to far-right ideology in Argentina during the military junta and Nazi Germany. Similar observations have been observed in the Chinese revolution, particularly in the land reform movement, which involved the mass killing of landlords in order to facilitate land distribution to the peasantry. This state-sponsored collective violence demonstrated how calculated terror and systematic violence was utilized to transform Chinese society (Dikotter 2013). Roderick MacFarquhar & Michael Schoenhals (2006) further points out how the violence used by the Community party during the revolution – targeted at land reform, counterrevolutionaries, and anti-rightist efforts— transformed the body politic, thus embedding a new consciousness and understanding of revolution in the younger populations that accepted, facilitated, and participated in this violence. Marc Opper (2018) identifies some of the precedent for this approach in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) campaigns in an earlier conflict where the CCP used violence against civilians to purge and restore local, elite-run governance institutions.

Brutal violence has a transformative social impact because of how it erodes norms and shapes identities, facilitating a socialization process between civilians and armed actors (Checkel 2017). Lee Ann Fujii (2021), Andrés Fernando Suárez (2007, 2022), and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008) have all documented how the mere act of being targeted transforms an individual's identities and infers guilt. In these changing wartime social landscapes, Stathis Kalyvas identifies an element of this social transformation as the breakdown of political order through a process of "brutalization." He recognizes the pathway in four ways:

> [F]irst, breakdown reveals or creates a culture of generalized brutalization; second, in the absence of institutionalized justice, it leads to an endless spiral of retaliation; third, breakdown generates security dilemmas, leading to mass preemptive violence; and, fourth, it gives rise to undisciplined armed groups that prey on civilians in a fashion reminiscent of medieval warfare (2006, 55).

As war occurs, combatants become brutalized and more prone to violence (Hoover Green 2018, Manekin 2020, Mitton 2015). Additionally, Kalyvas (2006) argues that this brutalization ebbs the psychosocial mechanisms of self-sanction that deter violent conduct, limiting self-deterrent mechanisms. Furthermore, the landscape of war lowers the cost of violence with fewer structures of accountability. War also produces an opening for people with violent tendencies to act as well as new actors interested in the perpetuation of both the war and its associated violence (Mueller 2000).

Brutality thus serves as a mechanism of social transformation because of how it causes trauma, stigma, and horror among civilians. In their theoretical analyses of torture, both Elaine Scarry (1987) and Adriana Cavarero (2009) detail the trauma of witnessing violence. Scholars of sexual violence have noted how bearing witness to this form of violence has a harmful impact on the spectator; in Colombia, the CNMH (2011) documents how some women were publicly raped by

paramilitaries in front of their male relatives in order to punish their alleged participation in the guerrilla insurgency. R. Charli Carpenter (2006) argues that witnessing an act of sexual violence against a loved one is a separate repertoire of gender-based violence against the spectator based on the harm felt in bearing witness. Carpenter's point expands the category of victim beyond the direct target of sexual violence to also include its witnesses.[33] Philipp Schulz (2018, 2020) has also noted how the legacy of sexual violence, and the intersubjectivity of its impact, expands the category of victim beyond the original target. Both these scholars take gendered approaches to understand what Carpenter (2006:96) describes the "psycho-social harm" of bearing witness—which she uses to describe men witnessing this violence against their female relatives and for the associated stigmas of sexual violence for all genders. Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsay (2022) further document how the stigma produced by sexual violence reconfigures social relations within a community. Lindsay (2022) argues that this stigma-produced transformation might reconceptualize how the community itself understands violence and punishment. Stigma then might be considered a form of social control in how it weaponizes cultural beliefs and moral orders in order to influence the behavior of non-combatants (Penwell Barnett et al. 2016).[34]

Adriana Cavarero's observations on the social phenomenon of horror, which she refers to as *horrorism*, reveal the process through which bearing witness to acts of brutal violence can produce psycho-social harms. In acts of horror, Cavarero details (2009, 9) "the violence that dismembers offends the ontological dignity that the human figure possesses and renders it

[33] In Colombia, the state in judicial processes can recognize the entire families as victims when only one member is the victim of direct violence, the others will be considered 'indirect victims' (*see* sentences listed in Appendix I).
[34] Attempting to coerce with stigmatizing violence can, of course, backfire. Anne-Kathrin Kreft (2019) found that in the presence of rape by armed actors, women were more likely to mobilize because they perceive the threat of rape against individuals as a potential threat against all women. Julia Zulver (2022) identifies the conditions in which collectively framing in the wake of gender-based violence can actually mobilize women to resist.

unwatchable…. More than simply being carried out, the crime is staged as an intentional offense to the ontological dignity of the victim." The abject feeling of horror is thus produced in observing an event that intentionally harms the physical and psychological integrity of a person. Cruelty and brutality, as acts that transgress norms and cause suffering by one individual against another, thus, produce a level horror which require an audience to witness. Cavarero further identifies the dehumanizing aspect of feeling horror:

> The (specifically) human being is filled with repugnance for this violence, which aims primarily not to kill it but to destroy its humanity, to inflict wounds on it that will undo and dismember it. Nor is this a repugnance that grips the victim of dehumanization alone, the specific wounded body lying at the scene of horror. As singular bodies, the repugnance extends to all of us. Whoever shares in the human condition also shares in disgust for an ontological crime that aims to strike it in order to dehumanize it. The unwatchable is watching each one of us (2009, 16).

This violence that exceeds death becomes a key component of Cavarero's understanding of horror, "Evidently it is not so much killing that is in question here but rather dehumanizing and savaging the body, destroying it in its figural unity, sullying it" (2009, 9). Thus, acts of brutal violence that offend the physical integrity of a living person take on a particular level of cruelty because they deny the recognition of a person's physical integrity. She refers to this violence as acts against ontological dignity.

This focus on the ontological elements of horror relate to brutality in how they both encompass a duality. As acts of brutality take place on both physical and psychological levels, acts of horror take place on the physical and "ontological plane[s]" (2009, 40). Thus, brutality's unique impact lies in its capacity to harm at the physical and ontological level because of its connection to horror, which has an impact on the social behavior of the audience. This ontological consideration presents a new way to conceptualize brutality's impact— brutality helps facilitate a sense of abject horror, which offends a person's sense of ontological dignity and physical

integrity. It is in observing this dehumanizing violence that a witness becomes a victim to it as well. This conceptualization allows for new ways of thinking through forms of violence by recognizing the harm in its semiotic impact. This conception still fits into the established Schmittian sense of politics and war reaffirmed by Andrés Fernando Suárez (2007, 2022): acts of brutality dehumanize targets and potentially help legitimate violence against them, but they also produce horror to all those who witness this form of violence. In the wake of horror, a civilian might change their behavior or recognize a new socio-political order.

This brutal violence produces social exclusion because of how it facilitates processes of *abjection* among the broader public. The term 'abjection' comes from the work of Julia Kristeva (1982), who defines the concept as the feeling of disgust and horror that is underpinned with a perverse fascination. Abjection results from witnessing something that either reminds the observer of their own death or the weakness of their body. Kristeva starts her own introduction to the topic by describing the visceral reaction she had to the accidental drinking of the skin of milk, but then explains that "the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject" (1984, 4). She further explains, "It is thus not the lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, and order" (1984, 4). Thus, akin to Adriana Cavarero's conception of horror, abjection serves as a threat to one's ontological safety. Kristeva argues that the corporeal reaction to abjection, the feeling of disgust, is a way for the observer to distance themselves from the phenomenon and reinforce their own sense of self. This need to defend one's sense of self in the face of an affronting object is not static. As such, different ideologies can produce different states of abjection tied to morality. Kristeva argues that ideologies centered on morality and shame expand the possibility

of abjection as well as opportunities to reaffirm one's sense of self by distancing from the object in question.

Social beliefs related to gender and sexuality thus provide opportunity to produce abjection when it comes to the violation of moral norms (Butler 2011, McCormick 2000). And feelings of disgust can lead to extreme prejudice that makes intellectual space for the moralization of violence (Nussbaum 2010; Taylor 2007). Iris Marion Young argues that experiences of abjection by broader publics facilitate violence against the socially marginal. According to Young, abjection produces disgust, fear, and stigma at a broader social level. In this process of marginalization, the privileged lose all critical inquiry and the marginalized become "objectified bodies, blind, dumb, and passive" (2011, 41). These feelings produce a public consciousness of the marginalized individual as "despised, ugly, or fearful bodies" (2011, 56) and help establish a moral order. This disgust is linked to moral judgments on the behavior of the marginal:

> "Moral degeneracy usually means sexual indulgence or deviant sexual behavior, though it also refers to indulgence in other physical pleasures. Thus, the homosexual and the prostitute are primary degenerates, whose sexual behavior produces physical and mental disease" (2011, 42).

As such, these groups fail to meet exceptions of respectability and thus become considered antithetical to conceptions of order and cleanliness. Once the link is made between a social group and a feeling of abjection, the group can easily be framed as a threat to the privileged broader public and 'cleansing', in both its meanings, against them can be justified.

This justification is tied to a process of dehumanization that results from associating an entire collective with degeneracy. Johannes Lang (2020, 17) defines dehumanization as "a social-

cognitive process or mechanism that redraws the boundaries of community and personhood."[35] Nour Kteily and Alexander Landry (2022) conceptualize dehumanization as an antecedent to collective violence and consider it on a continuum, where a population is dehumanized by being considered to fall short of the ideal human in a myriad of ways, *i.e.*, moral, civilized, rational, intelligent. The more ways that a population is dehumanized, the less they are valued, lowering the threshold for violence against them. Kteily and Landry (2022, 231) note, "Falling short of the category 'human' therefore implies that a target has less value, making them more subject to being ignored, mistreated, or actively harmed." Narratives and public justifications for violence against a community deemed 'less than' or 'subversive' can serve as a dehumanizing act that provides a moral basis for acts of violence, thereby legitimizing them. Jonathan Leader Maynard identifies the importance of ideological narratives in legitimizing collective violence. In discussing the Armenian genocide, he notes that

> Pursuing genocide as a response to such circumstances only made sense in light of certain ideological narratives about the Armenian population and Ottoman security, which were adhered to by key political elites, institutionalized within the organizations they commanded, and promoted the broader social mobilization and escalation of violence (2022, 9).

Thus, public justifications of violence as needed to counteract amoral behavior produced a social environment where collective violence against LGBT people could be justified as being necessary from a moral perspective. Kteily and Landry (2022, 234) argue that "Perpetrators might feel a strong moral mandate to aggress even as, or indeed because, they dehumanize." As such, in the context of an anti-subversive conservative ideology, dehumanizing LGBT people

[35] While there is a long history of dehumanization in collective violence, recent scholarship in political psychology has challenged its broad conceptualization as an antecedent to mass killing as a result of lowering the moral cost of committing violence against 'non-humans.' This critique argues that despite dehumanizing language that denies 'humanity' to the victim, many victims of violence are targeted and tortured precisely because they are humans. Multiple recent studies in psychology have not found a link between justifications for collective violence as a result of an absent morality that would normally restrain violence (Lang 2020; Rai et al. 2017).

does not make violence against them morally irrelevant but instead provides a strong moral mandate to commit these acts of anti-LGBT violence.

In this framing, brutal violence against LGBT people facilitates two forms of abjection. The first form is a *personal abjection*, where an individual sees or hears of an act of brutal violence and experiences a disgust tied to horror. A disgust that anyone might feel after encountering a corpse. In the aftermath of this brutal violence, framing that dehumanizes the victim as 'less' than an ideal human, moralizes their victimization as a result of their own action, thus legitimizing the brutality against them, and facilitates a second form of abjection. This second form, *social abjection*, which is the type of disgust described by Iris Marion Young that denies any individuality to these victims and views the collective as degenerates, cleaves the targeted population from the broader population. It is in this process of social abjection that a marginalized population becomes even more marginalized, and the broader population reinforces its sense of self on the basis of moral exclusion. This process of social abjection then facilitates a socialization process through brutal violence in which civilians' ties to the armed actor are rearranged. In regard to anti-LGBT violence, acts of social brutalization are able to produce a personal abjection in that the horrific violence impacts witnesses and the broader popular. But only acts of social cleansing are able to achieve widespread acts of social abjection as an effective framing of this violence to redraw social boundaries requires its intelligibility. If brutal violence is used to create an 'us' and 'them' through abjection, then civilian populations need to understand the demarcations of that new social boundary.

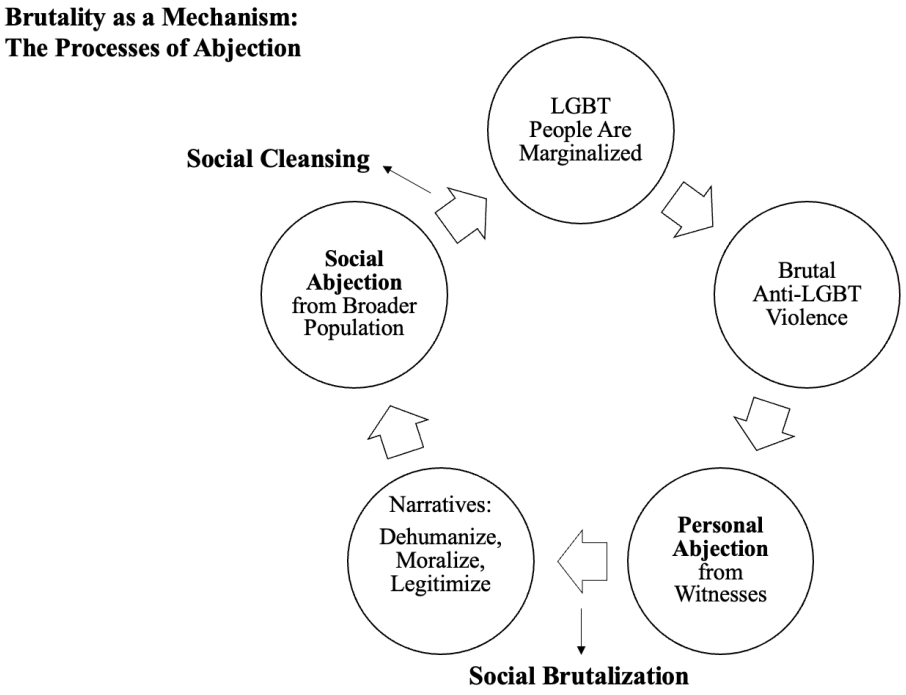


Figure 2: The Process of Social Abjection

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a theory of anti-LGBT violence through three levels of analysis that provides a framework for the rest of this dissertation. At the 'macro-level', I started with a presentation of anti-LGBT violence: how to conceptualize this form of collective violence and how to analyze it as a matter of politics. From there, at the 'meso-level', I presented a typology of anti-LGBT violence that centers around two factors: the ideology of an armed group and their capacity to social embed. This typology results in three possible outcomes: social cleansing, social brutalization, and social prejudice. In

this chapter, I explored these factors further in dialogue with related literatures of collective violence. I then explored, at the 'micro-level', the mechanism of brutality and identified the process of social abjection that it produces. Social abjection becomes a way for armed actors to solidify their control by cleaving LGBT people from the body politic and rearranging their relationship with the civilian population. This framing helps explain the phenomenon of anti-LGBT violence, as well as its variation. In considering this variation, I identify two separate logics of anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries. The first, *social cleansing*, is a destructive, normative, and protective violence that uses brutal violence to enforce a moral order and remove LGBT people or 'behaviors' from a given territory. The second, *social brutalization*, is a predatory and repressive violence that uses brutal violence to dominate and traumatize a local population into submission.

This extended consideration of anti-LGBT violence contributes to the field of civil war studies in a few ways. First, in its focus on the transformative impact of brutality, it helps remedy an existing gap in the literature which Elisabeth Jean Wood (2008, 541) registers as "how distinct repertoires of violence shape other social processes." Second, it builds on existing understanding of collective violence, namely defined by ethnic and political identities, to explain how other social groups get targeted as a logic of war. In this focus, it not only expands our knowledge of collective experiences of war, but also presents a novel approach to considering marginality and war. A broader consideration of marginality in war could reveal wartime logics of violence that are tied to social structures of exclusion, marginalization, and prejudice as opposed to perceptions of threat. And finally, in its focus on social transformation through brutality, this framework

reveals new logics of violence during war, including the production of new identities for both perpetrator and victim. I explore these contributions further in the dissertation's conclusion.

Chapter 3 Research Design

"*If you set off on a witch-hunt, you will find a witch*" – Chinelo Okparanta[36]

"*To paraphrase several sages: Nobody can think and hit someone at the same time*" – Susan Sontag[37]

In this section, I present my research design. I start with my process of developing this thesis. I then present my methods before concluding with a discussion on ethics.

3.1 The Research Process

This project evolved from a series of disruptions. As I began to explore a dissertation project on the targeting of LGBT people during civil war in 2017, Colombia had just completed a peace deal with the leftist guerrilla group, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* ('Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia', FARC). Subsequent analyses of the 2016 Peace Accord had come out and scholars such as Jamie Hagen (2017) analyzed how the accord recognized the differential experiences of marginalized populations, such as LGBT populations. In exploring the Colombian conflict more, the country became an obvious choice because of the long history of documenting anti-LGBT violence by government agencies, scholars, and NGOs (Comisión de la Verdad 2022; CNMH 2011, 2015, 2019; Fernández 2017; Serrano-Amaya 2018; Villamil 2020). These analyses documented the subnational variation in the dynamics of violence against this population and reinforced my belief that a unique, unexplored logic related

[36] (2015).
[37] (2003).

to anti-LGBT violence during civil war existed. In reviewing the existing published material, I realized my potential contribution to complement these works by exploring a logic of variation and deepening the existing analyses of this form of violence's relationship to social control. Additionally, with years of work experience on Latin American human rights issues in Washington, DC, and the United Nations, I was drawn to a research context where I could operate with relative ease and familiarity.

My first trip to Colombia in October 2019 simultaneously confirmed and rejected these initial insights. I referred to this trip as a 'listening tour' where I traversed Bogotá to have initial meetings on my research with academics, government officials, activists, NGOs, international organizations, and community leaders. In Colombia, I found a thriving research environment where scholars at all levels of their careers opened their homes to discuss my research and guide me. In some ways, I also found a trickier research environment than I anticipated. Being someone from the 'Global North' with the backing of an elite institution required considerable reflection on research ethics and power dynamics. Conversations with members of the LGBT community, particularly those working in advocacy and research, underscored the importance of this reflection. In my first meeting with a prominent LGBT advocacy organization, its research director asked a pointed question in the first few minutes our chat: "*What makes you different from any of the other 'Global Northerners' from elite institutions that come here to study us*?" In another correspondence with a prominent researcher on LGBT violence in Colombia, I was told, "*first read my work and then if you would still like to speak, write to me*." I recognized the importance of these questions and appreciated how they pushed me to recognize my own contribution within the existing research gaps on the subject. These tensions related to

problematic dynamics in the academy associated with student researchers engaged in political violence research as well as the tensions between resources and access in the 'Global North.'[38]

Through good conversations, reflection, and subsequent action, both above-mentioned researchers have become dear friends and collaborators, but at the start they revealed an important ethical dilemma. I had first landed in Colombia three years after the Peace Accord with the FARC had been signed. I was not part of the first wave of foreign researchers in the country, nor the second, I was at least the third. And many of these foreign researchers, particularly those concerned with the lives of LGBT people, had undertaken their research in a way that was considered extractive or traumatizing. They would parachute in, get the saddest stories, and then leave to publish a dissertation in a foreign language with limited readership. I hoped to avoid this pattern by developing a research protocol in collaboration with the research community in Colombia. Through this collaboration, which involved many conversations with peers in Colombia late into the night, I made a series of decisions based on a newly developed research ethic, in conjunction with the required research ethics protocols of my university and department.[39] First, I would not intentionally interview survivors of their experience with violence;[40] second, I would share my insights with local research organizations; and third, I

[38] Kristine Eck and Dara Kay Cohen (2021) have called for more ethical engagement of student researchers on these subjects, including the discouraging of undergraduate and masters' students away from fieldwork on political violence topics. After my time investigating this project in Colombia and hearing countless horror stories of extractive and traumatizing research by master's students from the 'Global North,' I echo these sentiments. Good, ethical research takes time, and I could never have achieved the level of care needed to conduct my research ethically in the timespan of a master's thesis. For those interested in thinking more critically about the dynamics of researchers from the 'Global North' doing research in the 'Global South', *see* Connell 2020 and Mac Ginty et al. 2021.

[39] Reference number for University of Oxford ethics review process: CUREC 1A/ODID C1A 20-008.

[40] I did not intentionally interview survivors of this violence because there are substantial interview transcripts that exist, and I had been warned that most survivors have become exhausted with researchers. Most of the quotes in this dissertation about violence come from existing testimony and reports, some may have been shared with me by 'witnesses' that I interviewed. Given that the witness-survivor binary is ambiguous, in my interviews, I strove to steer interviewees away from personal retellings of their own violent victimization.

would attempt to address this imbalance between 'Global North' and 'South' scholarship by publishing in Spanish, collaborating with Colombian colleagues, and citing Colombian scholarship in my own work.[41]

I returned to Colombia in January 2020 for an expected 9 months of fieldwork focused on interviewees with ex paramilitaries and community witnesses to anti-LGBT violence. For the first three months, I was meant to be in Bogotá, working to identify case study sites, interviewing experts, and reviewing archives. By March 2020, following this plan, I had conducted 35 interviews, amassed a considerable number of archives from government reports, historical memory construction documents, court records, media articles, multiple datasets on violent victimization, and other materials from NGOs. I also identified two case study sites that exhibited patterns related to my research questions. There was then a pandemic.

In March 2020, I left Colombia. I would not return for 18 months. During that time, I pivoted my project to focus more on historical methods that could be done remotely. In this sense, I attempted a 'meta-ethnography' of violence against LGBT people in Colombia, which could also be described as a mapping analysis where I assess existing data on LGBT violent victimization provided by the government and draw some provisional conclusions.[42] To balance the opaque government data, I developed another data source of wartime violence against LGBT people with Ila Axelrod Zelmanovitz, which compiled the information of victimizing acts of anti-LGBT

[41] On this third point, a heartwarming initiative has been to guest co-edit a special issue on 'Queer Peacebuilding' for the *Revista de Estudios Sociales* based at the Universidad de los Andes, my host university during my time in Colombia.
[42] The existing government database had over 3,000 anonymized incidences of LGBT violent victimization between 1984-2008.

violence from 16 government and NGO reports, documenting 752 separate cases. To structure this mapping exercise in a more analytical fashion, I undertook Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood's (2017) 'pattern of violence' approach (see Appendix II for the results of this 'patterns' analysis). This approach analyzes patterns of violence through four categories: repertoire (type of violence: homicide, rape, forced disappearance, etc), targeting (individual members of a social/ethnic group, general members of a social/ethnic group), frequency, and technique (how the violence is performed). I added a fifth category of 'characteristic' to my patterns analysis. Thus, in the context of anti-LGBT violence, such an approach offers an opportunity to demarcate differences between groups and establish patterns.

I matched this mapping effort with additional research related to more contextual archival material provided from a range of government, NGO, and international organization sources. With support from the government's *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* ('National Center for Historic Memory', CNMH) and *Comisión de la Verdad* ('Truth Commission'), I have reviewed an archive of interviews with paramilitaries, detailed court documents of paramilitary cases from the *Justicia y Paz* ('Justice and Peace') transitional justice program, as well as a press archive of all covered incidents of anti-LGBT violence perceived as relating to the conflict. This mix of primary and secondary data helps me understand historical analyses, narratives, and perspectives of this violence, as well as allowed me to triangulate points referenced in interviews or other sources.

Since October 2021, I have returned to Colombia a few more times for both personal and professional reasons, totaling my time in the country to about 8 months and expanding the

number of interviews conducted to 55. While I have not been able to conduct the desired research in my case study sites (of interviews with ex paramilitaries and community witnesses) as a result of pandemic-related complications, my connections and roots in the country have grown to the point where much of my experience contributes to my research through the process of what Lee Ann Fujii (2021) refers to as "accidental ethnography." Given that much of my work requires analyzing primary and secondary data collected by other organizations, I add "meta" in front of "ethnography" in recognition of how I analyze the data in a similar fashion to the method of meta-ethnography, which Mike Allen (2017) describes as "synthesizing qualitative studies in order to achieve a new conceptual understanding of a particular phenomenon." In this sense, when traveling throughout the country, certain comments or conversations said in a relaxed environment might trigger something in me that could later influence might research. For example, while on assignment for an international publication in Montes de María, an interviewee shared that during the height the conflict, she would never tell people what town she was from 'because if you were from that town, you were a guerilla.' Such a comment said for another purpose left me thinking about how violence produces new identities for its victims— a core takeaway from this study.

3.2 Methods

This section explores my methodological approach in three parts. I first explain my historical paired comparative case study analysis methodology. I then detail how I plan to analyze acts of violence as well as my analytical innovation of recognizing 'characteristics' of violence when considering variation.

3.2.1 Historical Paired Comparative Case Study Analysis

To explore how violence facilitates social transformation, I pursue a small-N, comparative, qualitative case study approach with two sites in order to understand the historical micro-dynamics that impact armed actor behavior and produce variation. Comparative, sub-national, multi-sited fieldwork permits the identification of different intermediate variables that impact local dynamics of violence, while holding constant much of the broader context of the conflict. In selecting case sites, following Jason Seawright and John Gerring's (2008) typology, my two case studies are a 'typical' case and an 'extreme' case of anti-LGBT violence. Investigating a 'typical' case, helps me identify the logics of this violence that can explain its occurrence. Exploring an 'extreme' case allows me to analyze the different variables present which bring this phenomenon to new and extreme ends. With limited data, the delineation between an extreme case and a typical case is subjective. However, for the purposes of this study, my typical case will be defined by forms of violence that are more commonly used during social cleansing campaigns against LGBT people during the civil war. I label as extreme any acts of violence remarkable for their public, cruel, or spectacular nature.

I base my approach on the previous works of Paul Brass (1997), Lee Ann Fujii (2009), Stathis Kalyvas (2006), and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2003), who have all undertaken comparative, sub-national, multi-sited fieldwork so as to better identify the different variables that impact logics of violence. These approaches have also inspired me to consider episodic events of violence, their contexts, and their impact in order to inductively produce theory on anti-LGBT violence during war. In particular, the work of Fujii, on the social dimensions of violence has pushed me to consider the socio-political impacts of violent victimization. As Fujii writes, "Specific acts of

violence can carry specific meanings. Cutting off the arms or hands of villagers in Sierra Leone, for example, might serve the goal of social control, but these acts also convey graphic warnings to villagers not to vote in upcoming elections or harvest their fields (Richards 1996, xx)." Thus, I center this social meaning making potential in understanding violence in its variant forms and characteristics.

Through a revision of government, NGO reports, and media articles, I identified hundreds of instances of paramilitary-violence against sexual and gender minorities between 1984 and 2008.[43] The repertoires of this violence include murder, displacement, threats, forced disappearance, kidnapping, torture, rape, sexual enslavement, forced labor, and corpse desecration. Many of these events present extreme cruelty and brutality.[44] In analyzing these instances, I have discovered prominent patterns of this violence and as such, have identified sites as relevant cases for comparison according to Jason Seawright and John Gerring's typology.

In each case study site, I process trace the events preceding and following periods of anti-LGBT violence. The methodological approach of process tracing a case study, as developed by Alexander George and Timothy McKeown (1985, 35), "involves both an attempt to reconstruct actors' definitions of the situation and an attempt to develop a theory of action. The framework

[43] The sources used to construct this novel database are detailed in Appendix I.
[44] In my own database, nearly one-third (234) of all reported incidences (752) of anti-LGBT violence incorporate cruelty or brutality. We coded for the presence of cruelty or brutality discursively, identifying the following terms as an indicator of these characteristics: *sevicia; violación y maltrato; crueldad/tratos crueles; asfixia; amordazado/a; tortura; hostigamiento; degollada; violación sexual aguda; violación sexual colectiva; destrozar; golpeadas severas; marcas de una brutalidad y ensañamiento extremos; mutilación; destrucción del rostro/cuerpo; descuartizamiento; brutalidad/matadas brutales.* These terms translate to: 'sevicia' or cruel and brutal violence; rape and abuse; cruelty/cruel treatment; suffocation; gagged; torture; harassment; beheaded/throat slashed; acute sexual assault; collective sexual assault/rape; ripped apart; severe blows; marks of extreme brutality and cruelty; mutilation; destruction of face/body; corporeal quartering; brutality/brutal death.

within which actors' perceptions and actions are described is given by the researcher, not by the actors themselves." In this approach, I seek out paramilitary perspectives through testimonies or court cases, where they discuss this form of violence and their reasoning for it. Revisiting historical contexts deepens our understanding of a given event, as Lee Ann Fujii writes "Contextualizing data also means examining their meanings or possible meanings, within the framework of historical conditions and institutions" (2009, 42). As such, my goal is both to identify the process of these events as well as understand the norms and interpretations surrounding them. As noted in the George and McKeown definition of process tracing, it is vital to understand the actors' definitions of the situation. This, thus, requires a knowledge of the involved actors' interpretations of a given event. Molly Patterson and Kristen Monroe (1998, 322) note that "how we make sense of the world and our place in it guides how we act and how we understand other actors in our world." A vital step in identifying a logic of anti-LGBT violence as tied to wartime logics is to understand it from the perspective of the perpetrators and witnesses. Through this consideration of historical context, I glean how these groups conceptualize, interpret, and understand the violence that occurred. This analysis is connected to other archival data to see how language, interpretation, and conceptualizations of these events has changed, as well as evaluate accuracy.

3.2.2 Analyzing Violence

With the violence mapped and historicized, I conduct two forms of analysis. First, I perform a textual and visual analysis of media coverage of anti-LGBT violence to identify public interpretations, as well as justificatory narrative frames, of this violence. Paul Brass (1997) demonstrates how textual analysis can pair with process tracing to develop new insights on

violence. In analyzing cases of riots in India, Brass treats his interviews as texts and notes that seemingly disparate cases are all 'linked by discourse.' Drawing on this insight, Brass develops the concept of a 'grand interpretive framework' used in India by political actors to conceptualize any type of violence or riot as ethnic-based. For my own research, I adopt a similar process-tracing, case study methodology with textual and visual analysis as a way to analyze the grand narratives surrounding anti-LGBT violence.

To identify these grand narratives, I draw on rhetorical approaches in political violence studies to identify the productive capacity of narratives to provide new identities (Fujii 2021, 2009; Ore 2019; Taylor 1997; Wedeen 2015). I connect these rhetorical approaches with visual analysis methods to recognize how images of violence produce, reinforce, and reveal these narratives and identities (Cooper-Cunningham 2020; Loken 2021; Loney & Pohlman 2022). In connecting acts of violence, narratives, and new identities, I build on Sharon Marcus' (2013, 389) discursive analyses of violence, which reads acts of violence in context. In theorizing a politic of rape, Marcus argues that "violence…is enabled by narratives, complexes and institutions which derive their strength not from outright, immutable, unbeatable force but rather from their power to structure our lives as imposing cultural scripts." In other words, the act of rape is made powerful beyond the individual victim because of the existing societal constructions relating to gender and power. Thus, Marcus provides a framework for understanding how social constructions impact the interpretations of violence. Violence has instrumental uses, of course, but it also relies on these cultural scripts to magnify its impacts. In my own analysis, I seek to identify the cultural scripts surrounding anti-LGBT violence by interrogating this media coverage.

For this chapter, I adopt a similar episodically focused methodology with content analysis as a way to analyze broader social narratives surrounding anti-LGBT violence by the media. These rhetorical studies approaches highlight the need for a new grammar of analysis to read different forms of violence in relation to their broader social impacts on civilians. Such a consideration of acts of violence against civilians has been more established in interpretivist social science work, like Lee Ann Fujii's, that concern the subjective social interpretation of political phenomena (Fujii 2009, 2013, 2017, 2021). Grammar, in this sense, is not affiliated with a proper discourse, but instead a recognition of a socio-cultural structure or social code that facilitates an interpretation of violence from both armed actors as well as civilians. Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (1991, 1992) wrote of the "grammar of terror" that occurred during the state repression of the Argentina military dictatorship in the late 20th-century. According to Suárez-Orozco, the military junta used a selection of repertories, particularly that of enforced disappearance, which established a level of terror in the country's civilian population that forced them to make strategic and quotidian decision from the angle of terror. By considering the grammars, or socio-cultural interpretation, of brutality by witnesses, I attempt to engage a range of scholars including, critical realists and neo-positivists, to question the importance of civilian interpretations to brutality during war through a framing of abjection as a social process. Given that armed actors attempt to understand civilian responses to violence, these deeper considerations of grammar also provide further context into armed actor behavior and why they might pursue a logic of brutality as it relates to civilian socialization.

I pair this textual and visual analysis of media archives with content analysis of my case study sites, which I then connect through an incorporated historical paired comparison to identify

overlapping and differing logics, mechanisms, and interpretations. As Phillip McMichael (1990, 386) states, an incorporated comparison "gives substance to a historical process (a whole) through comparison of its parts" and provides a "strategy in which theory construction is historically specific" (388). I utilize this historical comparative method in conjunction with what Sidney Tarrow (2010) labeled a "paired comparative analysis" or a two-case study comparison that varies on the dependent variable. As such, I adopt an incorporated comparison of paramilitary violence whereby I analyze two different paramilitary fronts, compare a set of features across these two groups while taking into account the different historical contexts in which those features occur. More specifically, in this project, I compare the differing forms of anti-LGBT violence utilized by these paramilitary units through a historical sociological lens in order to properly build a theory surrounding their uses of anti-LGBT violence.

Through these two forms of analysis, I first identify the interpretations of anti-LGBT violence in the broader community, establishing its social context and transformative potential. I then consider how paramilitaries utilize and conceptualize this violence in their own wartime social control efforts. In answering these questions, I gain a better understanding of this relationship between anti-LGBT violence, ideology, and social order as way to explain both occurrence as well as variation. Moreover, I reveal the utility surrounding brutality in episodes of violence.

3.2.3 Variation in Characteristics of Violence

A challenge to studying anti-LGBT violence in Colombia is that the variation witnessed is not easily captured through the concept of 'repertoire'. The term, which Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2017, 26) define as "the forms of violence in which the organization

regularly engages" comes from Charles Tilly's (2003) work on 'repertoires of contention' in social movements. Established repertoires of violence against LGBT people in Colombia were consistent combinations of lethal violence, sexual violence, torture, threats, forced disappearances, and displacement. With that said, variation existed in how this violence occurred: sometimes it would be in public, other times it would occur after death. This variation had important socio-political impacts that were tied to wartime logics but are impossible to identify through the consideration of repertoire alone.

To capture the subtle, yet important, variation in this phenomenon, I follow Lee Ann Fujii's (2009, 170) dictum that "investigating how people carry out violence can tell us quite a lot about why they do it in the first place." To date, existing approaches to studying civilian victimization cannot account for variation in the *characteristic* of violence, namely changes in the form of violence within the same repertoires. With the little attention paid to characteristics of violence, there are limited explanations for why LGBT people are targeted with such extreme brutality. In this section, I explore three of the most prominent means of analyzing wartime violence and demonstrate how their limited consideration of characteristics of violence inhibits their analytical potential to studying variation in violence against LGBT populations. These three approaches are Stathis Kalyvas' 'control-collaboration' approach, Jeremy Weinstein's 'organizational' approach, and Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood's 'patterns of violence' approach. In analyzing the limits of these approaches, I begin to build toward my own analytical intervention in this dissertation, which is to incorporate considerations of *characteristic* in studies of variation in wartime violence dynamics.

Stathis Kalyvas' (2006, 2012) 'control-collaboration' approach utilizes a series of binaries: its occurrence (whether it does or not take place), its form (lethal or not), or target (selective or indiscriminate). He focuses on lethal violence, suggesting that it may be representative of other violences that occur. This focus on lethality has been challenged by scholars who have expanded this focus on microdynamics to other repertoires, including but not limited to sexual violence (Cohen 2016; Wood 2006, 2009), ethnic cleansing (Bulutgil 2016), and displacement (Steele 2017). Scholars have also expanded the binary of the target beyond selective and indiscriminate to include collective, group-selective, and categorical violence (Balcells 2017; Steele 2017; Straus 2015). Amelia Hoover Green identifies the analytical limitations of this focus on lethal violence:

> Social scientists often strip away gore and complexity as we search for the "logic of violence" (cf. Kalyvas 2006). In particular, we often focus on lethal violence, excluding other forms from our analyses and our attention. The stories above are reduced to a list of body counts; stories that include horrific violence other than death are often erased completely. Unfortunately, the simple, compelling theories of (lethal) violence that are social scientists' stock-in-trade offer few explanations for the abduction, destruction, detention, disappearance, disfigurement, displacement, sexual violence, slavery, theft, and torture that often accompany killings (2018, 6).

As Hoover Green notes, a limited focus on repertoire does not consider exactly how people are harmed, nor the characteristics of these acts of violence. A framework that considers changes of characteristics within repertoire by armed actors could further complicate the binary of form, with a potential focus on when violence is exceptional in its character as opposed to more standard within the social-cultural boundaries of acceptable harm. Hoover Green (2018, 8) expands our understanding of repertoire by acknowledging its "breadth" and bifurcating "repertoires and levels of violence" as "analytically separable." In her work on the dynamics of violence during the Salvadoran civil war, she looks at variation in violence through the different forms of violence used, the proportion of episodes of violence comprising a particular form, and

the levels of violence in a given period. Laia Balcells' (2017) work on the dynamics of violence during conventional (or symmetric) civil wars also advances this analytical direction of complicating repertoire with her establishment of direct and indirect violence, which divides forms of lethal violence between violence perpetrated unilaterally with heavy weaponry by armed groups (indirect) and violence perpetrated by small weapons by armed groups and aligned local civilians (direct). Balcells also characterizes the direct violence perpetrated by rebels as 'more brutal' and connects the uniqueness of this brutality with a focus on political factors associated with armed groups. Balcells' research establishes how an expanded concept of form, inclusive of characteristic variation, in relation to lethal violence can produce new questions and new insights.

Jeremy Weinstein's (2006, 301) organizational approach does conceptualize variation in the intensity of violence, which recognizes the character of violence through a consideration of the selectivity of violence and its brutality. But Weinstein's conceptualization of brutality as strategically excessive acts of violence leaves limited intellectual space to consider nuances in how its variation can be linked to wartime strategy and ideology. Furthermore, without a consideration of the central roles of intention and ideology in the adoption of certain violent practices, the occurrence of brutality can be considered a result of lacking organizational discipline by resource-poor rebels as opposed to an inherent strategy or belief which could still relate to internal group dynamics. Dara Kay Cohen (2016), Lee Ann Fujii (2009, 2021) and Kieran Mitton (2015) all document how acts of extreme brutality can be used for in-group cohesion, such as gang rape among forced recruits, and group culpability, such as forced

participation in acts of mass killing. A focus on characteristics then could perhaps reveal new dynamics of the socialization process.

The pattern of violence approach presented by Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2017, 22) develops a new matrix to analyze violence through four categories: repertoire, target, frequency, and technique. They declare that "each dimension is necessary and together they are sufficient," purporting that they deepen previous analyses of violence. The scholars challenged the focus on lethal violence developed by Stathis Kalyvas' control-collaboration model, arguing that it incorrectly assumes that armed groups mete out lethal and non-lethal in parallel ways. Furthermore, they challenge Jeremy Weinstein's conceptualization of 'intensity' and 'brutality' of violence because of how it fails to distinguish between form and targeting. To illustrate the strengths of their approach, Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood analyze the violence perpetrated by paramilitary and guerrilla groups in Colombia during the 1990s and find that homicide rates do not reveal the extent of the differences in how the groups use violence. They note that "forms of violence such as massacres, kidnapping, or sexual violence differ sharply across the organization," and that the "combinations of repertoire elements and targets serve as signatures" of the respective organizations (2017, 34-35). It is unclear where characteristics would fit in this approach in its current form. The element could be at the intersection of repertoire and technique, but neither dimension accurately reflects the desired unit of analysis. As such, the combined sufficiency of these four dimensions is called into question if they are not able to properly consider important characteristics of violence. 'Characteristic' could be a fifth dimension of this approach that takes into account 'brutal' acts

of violence as well as other important descriptive elements such as ‘cruel’, ‘public’, ‘group-perpetrated’, or ‘necroviolent’.

There is analytical potential in the study of characteristics of violence as a way to complicate how scholars consider form. The cited approaches all help reveal the complex interactions that produce different dynamics of violence, yet they do not consider the varying impacts that violence might have depending on its characteristics. These nuances at the intersection of characteristic and impact relate to the tensions between understanding violence as expressive and instrumental. Lee Ann Fujii (2013) asserts that because violence is both expressive and instrumental, it can serve as a semiotic tool. Writing on the goals of violence, Stathis Kalyvas (2006, 26) purports that “violence is intended to shape the behavior of the targeted audience by altering the expected value of particular attitudes. Put otherwise, violence performs a communicative function with a clear deterrent dimension.” But thus far in studies that center violence as the unit of analysis, the communicative function of more gruesome violence has been undertheorized because such variations (or gradations) in characteristics of violence are not taken into consideration. In certain literatures beyond civil war studies, scholars consider the “semiotics of murder” (Rotella 1998), in the case of cartel violence in Mexico, and “necroviolence” (De León 2015), in the case of visual destruction of a corpse. Fujii’s (2021) work on the logic of violent display reveals how public acts of brutal violence are communicative as well as transformational, drawing in the witnesses into the performances of violence through direct participation or observation. Fujii’s interventions on the semiotics of public forms of extreme violence establish the groundwork for a consideration of characteristic in the study of violence in civil war. As this analysis of variation in paramilitary violence against

LGBT people will show, applying a renewed focus on *characteristic* in analyses of violence allows scholars to study the interaction of established analytical variables of violence and thus, better understand the logics of semiotic violence and its socially transformative potential during civil war.

3.3 Ethical Considerations Regarding the Pain of Others

Beyond the ethical considerations of myself as a 'Global North' researcher in the 'Global South', this dissertation also requires ethical consideration in how it represents victims of anti-LGBT violence. While university ethics protocols require deep consideration of how a scholar engages with *living* human subjects, there has been little consideration of how to deal with dead (or murdered) human subjects of research (Subotic 2020). Such considerations are particularly important for this dissertation as in Chapter 5, I show actual media coverage of anti-LGBT violence—meaning I provide examples of graphic images and their respective headlines in the Colombian tabloid EL ESPACIO.[45] While I obscure the faces of any corpses depicted, I still share my approach in order to 'warn' the reader that the contents of this chapter are graphic. I also share in order to introduce a conversation on research ethics, photography, and the archive. Much of my approach to visual representation in Chapter 5 is inspired by Susan Sontag's (2003) work on photography, particularly in her last book *Regarding the Pain of Others.* In this text, Sontag recognizes the interpretive and manipulative nature of war photography. A photo may

[45] These decisions in my research design were further influenced by discussions with my peers in Colombia. I discussed how to present this EL ESPACIO coverage with six social leaders in Colombia, five were survivors of anti-LGBT violence from the territories and one was a lawyer representing victims of anti-LGBT violence before the transitional justice courts in Bogotá. Within this small sample, all told me that they supported publishing the original photos— without any censoring of graphic imagery— in order to 'show how things were' and to force the reader to confront the 'perpetrator's gaze', particularly to a predominately English-speaking audience. While recognizing that this group does not speak for all victims of Colombia, I took these insights seriously in my own considerations.

appear like an empirical reality, but it is a moment witnessed (and controlled) through the eyes of the image-taker. Images might appear more 'real' than other forms of written media because they can be directly viewed and interpreted by the viewer, but their perceived veracity is a fiction. They ultimately are the construction of the image-taker, who applies them to their own narrative. As such, photographs are not always a representational truth, their meaning comes from a combination of deceit, context, and personal perspective. This possibility of manipulation haunts their analytical potential.

In the text, Susan Sontag (2003, 65) writes, "Photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed." This possession, or association through familiarity, represents an inter-relational process between the image and the viewer. The image, particularly that of suffering, compels (perhaps even excites) the viewer. If it did not, these images from EL ESPACIO would not sell. But what does it do after its initial attraction? Susan Sontag argues that images of suffering only produce compassion when the viewer can identify with the subject. She warns that they also produce a feeling of powerlessness. In the face of this powerlessness and without that capacity to identify, the image can harden a viewer, creating distance between the viewer and its subject. These photos of anti-LGBT violence in EL ESPACIO with their sensationalist and stigmatizing commentary, thus, are not meant to draw compassion. Instead, they alienate and characterize a community already stigmatized by prejudice.

It is because of their vital role in the stigmatizing process that I believe it is ethical and important to show these images. Meredith Loken (2021) identifies how images can be a source of data in political violence research as they disclose beliefs associated with a given topic. The EL ESPACIO

coverage of anti-LGBT violence thus reveals broader norms, symbols, and cultural narratives in Colombian society at that time. In her analysis on the ethics of archival material related to atrocity, Jelena Subotic (2020, 5) notes "[the archive is] of human significance because it details the process of dehumanization and deconstruction of social norms that happens in the worst possible human environment imaginable." In a thesis that focuses on the contexts that produce these images, I argue that these images represent a form of virtual documentation of the processes explored. I follow Subotic's direction that:

> We need to embed these archival materials within the historical and political context of the time and evaluate the documents against other factors such as, for example, the severity of violence and repression in society. An archival document alone is not only meaningless, it can be highly deceptive and its interpretation ethically challenging (2020, 6).

In line with this analysis, Chapter 5 follows the history and context of Chapter 4 yet precedes the case studies of Chapters 6 and 7, in order to demonstrate the mechanisms through which brutal anti-LGBT violence facilitate social transformation through processes of abjection.

I recognize the critiques and risks of my approach. Susan Crane (2008) has argued reproducing photographs of atrocities, particular those taken by the perpetrator, is a form of participation in the atrocity because it reproduces the perpetrator's perspective. Similar critiques have been launched by scholars of lynching and the Holocaust who argue that the reproduction of these images of atrocity in the public domain facilitate a form of renewed violence (Reinhardt 2012). Additionally, transgender studies scholars have been critical of this focus on lethal anti-trans violence as opposed to ameliorating the conditions of the living. C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn write, "the circulation of trans people of color in their afterlife accrues value to a newly professionalizing and institutionalizing class of experts whose lives could not be further removed from those they are professing to help" (2013, 74). I recognize these critiques and I worry about my own involvement in these patterns, but ultimately, conclude that presenting

these images are worth this risk because new knowledge on this process has the potential to better the lives of these affected populations by recognizing and memorializing a lost aspect of their wartime history. Such a litmus test is used for ethical considerations by Karen Jacobsen and Loren Landau (2003), who argue that research on vulnerable populations (in their case, refugees) is only justifiable if it helps to end suffering. I will not justify my approach by arguing that doing so will directly 'help' these populations, my friend and colleague Fernando Serrano-Amaya (*forthcoming*) has done extensive work to demonstrate how these amorphous claims to 'help' through researching anti-LGBT violence are baseless and often from a neocolonial orientation. However, I am persuaded by the argument of the Argentine genocide scholar Daniel Feierstein, who argues that "a social practice [such as genocide] must first be thoroughly understood before it can be successfully confronted and eradicated. First, it must be demystified and its multiple, complex, and nuanced causal relations laid bare" (2014, 83).

In this dissertation, I reproduce these images (with faces covered to anonymize) in order to document how they contribute and represent a process of marginalization relevant to the context and phenomenon in question. These images are already in the public domain, yet there is not necessarily a public knowledge of this phenomenon—especially outside of Colombia (Gómez 2012). As such revealing this process and introducing it to the record of memory requires revisiting these machinations of horror. These photos are horrific to view, but in recognition with Amelia Hoover Green's (2018) critique that scholars of violence have a way of sanitizing and decontextualizing violence that risks a removed analysis from the lives of those affected, centering these images as the unit of analysis allows me to avoid perpetuating this dynamic in my own exploration of brutality during war. Peers in Colombia expressed a similar sentiment.

Finally, I conclude by recognizing a potential ethical redemption in challenging the final resting narratives of these victims. Though I cannot and do not intend to redress the ethical indignity of their treatment, I attempt to avoid an extension of this indignity by confronting the problematic narratives that framed this coverage. As Colombian artist Doris Salcedo argued, "if you forget [the victim], then you kill them a second time" (Luke 2021). This approach extends into broader debates in conflict studies on the ethics of the archive. I try to practice an ethic of care (Krystalli and Schulz 2022) but believe that standard efforts to anonymize and obscure only work in favor of existing discriminating power structures that further harm.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research design for this dissertation. It started with a general retelling of the research process, demonstrating how I developed my method and ethics in collaboration with peers in Colombia. From there, I presented my methods in three parts. First, I explained that this inductive theory building project results from an historical paired comparison of two case study sites. I then detailed how I plan to analyze acts of anti-LGBT violence in order to inductively build theory. This section continued with an analytical contribution that I make to the discipline through this dissertation, which is recognizing variations in characteristics of violence. I note that in both case study sites, similar repertoires were used in various ways. As such, only focusing on repertoire would miss important elements of the violence's reception in that specific context because the form differed so greatly. Analyzing 'characteristics' in violence, thus, becomes a way to recognize this more subtle form of variation. I conclude with a discussion on ethics in relation to studying anti-LGBT violence and its representations in photography.

Chapter 4 Paramilitary Violence against LGBT People in Context

"*There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism*" – Walter Benjamin[46]

"*Colombia is a country of ghosts*" – Juliana Martínez[47]

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a brief review of the history of paramilitarism in Colombia in order to reveal how civilian victimization became a core aspect of their wartime strategy. Further, understanding the history of paramilitarism in the country provides important context for understanding the phenomenon of anti-LGBT violence as it relates to wartime logics. From this history, it becomes clear that LGBT people became targeted by paramilitaries as a result of wartime logics, and not just social prejudice. With the political and historical aspects of this phenomenon identified, the chapter then presents some context on the entity of the phenomenon. Using government data and historical sources, anti-LGBT violence is presented at the national and sub-national levels. From there, it details the process of anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries with an eye towards its variation.

There were three waves of paramilitarism in Colombia: the first wave (1964-1980), the second wave (1980-2008), and the third wave (2008-today). This dissertation focuses on the second generation of paramilitarism, when the group was the height of its power, particularly in the late

[46] (Benjamin 2009).
[47] (Martínez 2021, 1)

1990s and early 2000s. From 1997 onwards, the second generation of paramilitaries were known as the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* ('United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia'*, AUC*).

4.2 A Brief History of Paramilitarism in Colombia

This section introduces a brief history of paramilitarism in Colombia.[48] Paramilitarism in Colombia is understood through three waves (see Figure 3). With antecedents in mid-twentieth century civil war *La Violencia,* the first wave happened in response to the start of leftist guerrilla insurgencies in the mid-1960s with the guidance of the state. The second wave began in the 1980s and was led more by local political and business elites— particularly largescale landowners, narcotraffickers, and local military authorities. The third wave began in 2008 after the formal (if incomplete) political demobilization of the second-generation paramilitaries under President Álvaro Uribe and has continued to this day. This wave has been marked by a rejection of political ideology and renewed focus on narco-criminal activity.

4.2.1 The First Wave of Paramilitarism (1964-1980)

The roots of paramilitarism and much of the current Colombian civil war stem from *La Violencia,* a ten-year conventional civil war between as 1948-1958 that occurred between 'liberals' and 'conservatives' in the country as they struggled for political dominance. It is estimated that the violence of this period resulted between 200,000 and 300,000 deaths (Civico

[48] As this section is a history of paramilitarism in the country, and not a summary of the entire conflict, I will use footnotes to share some brief updates about other parties to the conflict. Additionally, see the cited sources for more in-depth histories of *La Violencia* (Karl 2017; Roldan 2002), the Colombian conflict (Palacios 2006; Ríos Sierra 2020), and Paramilitarism (Daly 2016; Duncan 2006; Hristov 2009; Medina Gallego 1990; Ronderos 2006).

2016; Daly 2016; Hristov 2009). The dynamics of violence of *La Violencia* established certain logics that impacted future patterns of violence. María Victoria Uribe (2004) notes how *La Violencia* established patterns of dehumanizing and brutal violence against civilians, often tied to animal husbandry practices, to send signals to rural populations and encourage their flight. During this war, both parties to the conflict raised armed local militias known as *bandoleros*, who were instrumental in provoking massive dispossession of *campesinos*. Beyond the targeting of perceived partisans, these groups also targeted those who challenged established economic orders of large-scale agriculture. Uribe (2004) recognizes the social impact of this intercommunal violence— neighbors became strangers as they stopped communicating out of fear of informants. Uribe (2004, 81) notes:

> Nevertheless, it was an outburst of generalized violence that transformed neighbors into strangers and enemies, precipitating a war of extermination that spread throughout the country. During La Violencia, perpetrators and peasants became involved in a perverse logic. Bandoleros adopted the names and behavior of common birds of prey as well as the practices, strategies, and language used for hunting animals. In turn, peasants adopted the attitude of prey: meek, passive, and terrorized.

The formal end of *La Violencia* in 1958 did not see an end to the violence, which continued sporadically in both rural and urban areas. The peace treaty did establish a power sharing agreement between the liberal and conservatives, where they would rotate the presidency. This deal facilitated an elite capture that did not incorporate leftist perspectives, which were growing widespread as a result of a galvanized and frustrated *campesino* class (Hristov 2009). The government at the time sought to repress this leftism, which they considered to be influenced by outside Communist intervention and not based on socioeconomic discontent (Barón 2011). During this time, the Tolima department, a rural province southwest of Bogotá and part of Magdalena Medio, saw the election of local Communist Party members in five municipalities. The government, with US military support, undertook a repressive state offensive, known as the

War of Villarrica, to purge the area of Communist Party members. The communist leaders fled to the jungle where they started the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* ('Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia', FARC[49]) in 1964 (Daly 2016; Mantilla and Ferry 2022). That same year, students and members of the communist party in Colombia took up arms against the government nearby in the Magdalena Medio region of the country, forming the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* ('National Liberation Army', ELN[50]). A few years later in 1967, another insurgency, the *Ejército Popular de Liberación* ('Popular Liberation Army', EPL[51]) was formed out of another faction of the Communist Party in Colombia, taking up arms in the northern parts of Antioquia (Civico 2016).

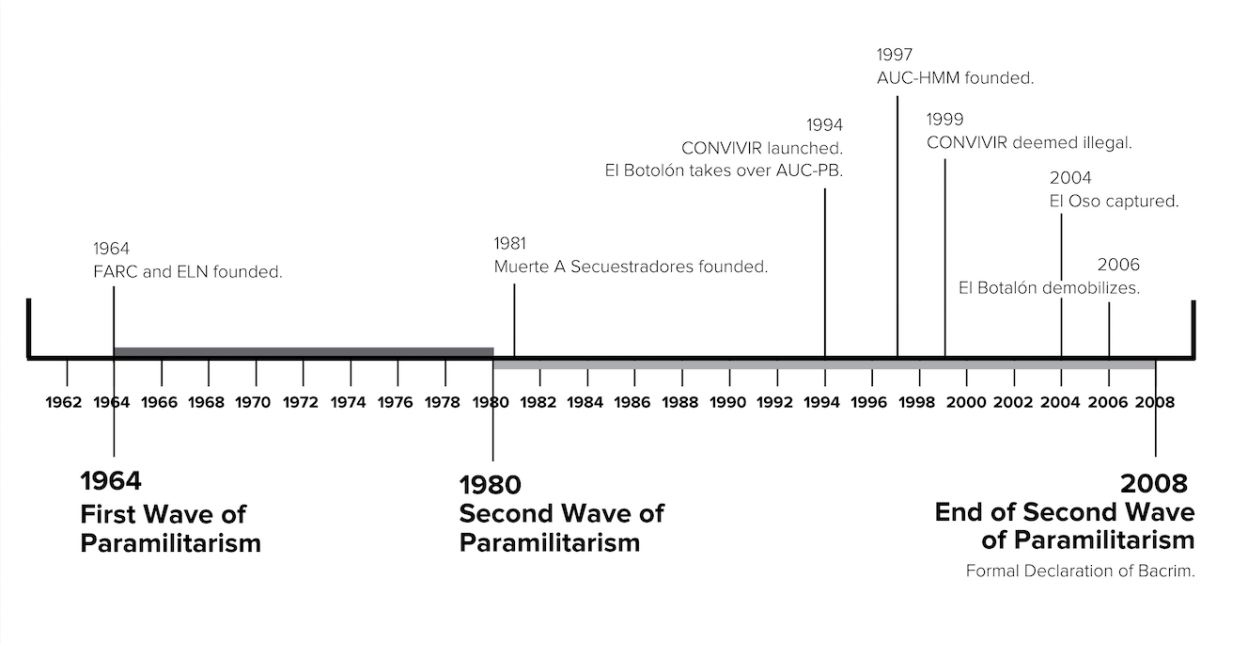


Figure 3: A Timeline of Paramilitarism in Colombia

[49] The FARC signed a deal with the government and demobilized in 2016. FARC dissident groups still exist, but they are much smaller than the original forces.
[50] The ELN are still active and largely considered the last active and organized leftist guerrilla insurgency in the country.
[51] The EPL signed a deal with the government and demobilized in 1990.

The growth of communist guerrilla insurgency in Colombia was part of a broader phenomenon in Latin America that caught the attention of not only the Colombian government, but the government of the United States (US). During this time, the US government worked closely with many Latin American governments, including Colombia, to combat the spread of communism. Modelled on the Phoenix Program counterinsurgency tactics used in Vietnam, the US government helped develop a counterinsurgency strategy against low intensity war in Latin America. With the support of the US, the Colombian government developed *Plan Lazo*, which sought to destroy the political infrastructure of the insurgency through the targeting of their civilian support base. This campaign of counterinsurgency through civilian victimization became known as the 'national security doctrine' in Colombia (Hristov 2009). To aid in this campaign of destroying the political infrastructure of the insurgency, the US government recommended that the Colombians raise paramilitary forces. General William P. Yarborough of the US Special Warfare Center to Colombia visited Colombia to access the situation and wrote the following in a memorandum to others in the US government:

> A concerted country team effort should be made now to select civilian and military personnel for clandestine training in resistance operations in case they are needed later. This should be done with a view toward development of a civil and military structure for exploitation in the event the Colombian internal security system deteriorates further. This structure should be used to pressure toward reforms known to be needed, perform counter-agent and counter-propaganda functions and as necessary execute paramilitary, sabotage, and/or terrorist activities against known communist proponents. It should be backed by the United States (HRW 1996).[52]

This suggestion of Yarborough was directly related to counterinsurgency tactics established in the 1960s US counterinsurgency manuals, which encouraged the formation of paramilitaries adjacent to government forces. The US army's field manual at the time shared that "paramilitary

[52] This letter, cited in HRW 1998, is accessible through the Declassified Documents Reference Series (1976) of the Carrollton Press, and entitled '*US Army Special Warfare School, 'Subject: Visit to Colombia, February 26, 1962*.'

units can support the national army in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations when the latter are being conducted in their own province or political subdivision" (Stokes 2005, 64). Further in a section entitled "Secure Population Centers," the manual observes a benefit of paramilitaries is their ability to be deployed rapidly to villages under attack by insurgents. In addition to supporting the establishment of paramilitaries, these counterinsurgency guides of the 1960s also provided a definition of subversion that went beyond armed actors but also included aligned social actors. In this definition, various social and political intuitions became considered fronts for communism, including "legal political organizations, the public education systems, leaders of dissident groups such as minorities, religious sects, and labour unions" (Hristov 2006, 62). These manuals also commented on the forms of acceptable violence in counterinsurgent campaigns. As Jasmin Hristov (2009, 61) notes, "In 1966 the field manual *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Forces* specified that while antiguerrilla forces should not employ mass terror, selective terror against civilians was acceptable and justified as a necessary response to the alleged terrorism committed by rebel forces."

The Colombian state followed the field manual's suggestion of 'selective terror' and in hard to access rural and urban zones, they raised paramilitaries to help the state combat guerillas as well as monitor rebels, their supporters, and suspected social organizations throughout the country (Ballvé 2020). Leaders of these paramilitaries were drawn from local businesses and political elite with training and financing from the US government. The Colombian government further put into place the legal regime necessary to legitimize these counterinsurgency actions including media censorship, the suspension of *habeus corpus* and other civil rights, and the forced relocation of whole towns (Hristov 2009, 62). In 1966, President Guillermo León Valencia

declared a state of siege, granting the military judicial and political powers that were no longer under the purview of civilian authorities. In 1978, President Julio César Turbay granted further powers to the military normally under the purview of civilian authorities. These decrees were eventually transformed into law with Decree 2298 of 1965 becoming Law 48 in 1968. This law, which remained in place until 1989, established the legal foundation for paramilitarism. Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2006) noted that "the military frequently cited Law 48 as the legal foundation for their support for all paramilitaries." Hristov (2009, 62) further explains:

> As part of Plan Lazo, the decree essentially laid the legal foundation for the establishment of paramilitarism by authorizing the executive branch to create civil patrols by decree and ordering the Ministry of Defense to supply them with weapons normally restricted to the exclusive use of the armed forces. Subsequently, paramilitary bodies called civil defense forces were designed by and incorporated into the Colombian Military systems. One of their most distinguished creators was Gen. Fernando Landazabal, a veteran of the Korean War, known as the godfather of counterinsurgency.

Hristov (2009, 60) describes this first wave of paramilitarism as "the state creates and the elite supports." This first wave of paramilitarism allowed for the state to access and securitize rural parts of the country without the costly expansion of the army and the accountability of international norms. It also allowed the state to target guerrillas through irregular war and receive information through informant networks.

4.2.2 The Second Wave of Paramilitarism (1981-2008)

Hristov describes the second wave of paramilitarism as the "elite creates, the state supports" (2009, 63). During this period, starting in the 1980s, political and business elites become directly involved in the creation of self-defense units. These units were particularly raised by large-scale

landowners, cattle ranchers, mine owners, and narcotraffickers. Hristov (2009, 63) defines the second wave of paramilitarism as having five characteristics:

> A shift in the state's (unofficial) policy toward the partial privatization of coercion; the state's fusion with the elite; a legal framework that had set the ground for the design, training, equipping, and administration by the state military of armed bodies outside its institution; a prevailing anticommunist ideology; and militarized patches of the country that served as a model to emulate.

Many understand the growth of paramilitarism in this period to be tied to state absence throughout rural (and some urban) zones of the country. In the absence of the state, guerrilla groups began to extort largescale landowners and mobilize *campesino* communities. Hristov (2009, 63-64) describes that "the elite was willing to sacrifice the monopoly over arms in order to be able to confront the challenge presented by insurgency." This approach was designed by General Farouk Yanine Dias, who was trained in the USA and sought to collaborate more with civil organizations in order to undertake a whole of society approach to counterinsurgency and further connect the military with paramilitary organizations (Civico 2016, 47; Hylton 2006, 72).

At this time, civilians in areas with a guerrilla presence were becoming subjected to kidnapping and extortion, as the armed groups sought new sources of income to resource themselves (Daly 2016). To bring an end to the extortion of the guerrillas, narcotraffickers in Cali and Medellín developed "Death to Kidnappers" (*Muerte a Secuestadores*, MAS) in 1981, which were paramilitaries that used brutal means to reduce guerrilla presence in urban areas in order to protect the economic elites' interests through a language of anti-subversion. In Puerto Boyacá[53], a rural river town in the Magdalena Medio region in the center of the country, the political and

[53] Puerto Boyacá is largely seen as the birthplace of paramilitarism in the country. The paramilitary project was widely effective there in the 1980s and 1990s and became a model spread throughout the country. The history of paramilitarism of Puerto Boyacá will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

business elite came together to create their own self-defense units in order to curb a FARC front in the region that was terrorizing landowners in 1982. The local government, which was run by a military-appointed mayor, mirrored the MAS structure of the narcotraffickers and introduced a similar strategy of anti-subversion counterinsurgency. The MAS of Puerto Boyacá, along with local military and police organizations, unleashed a terror campaign against local populations that they thought were affiliated with the insurgency, including elected communist party officials, social leaders, union members, and teachers. Their initial campaign killed 800 people (Hristov 2009).

After denouncements to the government and a subsequent investigation that found 59% of denounced acts of violence by MAS were performed by active police and military officials, the organization was forced to restructure in order to evade disbanding. The organization became the *Asociación Campesina de Ganaderos y Agricultores del Magdalena Medio* ('Campesino Association of Cattle Ranchers and Farmers of Magdalena Medio', ACDEGAM). ACDEGAM engaged in many social development projects, incorporating more civilians, who were increasingly becoming tired of insurgent extortion practices, into their organization. ACDEGAM also provided a structure to unite the disparate paramilitary groups in the region (HRW 1996; Ronderos 2014). In their offensive against insurgency, the ACDEGAM took on both social and political cleansings. In addition to the targeting of individuals associated with subversion, the group began targeting members of the *Union Patriótica* political party ('Patriotic Union', UP), which was viewed as the political wing of the FARC as it was established during peace talks between the FARC and the Betancur government (Hristov 2009; Steele 2017). Much of the local populations, including the military, were not a fan of these peace talks, considering them too

lenient on the guerrillas, and thus still performed these cleansing campaigns (Civico 2018). As Jasmin Hristov (2009, 66) explains, “From 1984 to the early 1990s in Puerto Berrio, which lies a little north of ACDEGAM’s headquarters in Puerto Boyacá, the Fourteenth Brigade provided intelligence and military support to paramilitary groups in their attacks against UP members.” In 1989, Decree 1194 formally banned paramilitary groups in the country, but had little impact on their actual existence. In 1990, the EPL guerrilla group demobilized and as part of the tripartite negotiation, some paramilitary groups also demobilized. This demobilization was only temporary as the FARC quickly filled the power vacuums in the regions, including former paramilitary strongholds like the department of Córdoba. Further in 1990, the US army began working with the Colombian army to develop covert intelligence networks to aid counterinsurgency networks. HRW (1996) argued that these intelligence networks further entrenched state authorities’ relations with paramilitaries, whom HRW alleged the state was relying on not only for information but also for murder.

The paramilitary groups were able to expand and consolidate power during this time period because of narcotrafficking and other forms of commodity trafficking (such as hydrocarbons and emeralds). Narcotrafficking required illegal armed groups to protect their supplies and other interests. Additionally, there was a growing move for narcotraffickers to launder their money through the purchasing of fertile or strategic land throughout the country (Hristov 2009). This fertile land became used for both illicit crop cultivation as well as other agricultural ventures. Strategic land was often closely tied to important narcotrafficking routes close to rivers or seaports. By the late 1988s, the narcotraffickers had bought more land than the government had bought for agrarian reform redistribution intended for landless *campesinos* (Dudley 2004).

Following the success of paramilitary groups in Magdalena Medio, other groups began to appear throughout the country. Of note were the *Campesino* Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá*, ACCU), which was headed by the Castaño brothers. The ACCU were active in the north of the country in the mid-1980s and led a very violent campaign against subversion that saw the political cleansing of UP members and their supporters from the region (Steele 2017). In 1994, the Gaviria government launched the Integral Rural Security Plan which created systems to facilitate civilian collaboration with armed forces, including the provision of arms. The Ministry of Defense then created the *Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada* ('Cooperatives of Private Security and Surveillance', CONVIVIR) program, which built on the Integral Rural Security Plan, to arm private civilian groups to surveil and defend high risk areas throughout the biggest department in the country. Future President Alvaro Uribe, who was then governor of Antioquia, was a pioneer of the program and helped establish it the department, which had already become a major theater of the war. By 1999, CONVIVIR was deemed illegal by the Constitutional Court of Colombia, but its legacy was already established. The program helped arm large swatch of the population, fueling the growths of disparate paramilitary throughout the country, who in 1997 came together to create the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) (Daly 2016).

The Castaño brothers of the ACCU played an important role in organizing the AUC, which ultimately became a loose federation of paramilitary groups around the country. By the height of their power in 2002, there were at least 22 paramilitary groups in 28 departments (Hristov

2009).[54] The strongholds of paramilitarism were Antioquia, the Caribbean coast, Magdalena Medio, and parts of the central plains (*los llanos*). While not all these groups came together under the AUC, most did. Recruits for these groups came from low-income areas (both rural and urban) as well as former soldiers, military and police officers, guerrillas, criminal group members, and *sicarios* (hired assassins). The most common narrative for joining the ranks was economic (the paramilitaries provided a stable payment), but some recruits mentioned a desire for revenge or political change (Civico 2016).[55] Many of these groups became involved in the drug trade and drug cartels were eager to finance them and incorporate themselves into them, given that they provided security against guerrillas.[56] Additionally, paramilitary leadership felt engagement with narcotrafficking would be beneficial in the event of a future political amnesty for these paramilitary groups might not only help launder their own behavior but also strengthen their hand in negotiations with the government (Civico 2016; Hristov 2009).

These groups came together on a platform as described by Jasmin Hristov:

> Have a clearly defined antisubversive doctrine and political projection. / Never abandon the struggle as long as the guerrillas exist, nor give up because of any obstacles that may appear. / Give up arms only as a consequence of trilateral negotiation. / Do not get involved in drug trafficking. / Each person is to take responsibility for his [or her] own military actions. / Actively carry out the decisions made by the organization's central leadership. / Define the organization as an antisubversive politico-military movement, with a right to legitimate defense, that seeks to reform the state but does not fight against it. / If any of the groups under the AUC get involved in drug dealing, they do so at their own responsibility. / Other groups will be allowed to join the movement as long as they comply with the above-mentioned requirements. / Unity should always be maintained (2009, 70).

[54] The 4 departments that did not have a formal second-wave paramilitary presence were the archipelago of San Andres and Providencia as well as the Amazon departments of Amazonas, Guainía, and Vaupes. Daly (2016) further recognizes some of these groups' sub-groups as independent *bloques*, identifying 37 groups in total. A report on demobilization from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ODDR 2012) documented 40 different groups.
[55] Interview, journalist, 2020; interview, journalist, 2021.
[56] Within the AUC structure, each paramilitary *bloque* was able to make their own decision regarding their involvement in the drug trade.

The AUC framed themselves as using the same irregular methods of guerrillas in order to protect the Colombian people. They argued that they were forced to violate the law because there was no existing legal regime to guarantee the right to self-defense and the state was not doing enough to protect the people. Carlos Castaño, one of the founders of the ACCU and AUC, said that the AUC tried "to make sure that wherever there is a guerrilla troop, there will be a self-defense troop…Because every day the state, through its armed forces, shows itself more and more incapable of controlling the advance of the guerrillas" (Pizarro 2004, 120).

These groups financed themselves through the performance of services for the economic and political elites, extortion and taxation of local populations, participation in illicit economies (such as the trafficking of drugs and arms), and money laundering through land and business investments. Beyond securitizing towns and pursuing guerrillas, the paramilitaries were instrumental in mass displacement and cleansing campaigns that were often requested by large-scale landowners, cattle ranchers, multinational mining and timber corporations (Pereira and Payne 2016).[57] Paramilitaries often utilized massacres and other indiscriminate forms of brutal violence in order to displace populations and take over lands that were fertile, mineral-rich, guerrilla occupied, or strategic for transportation and trafficking routes. These paramilitaries often appropriated the land and business themselves or cleared the area for use by local business elites or multinational corporations (Hristov 2009). Mass displacement is a defining feature of the conflict with most displacement being caused the paramilitaries as a result of the logic of

[57] There is an extended literature on the relationship between paramilitaries and business—both local and multinational. Corporations often paid paramilitaries to protect their material interests, and some paid them to clear areas through massive displacement campaigns in order to accumulate land. Paramilitaries were also paid to repress dissent, particularly through the targeting of union leaders (Hristov 2009).

land politics in the country.[58] Abbey Steele (2017, 5) defines displacement as "civilian migration that is provoked, directly or indirectly, by one or several armed groups." The UNHCR (2007) predicted that at the time of paramilitary demobilization in 2007, three million Colombians were displaced internally in the country.

Related to the dynamic of mass displacement, was the dynamic of cleansing. Cleansing had both political and social characteristics. Political cleansing, often tied to election cycles, occurred when the paramilitaries targeted local political leaders and supporters of leftist parties, whom they viewed as proxy for guerrillas. Abbey Steele (2017, 20) defines political cleansing as "the expulsion of a particular group from a territory." The most known cases of cleansing were related to UP party member and politicians who were lethally targeted throughout the paramilitary strongholds of the country (Steele 2017). Social cleansing followed a different logic than political cleansings. In addition to targeting those assumed to be subversive (or associated with guerrillas), the paramilitaries often targeted social minorities that were considered *desechables* ('disposable') including "petty thieves, beggars, the homeless, poor mentally ill people, garbage and recycle collectives, street prostitutes (as opposed to those in exclusive, upscale prostitution establishments), drug addicts and homosexuals" (Hristov 2009, 79). These social cleansing campaigns were another form of collaboration between local elites and the paramilitaries. Often the local political authorities might call in and request the social cleansing and then the business community would pay for it (though not always willingly). The cleansings were sometimes popular with local populations who felt that the Colombian justice system was

[58] Jasmin Hristov (2009, 76) labels this land politic an 'agrarian counter reform' and citing a conversation with now President Gustavo Petro reveals that second-generation paramilitary operations have transferred 11 million hectares of land into the hands of the political and economic elite between 1990 and 2004. In this same interview, Petro cites that 97% of all murders of unionists are committed by paramilitaries.

too lenient on criminals and would often feel safer once cleansing completed or at least in process (Taussig 2005). Social cleansing is different than political and ethnic cleansing because it not only had a geographic logic, but also a social logic. In the face of a threat during a social cleansing campaign, someone might leave akin to political cleansing. But, sometimes, rather than flee, the person might stop exhibiting the behavior that caused them to be targeted in the first place. For example, in some areas, gay men and trans women were often told that if they acted like "well-behaved faggots," they might avoid targeting (CNMH 2015). For both groups, it meant hiding any effeminate behaviors that might transgress social expectations of gender.

The second generation (or second wave) of paramilitaries were an extremely violent organization that took the civilian victimization suggested by counterinsurgent strategy to new levels as a result of their expansion territorially and entrance into the drug trade. The most common repertoires associated with paramilitaries were murder, forced disappearance, kidnapping, sexual violence, torture, and threats. They were also commonly associated with massacres (Gutiérrez-Sanín 2008; Suárez 2022). Between 1985 and 2002, the government reported that paramilitaries were responsible for 50% of displacements, while guerrillas were responsible for 8% of displacements, state forces were response for 10% of displacements, and 'general combat' with no clear perpetrator for 32% of displacements. (Colombia Reports 2021). A 2008 UN report suggested that 80% of all killings in Colombia during its civil war (1964-2007) were committed by paramilitaries where 12% were attributed to guerrilla groups and 8% by government forces (Vieira 2008). A few years earlier, in 2005, Amnesty International (2005, 3-4) made a similar argument, citing the paramilitaries as responsible for "the vast majority of non-combat politically-motivated killings, disappearances, and cases of torture have been carried out by army-backed paramilitaries." The second generation were known for extreme uses of torture and

corporeal brutalization.[59] Dismemberment of bodies was a repertoire of necroviolence[60] closely associated with paramilitaries throughout the country (Ferry 2011). Another key attribute of paramilitary violence was their targets. Beyond *campesinos*[61], the paramilitaries also targeted unionists, community leaders, environmental and human rights activists, journalists, intellectuals, student leaders, and leftist politicians.

Jasmin Hristov (2009) conceptualized the paramilitaries as an integral part of the state's coercive apparatus and Human Rights Watch (2001) referred to the paramilitaries as the 'sixth division' of the Colombian army. For most of the second generation of paramilitarism in the country, the Colombian government was aligned (tacitly) with the paramilitaries, particularly through the state military. Until Decree 1194 of 1989, which banned paramilitary groups, this collaboration was legal and considered as part of the state's counterinsurgent strategy. Even after Decree 1194 of 1989, collaboration continued in a series of ways that Hristov lists:

> the failure of state forces to intervene in order to protect civilians from paramilitary aggression / tolerance for the establishment of paramilitary bases near military bases / provision of firearms, other equipment (such as helicopters), uniforms, and transportation services by the army to paramilitary units / exchange of captured guerrilla fighters by the paramilitary for weapons and uniforms supplied by the military / provision of space for the training of paramilitary fighters in state military bases / exchange of intelligence / sharing of personnel (individuals working at the same time for both the state arm or

[59] From an interview with an investigator of the Technical Investigation Corps of the Attorney General's office, Hristov (2009, 104) lists the following forms of torture utilized by paramilitaries: hitting the person's knees with a metal rod / shooting a firearm near the ears to damage the eardrum / breaking fingers, arms, or legs / fracturing the jaw and destroying the teeth using metal instruments or firearms / placing sulfuric acid on genitals or face / using a power saw to cut fingers, hands, and arms / tying a towel around the neck, placing a stick inside the knot, and turning the stick until the person suffocates / hanging the person by the wrists tied behind the back / forcing the person to swallow enormous quantities of water and then hitting the stomach with a stick / inserting a small knife blade underneath the entire fingernail / pulling out fingernails / cutting men's genitals / cutting women's breasts / rape (of women) / forcing a stick or piece of glass inside the rectum (of men or women) / urinating on the person / forcing the person to eat human feces."

[60] Necroviolence being violent action committed against corpses.

[61] Many *campesinos* were targeted because they fit the profile of a guerrilla: young, male, and agrarian. With quotas and pressures to identify guerrillas as conditions for US aid military packages that were part of Plan Colombia, Colombian soldiers would kill *campesinos* as well as poor urban youth, dress them up as guerrillas and place guns on them after their murder in order to make it seem like they had caught guerrillas. This scandal became known as *falsos positivos* ('false positives') and is considered to have claimed the lives of 10,000 people (Daniels 2018).

> police and the paramilitary) / provision of security for paramilitary activities by the state army or the police / joint operations (2009, 82).

Indeed, in my own research, the association between the state and paramilitaries was regularly commented on. The common understanding was that the state authorities relied on paramilitaries to perform illegal acts of violence that would then present opportunities for state authorities to intervene. There are numerous stories of massacres going on for days in certain villages before a local military brigade arrives (Leon 2005; Hristov 2009).[62] One interlocutor shared a story of pamphlets with paramilitary insignia being dropped from a state military helicopter in the Montes de María region of the country.[63] Gilberto Cárdenas González, a former army commander in Urabá, one of those most contested zones of the war, laid out this relation between the state and paramilitaries clearly:

> The paramilitaries were created by the Colombian government itself to do the dirty work, in other words, in order to kill all individuals who according to the state and the police, are guerillas. But in order to do that, they [the government] had to create illegal groups so that no one would suspect the government of Colombia and its military forces" (CINEP 2004, 316).

Paramilitary forms of expansion often took on a very classic pattern as identified by Jasmin Hristov (2009, 91). First, they targeted alleged guerrillas and their supporters, often identified by informants. Sometimes this first cleansing had a performative element in which an individual covered with a mask would be brought in to point out guilty individuals. This first arrival would often become a massacre, defined by the government as the death of more than four people in one instance, with a mass killing of alleged guerrilla supporters (Murphy 2013). During these events, the paramilitaries would also destroy the property of the victims and steal any valuables. From there, the paramilitaries would conduct a social cleansing, where they would target social

[62] Interview, expert, 2020; Interview, journalist, 2021; Interview, witness, 2022.
[63] Interview, witness, 2022.

minority groups and impose their own moral orders. As Hristov (2009, 92) describes, "Paramilitary groups generally enter cities through the poorest neighborhoods, where the presence of the state is weak and public services are insufficient. There they exterminate thieves and drug addicts and impose their rule in terrifying manner, affecting almost all aspects of life—from business to morality." In 2005, AUC-group Bloque Capital distributed pamphlets in Medellín and surrounding suburb which represents these dynamics, which read:

> Autodefensas Unidos de Colombia AUC – [get] out, and death to thieves, addicts, drug dealers, the homeless, guerrilleros, militants, traitors. Children [should] go to bed early or we will put them to bed after 10pm. We don't want anyone on the streets or they will be a military objective (Hristov 2009, 92).

After these social cleansings, the paramilitaries then connected with existing criminal groups and sicarios in order to achieve a monopoly on violence and benefit from existing illicit industry. In this process, many deviant behaviors became permissible but only when under the paramilitary industrial umbrella. To conclude their process of takeover, the paramilitaries connected with local elites as well as armed forces in order to solidify their presence.

Eduardo Pizarro (2004) describes the paramilitary ideology as an authoritarian populism of the extreme right. They used this social discourse in order to gain political legitimacy, but they did not follow much of this platform in practice. As Jasmin Hristov (2009, 73) explains "The populist argument of the movement has to do with its supposed demand for a solution to the problems of displacement and poverty. Their extremist side had to do with the generalized terror, selective killings, and massacres in which they are implicated." Mauricio Romero (2003) argues that though they did get involved with drug trades and illicit economies, many of the second-generation paramilitaries were most focused on their political project of curbing insurgency and maintaining the social, political, and economic status quote of Colombia's periphery regions.

This political project resulted from their main base of support which were the regional elites. Hristov (2009) maintains that the paramilitaries were both a political and economic movement and the bifurcating of these considerations reveals more about paramilitary strategy than their underlying motivations. Given the level of disregard they had for their own social discourse and their own involvement in many human rights violations, including mass displacements, Hristov argues that they operated beyond a political logic and also sought to accumulate capital.

In 2003, President Alvaro Uribe launched the 'Democratic Security' initiative which sought to return the monopoly of violence to the state. As such, Uribe worked with the military and state forces to consolidate control throughout the country and curb the behavior of armed groups, both those involved in insurgency as well as drug trades. As a result, certain paramilitary groups, which were previously aligned with the state and to President Uribe, took up an offensive posturing against the state in order to protect their economic interests in illicit economies. This greatly changed many violence dynamics throughout the country as the paramilitaries started to target government institutions, as well as perceived informants— massively increasing civilian victimization.

President Alvaro Uribe launched peace talks with the AUC in 2003 and most demobilized by 2006 through a process known as *Justicia y Paz* ('Justice and Peace'). Some groups refused to demobilize, and others formally demobilized, but informally continued their narco-related activities or remobilized shortly after (Daly 2016). Under the *Justicia y Paz* law of 2005, disarmed paramilitary members entered into an arrangement with the government where if they testified to their violent crimes, they would receive a severely reduced sentence capped at eight years. This disarmament process produced thousands of testimonies (known as *versiones libres*,

'free versions' or 'debriefings') of paramilitary violence and led to the first conviction of a paramilitary group for crimes against LGBT people: the *Bloque Autodefensa Campesina de Puerto Boyacá*. *Justicia y Paz* was a largely criticized process, as many felt that it was only the end of a formal political paramilitarism in the country, but that it did little to actually break up the paramilitaries and end their violent participation in drug trafficking and politics. The process was opaque and hard to follow, which many interpreted to be intentional (Hristov 2009). Given the President's connections to the paramilitaries, the sincerity of this performance of paramilitary demobilization was called into question and many critiqued that there would not be any justice given these wide amnesty provisions did not incorporate victim's opinions.[64] As a researcher, the difficulty in observing key mechanisms of the process was a central challenge to my work.[65] Even 15 years later, I had trouble accessing documents and resources. Much archival material was sealed in the military archives, which require difficult permissions for researchers, and rumor among many government officials and academics was that much material was destroyed.[66] As one interlocutor described to me when I asked where I could find archives related to *Justicia y Paz*, "You're trying to study a process that was designed to never be studied."[67]

To reinforce a formal end of paramilitarism in the country (even if just superficial), the government pushed to call these post-demobilization paramilitary groups *bandas criminales* ('criminal bands', BACRIM) and consider them a different phenomenon (Saab & Taylor 2009).

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[64] Recognizing this claim as contentious, the *parapolitica scandal* of 2006 in Colombia really revealed the depths and entrenchment of paramilitary leaders in the political system of the country (Daly 2016).
[65] My fieldwork experience resulted from my research design, my connections, and the time period: 15 years after *Justicia y Paz* and only a few years after the Peace Accord with the FARC. During this time, justice and peace were contested concepts that both seemed at risk. 'Justice for whom?' and 'Peace for whom?' were frequent doubts encountered in my research. Sarah Zuckerman Daly's (2016) extraordinary fieldwork in Colombia occurred during the peak of paramilitary demobilization and her writing/research provide a contemporaneous account of the peace process and its immediate aftermath in terms of the remilitarization of paramilitary groups.
[66] Interviews, government officials and academics, 2020.
[67] Interview, government official, 2020.

These groups are often referred to as the third wave of paramilitarism in the country today. They are more aligned with foreign cartel groups, particularly in Mexico, and their main focus is on the trafficking of illicit drugs and minerals. They have brought back a wave of violence throughout the country and still perform social and political cleansings, but the logics very much differ. For example, in one of my case study sites, the second-generation paramilitaries very violently targeted LGBT people, but the third-generation paramilitaries have left them relatively alone (Ritholtz and Stallone 2022).[68] Women social leaders in the region, however, have continued to be threatened and victimized by these third-generation groups in similar ways to how the second-generation groups targeted them (Stallone and Janetsky 2021; Zulver 2021).

4.3 The Dynamics of Violence Against LGBT People During the Colombian Civil War

This section provides some contextual data surrounding anti-LGBT violence at the national level. I include maps in this analysis to orient readers to the country's sub-national variation of violence and its geography.

4.3.1 A National Mapping of Anti-LGBT Violence During the Colombian Civil War

While all armed groups in the protracted Colombian conflict targeted LGBT people (*i.e.*, the police, the military, paramilitary groups, and the guerrillas), the paramilitaries were by far the biggest perpetrators of violence against LGBT people (Comisión de la Verdad 2022; CNMH 2015; Serrano Amaya 2017; Villamil 2020).[69] Reported acts of violence against LGBT people

[68] This fragile peace relates to the time of writing (August 2022) and is contingent on a rapidly evolving security situation. With a new presidential administration and upcoming local elections, the situation may change.
[69] Armed groups within Colombia also had differing approaches to how they treated LGBT combatants within their ranks (*see e.g.,* Payne 2016 and Thylin 2020).

reflect this dynamic with Figure 4 showing a heightened increase of reported acts of violence when the paramilitaries were at their most violence and powerful. The collective victimization of certain communities was made clear through the performative character of this violence.

While there are a host of anecdotes and reports about violence against LGBT people during the Colombian civil war, there is relatively little supporting statistical data. The Colombian government often repeats an opaque citation[70] that sexual and gender minorities were four times more likely to be targets of violence than their cisgender/heterosexual counterparts, but it is unclear where that statistic derives (Espita 2017). Some data are available from the National Victims' Unit, which has a registry for all identified victims in the country. Known as the *Registro Único de Víctimas* ('Unique Victim's Registry', RUV) of the national government's Victims' Unit (formally the *Unidad para la atención y reparación integral a las víctimas*, shortened to *Unidad Víctimas*). The Victim's Unit is the government agency tasked with attending to and providing reparation to victims of the armed conflict in Colombia (Unidad Víctimas 2015). The Unit keeps a range of data on all those identified as victims by the government and publishes an anonymized version for researchers, which includes the victims' ages, gender, ethnicity, disability status, repertoire of violence (known as a victimizing act), location of the "victimizing act," and date of the event, among other details.[71]

[70] Or what Kathryn Moeller (2019) would call a "ghost statistic". For further interesting considerations on the challenges of statistics related to political violence and civilian victimization, *see* Dawkins 2021 and Hoover Green 2018.

[71] I received permission to publish my analysis of RUV data from the Unidad de Víctimas on 9 June 2022, Unidad de Víctimas petition number: 20227112112992.

Like any massive government databases, the Registry is not without flaw.[72] It did not ask for sexual orientation or transgender identity of victims until 2014 and when it did, it characterized LGBT identities as a distinct gender (so the genders presented in the Registry are male, female, LGBT). As such, anti-LGBT violence is most likely underrepresented and there is no real ability to quantitatively differentiate between different forms of anti-LGBT violence (such as violence against lesbians versus violence against trans women). Nor is there the ability to differentiate armed actors.[73] Still this registry can still help identify some pattern to violence and helps underscore the levels of variation found within the country. The input system for the registry is intensive and so all acts have been confirmed by a special team within the registry; however, these acts of anti-LGBT violence have all been added retroactively. While it means there are likely many cases missed, this bias is most likely a national phenomenon and the cases that are included are not only confirmed to have happened but are also confirmed to have been tied to armed conflict logics (as assessed by the Victim's Unit) as well as likely to be related to LGBT identity (given that they have been retroactively identity and included).

[72] These descriptive statistics rely on three major assumptions. The first is that I assume that all reported acts of violence against LGBT people can be analytically considered anti-LGBT violence, as in their sexual orientation or gender identity had some role in their victimization. While this assumption risks conflating an act with its goals, I accept this risk because the difficulty in reporting sexuality in the database (it not being asked until 2014 and general underreporting) leads me to believe its inclusion was central to the reported violent act. In other words, for someone to be recognized as a victim by the government for an event taking place before 2014, and to have their gender coded in the database for said event as LGBT, means that most likely the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person played a role in their victimization. The second assumption is that the data is substantial enough to warrant confidence in the analysis—in many departments, the number of reported acts of anti-LGBT violence was anywhere between 0 and 100 in a given year. Relatedly, the third assumption is that, given the chronic underreporting of both anti-LGBT violence and sexual violence, the data provided is representative. My own analysis from my personal database of anti-LGBT victimization, produced from archives and other secondary sources, leads me to have faith that the patterns of this database broadly reflect the nature of the conflict even if a systematic underreporting occurs.

[73] The database does allow the victims to identify the perpetrator, but there is no way for the government to confirm this actor's involvement. As such, this variable in the database is viewed as unreliable. I have chosen not to use it.

Underreporting of anti-LGBT violence is not an issue unique to Colombia. Highly stigmatizing violence, such as sexual violence and anti-LGBT violence are chronically underreported globally. Issues of shame, stigma, and prejudice prevent such reporting (Albarracín 2011). For anti-LGBT violence, homicides and forced disappearances require someone other than the victim to report—which can be hard if the family refuses to acknowledge any relation (CNMH 2015); although, in the RUV data, close associates (in lieu of family) are allowed to identify missing or murdered persons and the gender team at the Victim's Unit also periodically scan news reports and court cases for this type of violence.[74] As a result, I consider the data underestimates, but believe them still workable as they do not have a systematic error *i.e.*, skewed temporally or spatially. Still, with incomplete data, I utilize this section to provide some context and descriptive trends in order to highlight the entity of the phenomenon in terms of size, frequency, and geographic distribution.[75]

This RUV dataset, which is the version from 2018, reports 3,242 acts of violence against LGBT people between 1985 and 2008, with acts taking place in every department of Colombia.[76] A cursory look at the data provides interesting revelations. To start, Figure 4 demonstrates that the trend of anti-LGBT violence, in terms of its incidence rate, matches the broader trend of all

[74] Interview, government official, 2021.
[75] In recognition of Sally Merry Engle's (2021) work (or warnings) on the 'seductions of quantification', I carefully present this section as descriptive statistics based on imperfect data. As stated in the main text, I recognize the import in having some data available and hope that the trends identified in this analysis, might spark interest in a future reader and encourage future research that could perhaps redress some of the inadequacies of that data.
[76] As previously mentioned, I have also compiled my own (also incomplete) database on anti-LGBT violence, which has identified 752 victimizing acts, with Ila Axelrod Zelmanovitz. The data for this database come from my review of about 16 major NGO and government reports on anti-LGBT violence in Colombia, as well as a media archive on the topic. I do not include this data here in my analysis, as there is certainly overlap between this data and the RUV data; however, this database has been helpful to me for reasons of triangulation and more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Given that I created this database, I have access to its sources, which I can read in depth. As such, beyond knowing the occurrence of the phenomenon, I have been able to learn and observe its details and process.

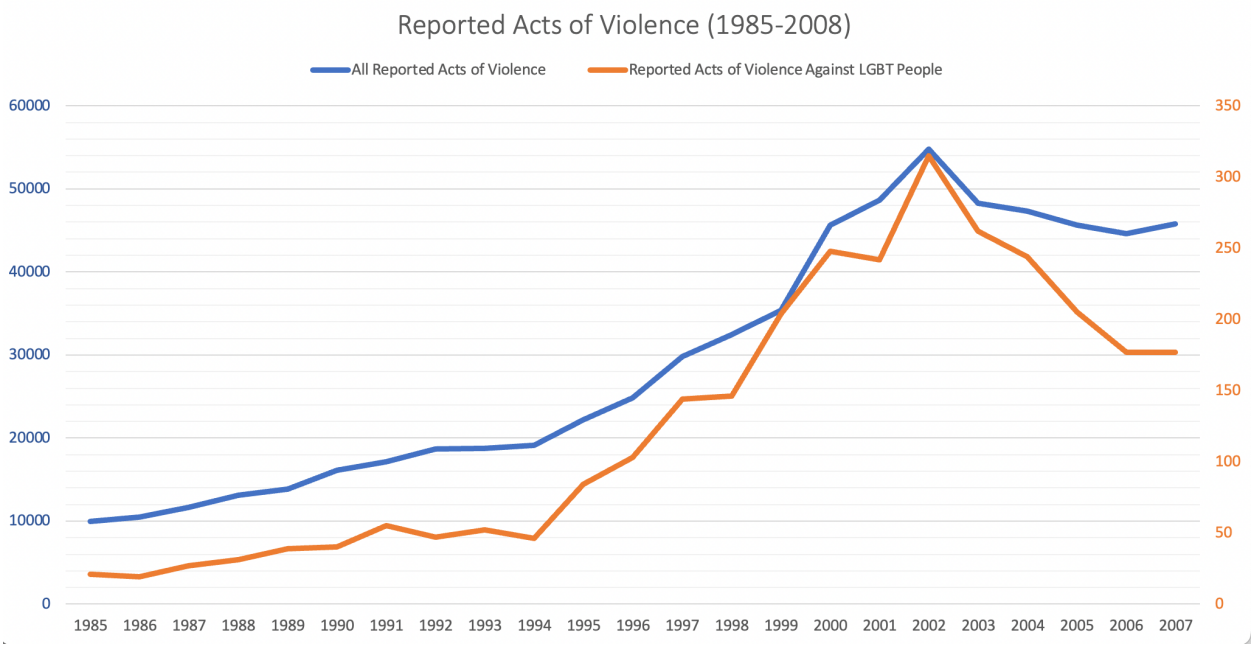


Figure 4: Reported Acts of Violence against LGBT People and the Broader Population

reported acts of violence in the country. This figure shows that the overall pattern of anti-LGBT violence (in terms of incidence) largely mirrors the overall pattern of all acts of violence in Colombia. As such, at first glance, it seems that anti-LGBT violence and general violence overall share a close relation. Tables 1 and 2 complicate this assumption by revealing that the most violent departments in Colombia for LGBT people differed from those that were the most violent for general populations, thus suggesting geographic variation when it comes to anti-LGBT violence. Still this match might infer that anti-LGBT violence follows similar logics of violence as the overall dynamic; however, there were also variations in the repertoires of violence reported by different gender populations. Table 3 reveals that LGBT people experienced (or reported) different repertoires of violence than their heterosexual and cis counterparts with a higher proportion of sexual violence reported. Analyzing data from the Registry[77] shows that the

[77] Analysis my own. Reminder that the registry codes LGBT people as their own 'gender', separate from man and women.

top three repertoires of violence for cisgender women and men were displacement, murder, and threats. For LGBT people, the top three were displacement, threats, and sexual violence. Figure 5 demonstrates that there was further variation in repertoires of violence against LGBT people based on the Department. This geographic variation is one way to present variation based on armed acts as geography can serve as a proxy for different armed actors given the decentralized nature of the Colombian conflict and the autonomy that many armed actors had (both paramilitary and guerilla groups). These numbers reveal that the pattern of violence against LGBT people around the country had large variation in terms of repertoire, but they do not necessarily explain this variation, nor do they reveal the impacts of this violence in wartime contexts. As such, I use them as a starting point to begin to understand the universe of variation of anti-LGBT violence in Colombia.

Top Ten Departments with Highest Rate of Violence Against LGBT People 1985-2008[78]

Department	Incidence (recognized victims)
Antioquia	813
Bolívar	340
Chocó	186
Magdalena	162
Caquetá	149
César	149
Nariño	119
Sucre	115
Norte de Santander	113
Córdoba	110

Table 1: Top Ten Departments with Highest Rate of Violence Against LGBT People 1985-2008

[78] I limit the time period of the data analyzed from 1985 to 2008 because that is considered the crest of the second generation of paramilitarism in Colombia (though to be technical, there were two distinct waves of paramilitarism from mid '80s to late '90s and then late '90s to mid '00s, investigating the variation over time might be interesting for future research). Reported acts of violence against LGBT people during this time were added after 2014, once the new gender category was added. The data came from government reports, court cases, media articles, as well as personal reports of survivors of the violence. All data entered in the database undergoes a rigorous authentication process by the Victim's Unit, interview, government official, 2021.

Top Ten Departments with Highest Rate of Violence Against All People 1985-2008

Department	Incidence (recognized victims)
Antioquia	1,643,834
Bolívar	649,838
Magdalena	538,892
César	462,224
Chocó	362,761
Valle del Cauca	296,104
Sucre	296,082
Córdoba	295,953
Caquetá	280,957
Tolima	273,224

Table 2: Top Ten Departments with Highest Rate of Violence Against All People 1985-2008

Most Reported Repertoires of Violence Experienced (nationally, 1985-2008) [79]

Men 363,131	Women 351,566	LGBT 3068
1. Displacement[80] (80%)	1. Displacement (82%)	1. Displacement (65%)
2. Homicide (14%)	2. Homicide (12%)	2. Homicide (11%)
3. Threats (2%)	3. Threats (2%)	3. Sexual Violence (10%)
4. Forced Disappearance (2%)	4. Forced Disappearance (2%)	4. Threats (9%)
5. Material Loss (1%)	5. Material Loss (1%)	5. Forced Disappearance (2%)
6. Kidnapping (1%)	6. Sexual Violence (1%)	6. Torture (1%)

Table 3: Most Reported Repertoires of Violence Experienced by Gender (nationally, 1985-2008)

[79] Sexual violence was the least (sixteenth) reported repertoire of violence by men. Studies of sexual violence in war show that men and women are both victims and perpetrators of this form of violence and such considerations are important for assessing gaps in reporting and avoiding biases (Cohen 2016; Leiby 2009). Because of the feminized associations of sexual violence, men often report this repertoire of violence as 'torture' (Leiby 2009).

[80] Displacement is the most reported repertoire of violence because for years it was the only form of violence recognized by the Colombian Government (starting with Law 387 of 1999). During that time period, to receive support from the State, one had to register as a victim of displacement. While displacement was a very common repertoire of violence throughout the Colombian civil war (*see* Steele 2017), this political history does mean that it is likely overrepresented in the government victimization data as compared to other repertoires of violence.

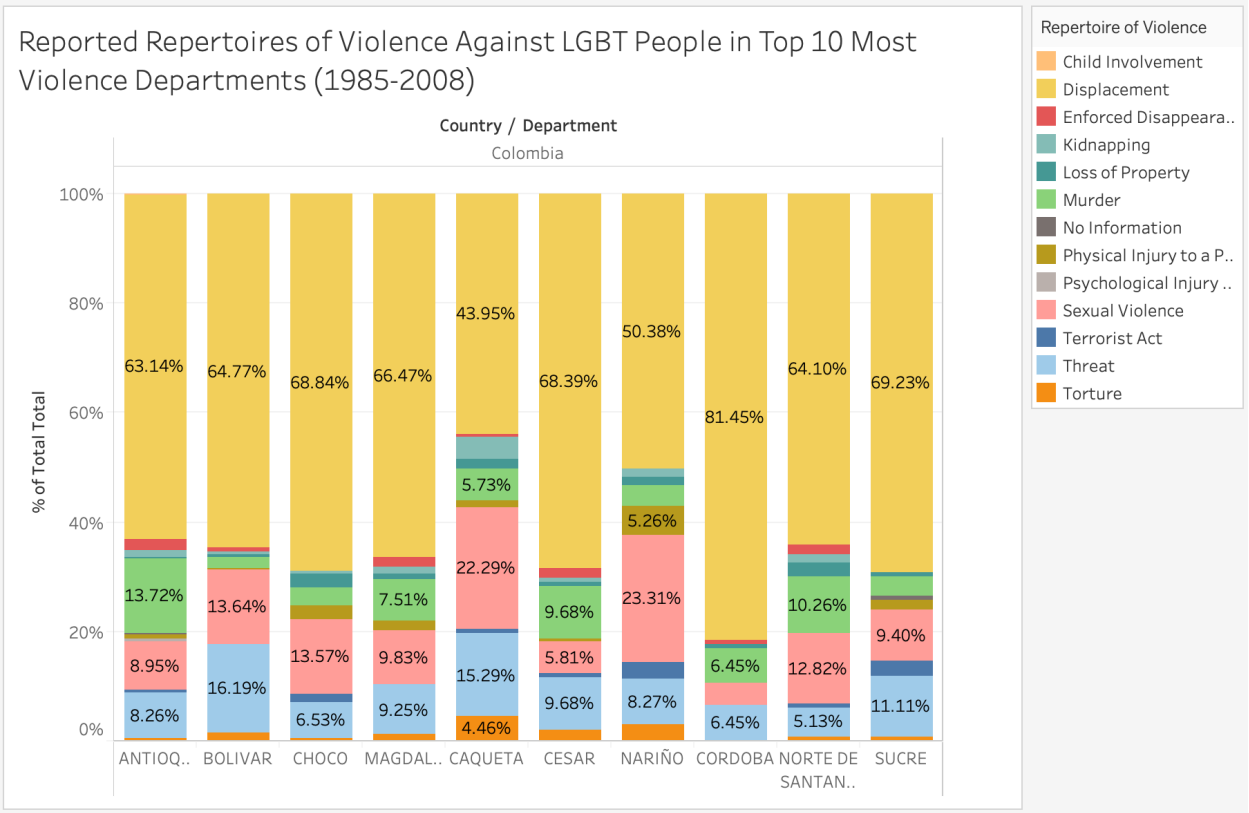


Figure 5: Reported Repertoires of Violence Against LGBT People in Top 10 Most Violent Departments

4.3.2 A Sub-National Mapping of Anti-LGBT Violence During the Colombian Civil War

At the sub-national department level, the data also reveals interesting insights regarding the geographic variation of where anti-LGBT violence occurs, as well as its relation to a distinct but related repertoire of sexual violence. I identify and separate these forms of violence for two reasons. First, in many interviews that I conducted, I noticed that the terms sexual violence and anti-LGBT violence were being used interchangeably. Second, I find that their relationship reveals important logics in relation to variation in anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries as sexual violence is much harder to justify than anti-LGBT violence. As such, exploring their relationship allows for a better understanding of the armed actors' own logics of violence.

The following figures are a range of maps that reveal some of these insights. The first two maps demonstrate the number of reports of all acts of violence (Figure 6) and acts of sexual violence (Figure 7) by department, showing interesting variation in geography. As to be expected, the most violent departments were not necessarily where sexual violence was most likely to occur. The third map (Figure 8) is a proportion of the incidence of sexual violence against LGBT people as compared to the incidence of all acts of violence committed against LGBT people. In other words, darker colors on this map indicate where acts of LGBT violence were more likely to be sexual in nature. This map also shows important variation that not only further disentangles the assumed correlation between sexual and anti-LGBT violence, but also reveals an interesting phenomenon or logic: that LGBT people were more likely to be sexually victimized in some departments over others, not necessarily in relation to the most violent areas for LGBT people. And finally, Figure 9 is a map of paramilitary presence in the country during this period (Osorio et al. 2019). A quick comparison between this map and the other three shows that many of the places that reported the most violence were areas with paramilitary hot spots, an expected finding as it is well established paramilitaries became present in contested territories and their counterinsurgency program incorporated civilian victimization (Arjona 2016; Civico 2016; Gutiérrez-Sanín 2019; Steele 2017; Tate 2001).

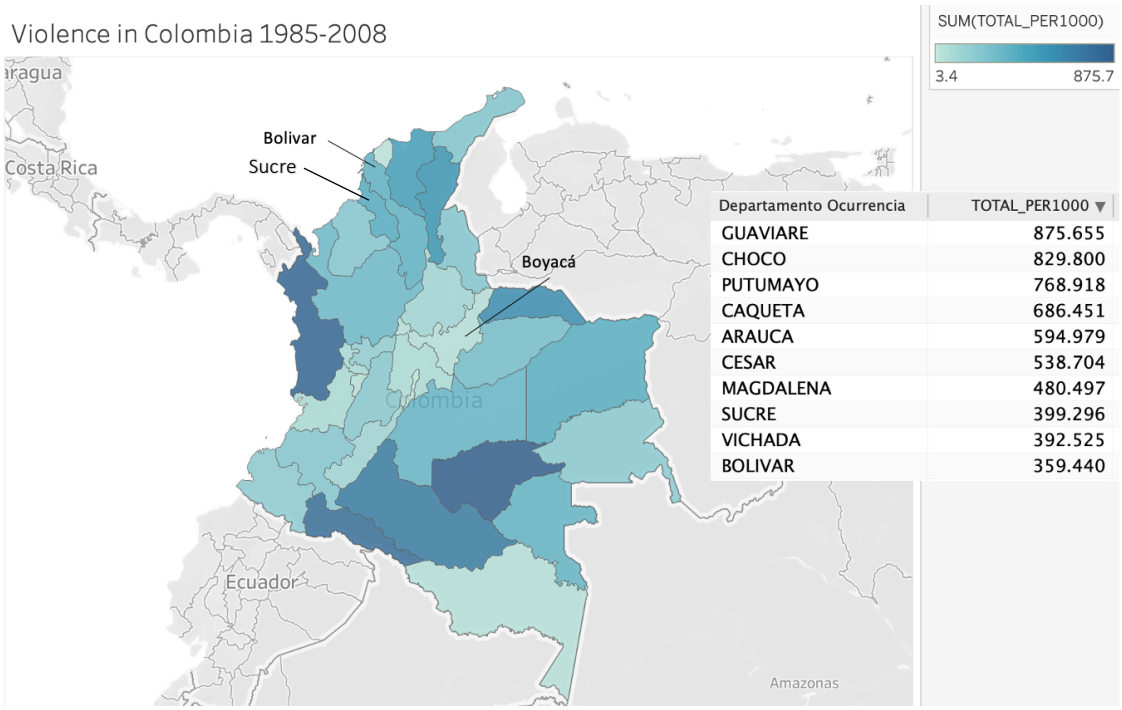


Figure 6: Proportion of All Acts of Violence per Population in Colombia (1985-2008)

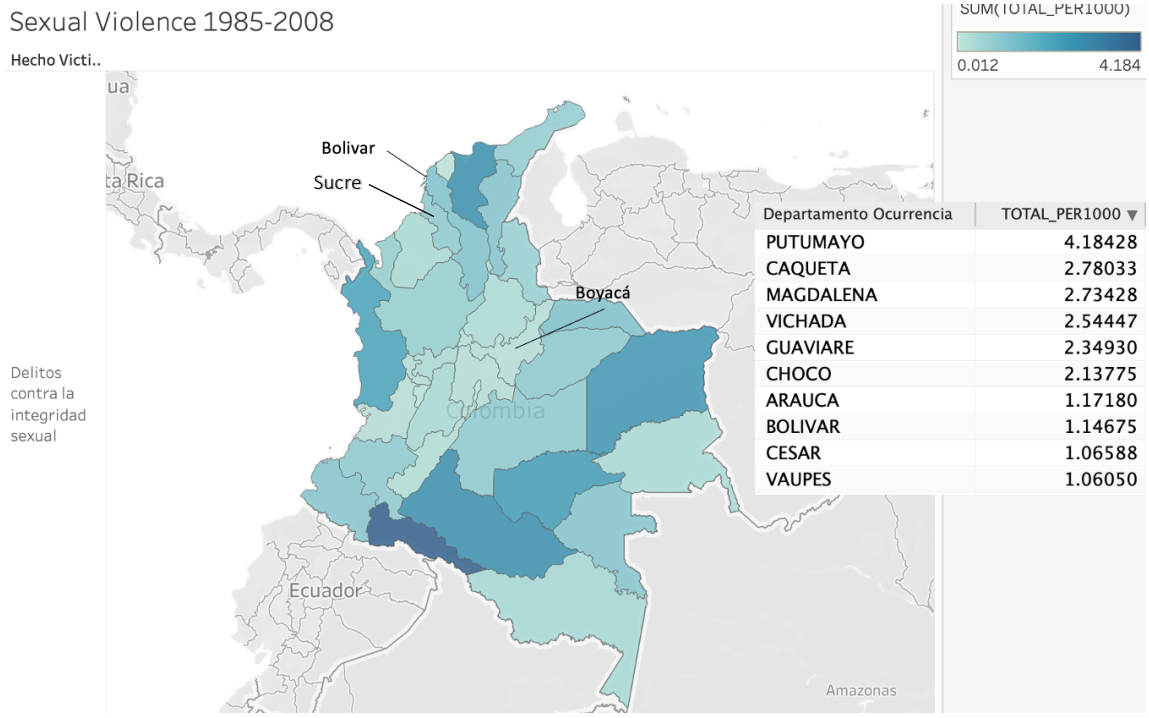


Figure 7: Proportion of Sexual Violence per Population in Colombia (1985-2008)

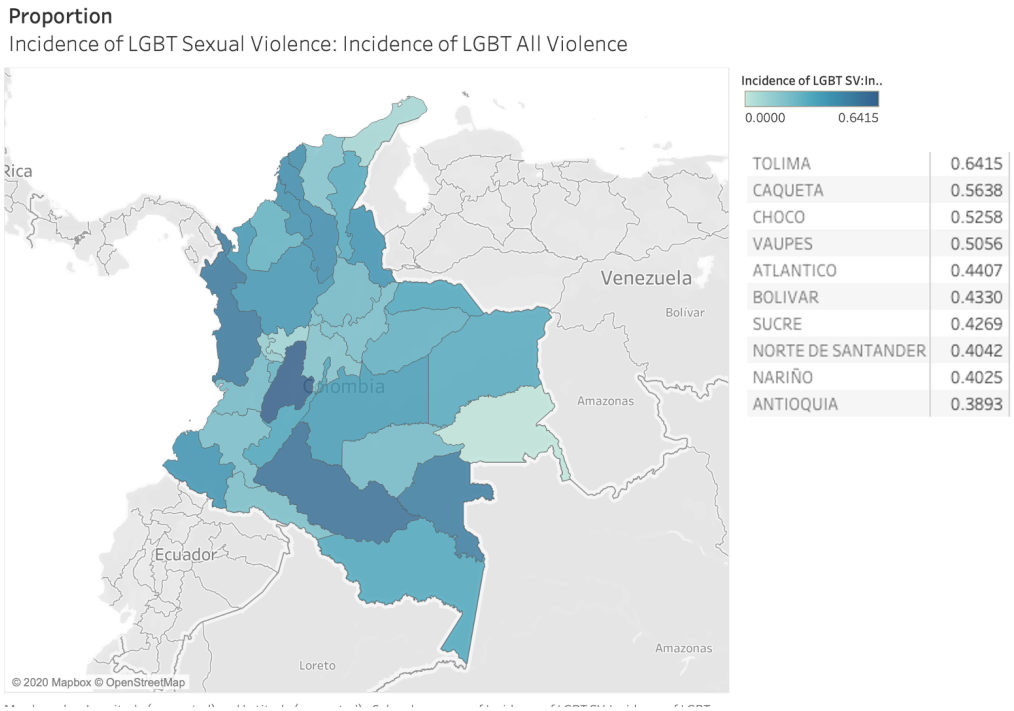


Figure 8: Incidence of LGBT Sexual Violence per Incidence of LGBT All Acts of Violence in Colombia (1985-2008)

Paramilitary Presence (1988-2008)

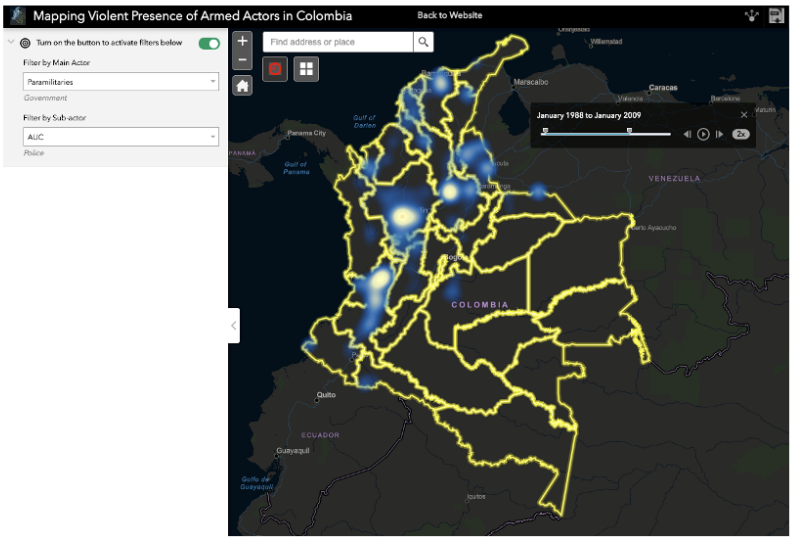


Figure 9: Paramilitary Presence Heat Map (1988-2008)

4.4 The Process of Anti-LGBT Violence in Colombia

While anti-LGBT violence varied in its form in Colombia, there were common elements to this process. Such a realization matches other analyses of collective violence, including acts of ethnic violence. As Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg (2018, 4) observe, "We agree with Żbikowski (2007) that no "uniform pogrom scenario" existed, but eyewitness accounts of how pogroms actually occurred do reveal some recurring themes." In this section, I present the process of anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries.[81] This process reveals the four stages of anti-LGBT violence: believe, embed, harm, control.

In order for paramilitaries to adopt anti-LGBT violence as a strategy, it must first connect with a broader moral order; they had to 'believe' in an ideology. This connection starts with the ideology of the paramilitaries themselves who must connect their actions with this goal of a 'purer' society, achieved through the establishment of a moral order. The first process of anti-LGBT violence is for the armed actor to establish a moral order through public performances of ideology. To establish this moral order, the paramilitaries had to clearly identify an issue: subversion and its relation to deviant behavior. In Colombia, there was a very public discourse on the threat of subversion, which was understood as support for the guerrilla insurgencies and broader communist ideals.

During this time period in Colombia, and throughout the region, the threat of communism was closely tied to morality. Deviant behavior was considered a pathway to subversion and as a

[81] As mentioned earlier in earlier chapters, I recognize that anti-LGBT violence (and its process) was not just committed by paramilitaries, but also guerrilla groups such as the FARC and ELN, the latter continuing the process today (Comisión de la Verdad 2022; HRW 2021). However, given my focus on paramilitary violence against LGBT people, I focus this section the process of anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries.

result, armed actors (and the state) became obsessed with the moral behavior of civilians as a way to prevent against communist threats. As such, counterinsurgent tactics incorporated this connection between deviancy and subversion. Deviancy became a catchall for any act of vice and the anti-subversive conservative ideology of the paramilitaries defined the parameters of vice, inclusive of LGBT identities. Gabriela Manrique Rueda (2020) has found that paramilitaries rationalized their violent actions against LGBT people and other social minorities, through moral justifications. Manrique explains:

> Paramilitaries created moral frames to deal with the immorality of the violence they meted out. Unable to claim the legitimacy of the state, they acknowledged their own illegality, while simultaneously representing their mission as moral and necessary to the security of the state and of civilian populations (2020, 373).

Manrique's framing of paramilitary action as 'dirty work' helps contextualize how the paramilitaries were able to commit such horrific acts of violence but still justify it to a broader public. In reading her interviews with these paramilitaries, Manrique reveals how the low-ranking paramilitaries believed in the moral importance of their efforts. She describes their own perspective on their violence as:

> Rather than regarding violence as a disintegration of the social normative structure, their accounts help us to understand how they perceived the public punishment of "deviant" bodies as a means of preserving a moral social order. Violence in this context imposed conservative codes and standards of conduct (2020, 383).

Of note, is that Manrique interviewed members of the AUC-HMM, one of the case study groups of this dissertation that were associated with brutal and cruel forms of anti-LGBT violence. As such, Manrique's work is fundamental in identifying that even when violence went beyond social norms and demonstrated very limited restraint in severity and target, low-ranking paramilitaries still viewed it is a moral effort.

With the moral order established, the paramilitaries would then weaponize their beliefs. In their war against subversion, the paramilitaries identified deviants as the source of this risk. To cement this blame, the paramilitaries sought to threaten them publicly and privately. The public threats helped alert the local community. The private threats helped facilitate the actual cleansing as many would flee in the face of such a threat. In Colombia, threats were a major part of anti-LGBT violence and commonly noted in any discussions of the phenomenon. The most prominent form of threat were pamphlet campaigns which would either list the individual and their alleged 'sin' or there would be more a general campaign threatening the removal of a given social group which transgressed the moral code (guerrillas, gays, sinners). One interlocutor recalled seeing pamphlets threatening LGBT people dropped by helicopters during a paramilitary takeover of her town.[82] In addition to these very public threats, there are many reports of private threats where low-ranking paramilitaries, or their informants, would approach LGBT people and share pointed threats such as "leave gays, you're no longer welcome here."[83]

In order to target LGBT people—publicly and privately— effectively, the paramilitaries had to embed themselves in the community. Community members had to identify any suspected 'subversives' to the paramilitaries and they also had to inform on anyone engaging in deviant behavior. In public threats, the paramilitaries often required high amounts of information, as they regularly listed the names of the specific individuals targeted along with their 'sins'. In private threats, the paramilitaries often had a person known to the target deliver the threat, therefore necessitating local community participation. In anti-LGBT violence, the threat is followed by violence aimed at the 'deviant' if the behavior continued. At times the violence might be more

[82] Interview, witness, 2022.
[83] Interview, witness, 2022.

tied to standard patterns of war, but the norm of the violence was to be brutal in its nature. The violence had to be brutal in order for this violence to have the socio-cultural impact necessary to enter the social sphere (to be witnessed, talked about, and absorbed). Brutality becomes the mechanism by which people recognize and talk about this violence. In certain contexts, the brutality took on a more psychological form, particularly through public humiliation.

In Colombia, brutality became tied to social control efforts, as the paramilitaries utilized this harm to legitimize their presence. As such, it was important that there would be an audience for this violence and that this audience, the broader public, would either accept, tolerate, or submit to the violence. Connecting with an existing social structure of exclusion helped facilitate this lack of resistance because it allowed the paramilitaries to more easily justify these acts of violence by blaming the 'deviants' for their own demise as well as connecting their violent actions to the desired moral order for the community in which they embedded. Paramilitaries often describe their violent actions as necessary to destroy an existing 'social fabric' aligned with subversion and a construct a new one. The paramilitary commander, Carlos Mauricio García Fernández, alias *Doble Cero* ('Double Zero'), described the entire project of paramilitarism conceived by the Castaño brothers in this way. In an interview with Aldo Civico (2016, 86), García shares that he helped found a paramilitary unit in order "to work with Fidel [Castaño] in the construction of a new social fabric in Córdoba."[84] In this political project of counterinsurgency, then, there was also a goal of establishing a social fabric of a new Colombia devoid of subversion tendencies.

[84] Córdoba is a department in Colombia associated with paramilitarism, as it was where the Castaño brothers, who established the AUC as well the preceding ACCU, set up their base on a farm. Córdoba was strategic because of its access to the coast and conflict (and agricultural) hotspots such as the Antioquia department and the region of Urabá.

In many cases of anti-LGBT violence, it was often known who committed this violence because the paramilitaries publicly took credit for it. This differed from a lot of other violence during the civil war, where people would often say they did not know who committed the violence. This "not knowing" could have been strategic, as Michael Taussig (2005) notes 'local knowledge' is very much about knowing what not to know. This type of brutalized violence, however, was often claimed because these armed groups wanted to signal their arrival and their desired social order. It would be impossible to establish this moral order from the shadows.

In Colombia, the paramilitaries did not try to hide their participation in anti-LGBT violence (many did try, poorly, to hide their connection with the military). Their pamphlets often included their names and logos; this practice continues to the present day in Colombia with other criminal groups. Their violence often utilized their known repertoires (dismembered bodies in river). And their justification after often included references to their rules, such as placing the sign *vicioso* ('a depraved person', or more likely, 'drug addict') on corpses, in order to publicly justify their violence used against someone for transgressing this new social order. This claiming had a temporal element to it. During the war, paramilitary groups would claim their act by leaving a sign on the dead body of the victim which shared the alleged crime. After the war, during a transitional justice process that had a policy of amnestiable offenses and public inquiries, this claiming had to be sanitized. Thus, many populations (particularly LGBT populations) *ex post facto* became accused of selling drugs, which became a more justifiable claim in a modern era.

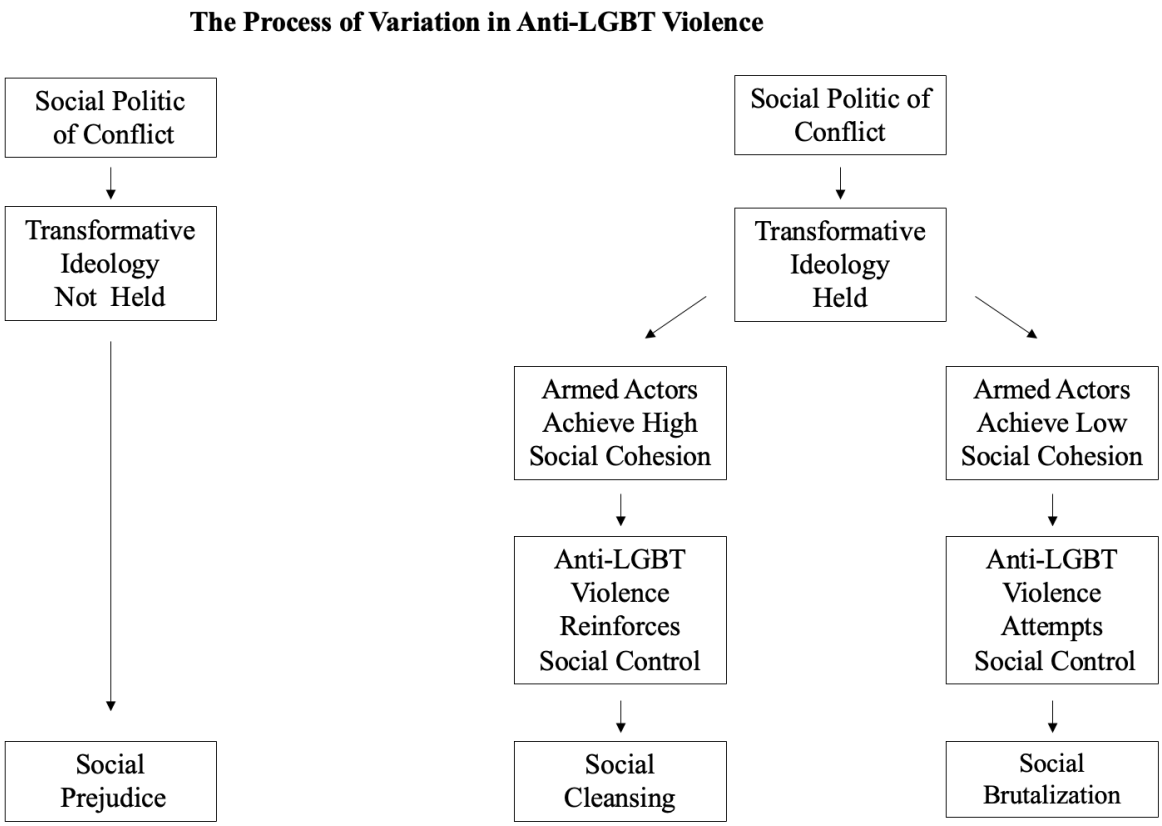


Figure 10: The Process of Variation in Anti-LGBT Violence

How the paramilitaries utilized violence, as well as sought social control, depended on the territory in question (Arjona 2016). The paramilitaries had three types of operation: a base operation, an occupation operation, and a takeover operation (Hristov 2009, UNDP 2010). In base operations, paramilitaries utilized a local territory as a base. Often this territory was near a government military base or had a population broadly supportive of the paramilitary project. Here the paramilitaries still committed acts of violence against local populations, but the violence was viewed as desirable or justifiable by the broader local population, normally through a public security lens of ridding the territory of subversives and other risks. In occupation operations, paramilitaries had to maintain control over a territory that they viewed as having a hostile population. Sometimes it actually would be a hostile population with known allegiances

to guerrillas, but most often these populations were apathetic to war and simply fit the stereotype of a guerrilla supporter: poor, rural, and agrarian. In occupation operations, paramilitaries used a range of violence to maintain control— often this violence was symbolic and semiotic in order to coerce local populations into submission. Finally, in takeover operations, paramilitaries grabbed territory where they had limited support or where the guerrillas were present, and to do so they would often commit a massacre or series of select, highly visible acts of violence which would cause a wave of displacement from fleeing populations. These populations knew that even without ties to the guerrilla, the violence was capricious enough that they were never truly safe.

Thus, the relationship between social control and violence for the paramilitaries depended on the type of operation and their relationship with civilian populations. In base operations, the paramilitaries would most likely use social cleansing because they had the level of social embeddedness necessary to commit such intensive forms of anti-LGBT violence. Further, the level of moral cohesion in these operations as well also allowed the paramilitaries to focus more on enforcing an existing moral order as opposed to establishing a new one. In occupation and takeover operations, the paramilitaries would be more likely to use social brutalization because of the low rates of social embeddedness between the armed group and the local population. In these situations, where the broader civilian population is considered as proxy for the guerrilla— the violence might still be collective and targeted in a way that matches the social project of paramilitaries, but there is less restraint in who is targeting and thus, more people are victimized. Control in this case, then, becomes achievable through coercion and attempted installation of a new social order.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the history, context, and process of anti-LGBT violence by paramilitaries in Colombia. I started with a brief history of paramilitarism in Colombia with a focus on the changing character of the armed group in their first two waves. Of note in this history was how a logic of social transformation became essential to the project of paramilitarism, particularly in its second wave. Throughout the course of the war, the social body of the nation became a matter of interest for the paramilitaries trying to curb insurgency and develop a Colombia in line with their anti-subversive conservativism. From there, I presented national level dynamics of anti-LGBT violence using government victimization data. This data, though imperfect, demonstrates interesting variation in terms of the geography and repertoires of violence used against LGBT people. Recognizing this variation at the national level is important for exploring more targeted sub-national variation between different paramilitary blocs. Finally, this chapter introduced the 'process' of paramilitary anti-LGBT violence which connects this perceived variation in national and sub-national dynamics of violence with the proposed theory of anti-LGBT violence in Chapter 2. This process highlights how paramilitary anti-LGBT violence, in its variant processes, related to social control efforts and wartime social transformation.

Chapter 5 Reading Brutality as a Social Process

"And when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live." – Toni Morrison[85]

"*The substance of this terror is its indistinctiveness, ambiguity, and confusion. It is a sticky, slippery substance made up of interwoven rumors that circulate before and after the event, that are construed from what is heard, seen, or imagined by those who live in these rural spaces of terror.*" – María Victoria Uribe[86]

5.1 Introduction

"*ORGY AND DEATH AT A PARTY OF 'GAYS'*"[87] reads a headline in scarlet letters. The accompanying image is a brutalized dead body covered in blood with a dark slash along their neck. A secondary headline contextualizes this wound; it reads "*one of the homosexuals had their throat slashed*". This salacious material appears in a 1991 issue of the Colombian daily tabloid EL ESPACIO. During much of its 50-year run, the tabloid covered violence against LGBT populations in graphic details. Twenty years of coverage (1985-2005) includes a range of gore and horrific headlines that show the pain of a persecuted community in a highly violent context.

While a country at war will experience violence, the brutality[88] of the violence found in this newspaper coverage is remarkable. The previous chapters of this dissertation have explored why and how violence against LGBT people happens during civil war. The overall argument has been

[85] (2007, 20X)
[86] (2004, 91)
[87] All translations in this chapter were conducted by the author. All photographs of newspaper coverage were taken by the author. Newspaper coverage reproduced pursuant to Articles 33 and 34 of the Colombian Law No. 23 of 1982 on Copyright.
[88] As described in Chapter 1, I use my own definition of brutality which is 'a violent action that transgresses established socio-cultural norms for a given context.' Thus, brutal violence becomes a form of violence that transgresses established socio-cultural norms, including established standards of harm. The novelty or salaciousness of the brutal violence (a sign of its transgressive character) comes from the extended coverage by the tabloid of this violence.

that violence against LGBT people facilitates a form of social transformation through the breakdown and reconfiguring of social norms through enforced and moralized violence, which takes different forms based on the capacity of the armed group to embed. In this framework, brutality serves as a mechanism. Still, these chapters have yet to answer a fundamental question: what does brutality do that less novel or remarkable forms of violence cannot? This chapter considers this question through EL ESPACIO's coverage of anti-LGBT violence. In line with the work of Diana Taylor (1997), I take media publication, both the written word and related photography, as a form of spectacle and performance. And given the focus on horrific acts of violence, showed in graphic detail, in these publications, I consider this specific spectacle what Lee Ann Fujii (2021, 2) calls "violence-on-display", or "a collective effort to stage violence for people to see notice, and take in". In line with Fujii's work, I also explore how these "displays can do things' that undisplayed violence cannot" (2021, 5). According to Fujii, these acts of violence display produce new identities for the participant, make participation in violence a requirement for in-group inclusion, and can establish a new political order.

In this chapter, I focus on the media coverage of anti-LGBT violence, notable for its brutality and prejudice, to extend the transformative potential of violence-on-display to the victims of these displays. I conduct textual and visual analyses to document the way that brutality serves as a mechanism for processes of civilian-armed actor socialization and social transformation. I argue that spectacles of brutality produce a stigma that cleave its victims from the body politic through a mechanism I refer to as the *processes of abjection*.[89] To deliver this argument, I first

[89] The arguments of this chapter complement arguments made by Catalina Gómez (2012), who did an analysis of media coverage of anti-LGBT violence (or hate crimes as she calls them) from the '80s and '90s in EL CALEÑO, a regional newspaper based in Cali, Colombia. In her analysis, Gómez argues that these hate crimes reveal links between violence, sexuality, and social order through the violent enforcement of social norms associated with an

present this media coverage. I then contextualize this violence within the broader patterns of the Colombian civil war before documenting how scholars of political violence have connected brutality with social transformation in a general context. From there, I connect these analyses to the previous presentation of my theory on the processes of abjection, in order to reinforce brutality as the mechanism through which violence transforms a social environment.

I argue that the images of this chapter facilitate processes of abjection (both personal and social) because of how their horrific content inspires disgust and horror in a manner that can cause the viewer to reject these populations. This rejection can be based in prejudice—these groups deserved it—or it can be based in defensiveness. Despite the difference in social standing between target and witness, the victim of violence is recognizable both as a human and as a material body. As such, the viewer identifies their own "bodiness" in seeing the violence and thus rejects it because it feels familiar but disruptive to their sense of self. This rejection thus comes from a self-preserving need to distance from the target and make sense of horrific violence.

5.2 The Spectacle of Brutalized LGBT Bodies

This material comes from the EL ESPACIO archive of the National Library of Bogotá as well as a private archive collated by the National Center for Historic Memory (CNMH) that detailed media reports of acts of violence against LGBT people. The CNMH archive was an incomplete collection of articles from the 1980s to the modern day published mostly in the tabloid paper, EL

'obligatory heterosexuality' (2012, 199). My proposed theory of abjection reveals a related socio-political process that considers how these linkages of violence, sexuality, and social order impact the broader non-LGBT population's interpretation of wartime logics.

ESPACIO. The emergence of these articles in the 1980s matches the same timeline of the paramilitary waves that came to define this period of the Colombian internal armed conflict. In reviewing these pages, the centrality of brutality in these pieces is remarkable. Entire spreads are devoted to the death of an LGBT person, nearly all gay men and trans women.[90] The scene of the crime would be described in lurid detail and often the mutilated corpse would be shown in graphic images. The image of these brutalized bodies would be matched with technocratic, forensic reporting of "*4 shots in the head*" or "*25 stab wounds*". Sometimes the papers would include a photo of the victim prior to their death and nearly always this photo showed nearly no resemblance to the mutilated corpse also on the page. Whether the presence of these 'before' photos provided some sort of dignity or reprieve to the horrific representations on the page is a matter of interpretation.

Beyond the remarkable portrayals of brutalities, also of note is the narrative around these sections. These narratives could split into two overarching frameworks: eroticism or securitization. In the first, most prevalent in the 1980s and early 1990s, these events were described as "passion crimes" or "the crimes of lovers". The word "orgy" was frequently in use. Tales of romance, jealousy, and revenge framed the graphic murders of love gone wrong. Additionally, the phrase "*pacto gay*" ('gay pact') began to be used as a proxy for a *Romeo and Juliet* type of suicide pact where two lovers would take their own lives because of a forbidden love. Starting in the 1990s and continuing until the 2000s, these events began to be framed in the context of crime and insecurity. The violence was still framed as intracommunal, or between

[90] This does not mean that lesbian women and trans men did not experience targeted anti-LGTB violence—they absolutely did—but, in line with broader trends of this phenomenon, this violence was much more private in nature (CNMH 2015; Tomsen 2013).

LGBT people, but here it was often in the context of criminal activities. The victims were framed as robbers and thieves caught up in a violent illicit economy. Less prominent narratives during this time included suicide-related to AIDS diagnoses and disappearances. Importantly, during this period, there is no mention of the paramilitaries or any other armed actors that were known to be active in these regions at this time. Such recognition of the probable involvement of paramilitaries was not reported on until the mid-2000s when the paramilitaries had already begun to demobilize, and their violent actions became more known and acceptable to discuss publicly. Previously, the media avoided naming the armed groups in their reporting in order to prevent violence against journalists (Uribe 1990, 2004). Additionally, many of the more conservative media organizations had relationships with paramilitary leaders.[91]

5.2.1 Reading the EL ESPACIO Tabloid as Spectacle

The Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez (or Gabo as he's affectionally called around the nation) once quipped "being a journalist is the best job in the world." During Gabo's life in the 20th century and after, journalists were treated with prestige as the path of the intellectual, indeed much of the country's former presidents either worked in newspapers or owned them. Journalism has a long history in Colombia that goes beyond the boundaries of this dissertation, but its salience in Colombian society reflects its importance. Part of this deep respect came from the job's danger. To date, Colombia continues to be one of the most dangerous places to be a journalist in the world: the reason being that non-state actors often violently target journalists that publish on their internal affairs (Arroyave Cabrera 2020).

[91] Interview, journalist, 2021. *See also* González 2014.

Today, Colombians get their news from a variety of sources. While TV is ubiquitous, many still rely on radio and newspapers. To compete in this environment, many newspapers have transitioned to a tabloid, sensationalist format. Jesus Antonio Arroyave Cabrera (2020) describes how many newspapers "have turned to the publication of types characterized by screaming headlines and information on judicial issues at the local level, which have attracted high audiences in a short time, mainly in popular sectors." According to Arroyave Cabrera, "half of the newspapers with the largest circulation in Colombia are sensationalist and do not offer neither texts in the major genres of journalism (reports, chronicles) and in-depth articles, nor do they have opinion columns that present analysis of facts."

This format was pioneered by the tabloid, EL ESPACIO, founded in 1965. The newspaper launched the 'yellow journalism' industry in Colombia, where the focus was on sensationalism and social drama. While EL ESPACIO closed in 2013, its legacy lives on in Colombia's media landscape today. For this chapter, the work of EL ESPACIO, becomes my subject of focus as it was not until after the end of formal paramilitarism in the early 2000s that the more traditional media organizations reported on violence against LGBT people. Until that point, coverage predominately occurred in tabloids. While the reason for this media silence remains unknown, the socio-political conditions of time provide some context. As Arroyave Cabrera has noted, "During the 1980s and 1990s, Colombia was considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world for a journalist to practice the profession." Paramilitary groups, guerrillas, and drug groups all threatened and harassed journalists that reported on them. In the country, there are many cases of journalists murdered for their writing. Given the risks to their lives, most journalists opted for self-censorship to survive, establishing a norm of leaving out the actor in

their reportage of violent affairs (Arroyave Cabrera 2022). Further, some newspapers practiced self-censorship because of their own private relations with or approval of paramilitary groups. These newspapers were owned or financed by local elites that were loyal to the paramilitary project and other newspapers (including a prominent newspaper in the department of Córdoba, a paramilitary hot spot) were secretly owned by paramilitaries.[92]

While this self-censorship silenced media's coverage of *who* was conducting this violence, it did not stop the coverage of the violence itself. As in most places around the world, sensational violence sells and thus, tabloids such as EL ESPACIO covered graphic acts of violence in gruesome details. Covers of the tabloid would include massive headlines in a bold red summarizing a horrific violence. The accompanying image would either be some sort of photo of the deceased or a cartoon rendering of the crime scene. María Victoria Uribe discusses how this proclivity for the media to cover acts of violence without naming the actor produced a "spectrality" that conceptualized actors as "dark forces of society," thereby diluting their identities and distorting the intentions and rationality of their actors" (2004, 91). A front-page story from 1985 illustrates this hysteria produced by spectrality. The headline in bright red reads "They Are Massacring *Travestis*" [93] (Figure 11). The additional context in black adds "*A group of assassins promises to put an end to homosexuals*" and *"In the past few days, 37 invertidos*[94] *have been shot. A reign of terror for those engaged in forbidden love*". The story further details that this violence is being perpetrated by "dark criminals" and though it does not share any details, it

[92] Interview, journalist, 2021.
[93] *Travesti* is a transfeminine gender identity found throughout Latin America, which is sometimes roughly translated to trans woman in English. I keep the Spanish-language term to recognize the cultural specificity of transgender identities in Latin America and Colombia more specifically.
[94] *Invertido* is an old-fashioned, Spanish-language pejorative for homosexual, exact translation is "inverted person".

adds "*the homicides have shown that they plan to exterminate many more in different regions of Colombia*." Thus, though not detailed or expanded upon, the article's author was able to connect this series of murders with a national phenomenon of anti-LGBT violence. Left unsaid in the article, is that by the time of its publication, the second generation of paramilitarism was well underway and anti-LGBT violence was being adopted throughout the country as a way to target subversion.


EL ESPACIO

grupo de asesinos promete acabar con homosexuales

Masacran travestis

En pocos días han sido acribillados 37 invertidos
Reina el terror en los medios del amor prohibido

ESPACIO y "Liberation", de Francia

os diarios unidos por un mismo éxito

Ambos, en sus respectivos países, son la revelación periodística

Figure 11, EL ESPACIO, 27 November 1985

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

As this chapter will detail, this absence of identifying the perpetrator produced a vacuum of accountability that media actors, and broader society, filled with prejudice. As a result, rather than documenting a pattern of violent victimization by armed actors (as LGBT organizations have done so impressively in the following years), tabloids like EL ESPACIO contributed to a broader societal understanding that LGBT people were responsible for their own victimization, thereby justifying the violence they experienced.

This chapter reviews an archive of coverage by EL ESPACIO on LGBT victimization from 1985 to 2008, the years of paramilitary activity in much of Colombia. I was first introduced to this

material via 78 article archive at the Gender Unit of the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* ('National Centre for Historic Memory', CNMH), I then went to a bigger EL ESPACIO archive in the *hemeroteca* of the National Library of Colombia. In what follows, I review this archive to explore how this media coverage facilitated a social marginalization of the LGBT people through their violent victimization. In detailing the grand narratives and pictorial representation of these narratives, I identify a process of social abjection, in which violent victimization becomes put through a stigmatizing and moralizing framework that centres the reason for this victimization on the LGBT population's own identity and behaviour, thus justifying their victimization. In documenting this socially transformative process, I attempt to illustrate how violence, particularly brutal violence, can have a socio-cultural impact that can cleave an entire population from a body politic. Though I do not, and cannot assert, that the paramilitaries had any role in these frames—there has been suspicion (and discovery) on the relationship between media elites and paramilitaries.[95] I draw on political theory and political psychology literature to demonstrate how brutality has a socio-cultural impact that affects the social position of these communities. I purport that to focus on intention misses the point. I am not asking who did these reports or why they occurred, I am instead focused on what this spectacle of brutality does and how it contributes to social transformation in highly violent contexts.

This data is separate from much of the thesis and focuses mostly on three population centers in the country, Bogotá, Cali, and Barranquilla, zones of focus for EL ESPACIO. Though these three cities are not my case study sites, this coverage of a similar phenomenon demonstrates the domestic translatability of this theory. In smaller villages, there may not have been this same

[95]Interview, journalist, 2021; González 2014. There are also plans for a forthcoming CNMH report on the subject.

level of media coverage, but information flowed nevertheless and thus, spectacle still existed—just in different forms.

5.2.2 Front Page News

EL ESPACIO was known around Colombia for its signature front page display. On the masthead was always the paper's title as well as its signature phase "*much more than news".* Below the masthead was the headline of the day, in bright red font that were often larger than the masthead itself. The headlines were showy, attention grabbing, but short on context. "Crime" (Figure 12), "The Lover Murdered Him" (Figure 13), "Mortal Orgy with *Travesti*" (Figure 14). Then, in smaller black writing would be more detail that still encouraged curiosity through its sensational brevity. To pair with the headline 'Crime', two lines of context: "*a homosexual stabbed 42 times*", "*with ferocity, the murderers attacked the victim. He was castrated. A photo of a woman at the scene. All the details*". Regarding 'The Lover Murdered Him', "*the murder of a homosexual in Bogotá. After stabbing him to death, he bathed himself. Discover more photos of perverted youth*." The context provided for 'Mortal Orgy with Travesti': "*In a residence in the center of Bogotá, the homosexual was murdered, by two men, in a room.*" These headlines highlight the gruesome details of the crime but deny the full story to the viewer. The goal is to grab one's attention with the bright red characters and make one want to read more, even after the morsel of black character details.

Next to these deadlines, there are always photos or illustrations that take up more than half the front page. Sometimes the illustration relates to a second story. Other times, smaller photos of seminude women appear. But most often, the main illustration matches the headline. These

matching photos sometimes incorporate a photo of the deceased. The dead, often nameless, stare back at the viewer in a photo without context. Other times, the matching illustration is a cartoon rendering of the crime scene. Dead bodies are drawn, along with pools of red blood through-out the mockup of the floor plan. These illustrations reinforce the matter at hand: *a sensational scene is before us, come join the show*.



Figure 12, El Espacio, 10 October 1988
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 13, El Espacio, 11 October 1988
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 14, El Espacio, 29 March 1990
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

From the very beginning, the framing of this violence is not of information, but of spectacle. The salacious details lead, followed by further explication of the gore. Photos, when they exist, only add to the intrigue— black-and-white figures with empty states, mutilated corpses, and blood-soaked cartoons. Little is done to contextualize or humanize the victims. The focus is not on the loss of life, but the drama of the story. A crime scene, a castration, death at the hands of the lover. Within this coverage, there is no mourning nor grief. The narratives presented are not of loss or sadness, but of gossip and confirmation of the behavior of 'perverted youth.'

5.2.3 In Cold Blood

The front page of these scenes is only the beginning of the show. When opened to the details, it was common to find a two-page spread devoted to the affair. Here, the lurid details, and perhaps more context, would be available, but they were second to the star of the show: the photography. In these sections, it was not uncommon to find corpses displayed. Sometimes it would be lifeless bodies face down or other times it would be murder scenes in vivid detail: throats slashed, blood everywhere, faces brutalized. The tabloid had no qualms about displaying these photos; there is a shocking level of casualness to these photos. One story titled in bold red "Tomb for the *travesti*!" (Figure 15), detailed the affair as "*All the shots were to the head…a beautiful and young homosexual is the newest victim of the dark criminals that attack invertidos".*



Figure 15, El Espacio, 28 March 1995
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

The title shows a confusing level of prejudice and care, "tomb for a *travesti*", who is then described as "beautiful and young." This balance of care and prejudice only deepens the intrigue—a beautiful lost boy felled by anonymous dark criminals. They are later called a *travesti*, which means there could be an element of misgendering.[96] And there is the framing of "newest victim of the dark criminals that attack homosexuals", which suggests that the media is picking up on a pattern of violent victimization against LGBT people, which is most likely an armed actor, but goes unsaid for aforementioned reasons. Below these complex and contradicting narratives is a photo of the body of the deceased. The body is in a ditch, the head slightly askew. Similar to the iconography of a

[96] While in general misgendering is considered an act of prejudice, in this time-period, it could be more representative of either a poor understanding of trans* identities by the media or *travestismo* and homosexuality being considered interchangeable concepts in society. El Espacio, at the time, seems to have conceptualized *travestis* not as transgender women but as 'men with the features of women.'

coffin, the pose confirms the death of the victim. But as with many victims of anti-LGBT violence, they have been denied the justice of a burial with dignity. Instead, their lifeless corpse with a fully exposed face takes up half the page of the tabloid, which was so concerned with losing exclusivity or ownership of this image that it places its own watermark on the page, *EL ESPACIO,* just under the head of the deceased. The little information provides no context to the life of this victim. On the issue's penultimate page, a naked woman in nothing but a pearl necklace and broad-brimmed hat. Both pages, then, featuring photos meant to entice the reader.

Other photos of this archive present similar portraits of the dead that document their demise with little dignity. In another photospread, the red-print headline reads "*Travesti* killed by blows" (Figure 16), the only context given "*the victim would have been 25 years old*". The photo here is a full two-page spread. The victim is face down in dirt. Their face unseen, disheveled black hair, and two arms outstretched. They are wearing a blue fabric, perhaps a coat or dress, but they have on no bottoms. Tights are seen, perhaps also padding (used to give the wearer more shape), but the shoes are still on. How did that happen? The image wreaks of foul play, perhaps of a sexual nature. Again, there is no description of the victimizer, though the silence suggests the culpability of armed actors.



Figure 16, EL ESPACIO, 6 November 1992

Source: National Museum of Colombia.
Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author.
January 2023.

These provocative images capture the imagination of the viewer, who is left wondering what happened. And though gravelly, open graves are a common iconography of these archival materials and social cleansing more broadly—they are not the only one. One of the most striking comes from 1991 (Figure 17). In this issue, two images show a corpse soaked in red. The main image is close up and shows a dead LGBT person, covered in what can be presumed to be their own blood. Their head turned to the side, eyes closed, with one arm raised above their head. There is a long, thick wound around their neck, which suggests the throat was slit. Their white covers are soaked in his blood. The second image, taken from a few steps back, reveals the rest of the crime scene – a contorted body between sheets and pillows, soaked in blood, centers the frame, but then around it is a chaotic mess of materials in all directions. Clothes on the floor, drawers ripped open. The image would suggest a robbery, or as the headlines suggests, *a party*. In the classic red texts, reads the title "Orgy and death at a party of 'gays'". The added context in blue reads "*one of the homosexuals had his throat slit (part 1)*" and "*Between the sheets, he was found naked by the authorities*." And then, again in red, but in the same size as the context lines in blue, "*they stabbed him in the heart*". No actors are named, but the grammar used suggest that

there were multiple victims, multiple victimizers, and that perhaps there was an overlap between the two categories: a satanic orgy gone wrong. The editors feel that there is so much to unpack that this story deserves serial treatment, *part 1*. The editors must have feared the loss of exclusivity of this material, so again the watermark appears near the head of the deceased, "EL ESPACIO".



Figure 17, EL ESPACIO, 6 December 1991
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

These photos take in a literal sense the Roland Barthes (1981) maxim that a photograph is the capturing of a dead moment. These photos show the final moments of dozens of LGBT people. Rarely do they ever include any moments prior to their demise— let alone receive consent for such photos. Despite knowing, intimately, the form of their demise, these images do nothing to share the life of these people. As viewers of the spectacle, we simply do not know these people beyond their violent victimization and death. In many cases, a mix of little detail and prejudice denies us the possibility of even knowing their sexual orientation or gender identity.[97] Still, to much of the Colombian public, these photos were the only introduction of a marginalized, hidden population that had not yet organized at a national level to become a household phenomenon.

[97] Though, again, this could be a product of the times, given the poor societal understanding of LGBT identities.

Susan Sontag (2001, 2003) has recognized the productive capacity of photography to engender empathy and support or reinforce stereotypes and cheap understanding. And Meredith Loken (2021) has identified how visual images can present both new and established narratives based on cultural beliefs. The framing and presentation of a photography can capture a moment and challenge opinion through the introduction of a critical perspective that can change public opinion. These photos could be read through Sontag's interpretation but from a more sinister angle: though photography can enact change and facilitate empathy when done in a certain way, the opposite is also true. That photography here reinforces existing prejudice and diminishes empathy by establishing an association with the LGBT community and violence. These images exacerbated an existing prejudice against LGBT people by attributing their murder to their immoral behavior.

5.2.4 'Pactos Gay': Passion Crimes and the Eroticism of Murder

One of the most prominent framings of the violence experienced by these populations is that of eroticization. As the saying goes, "sex sells" and adding in a perverse, dark element only seems to sell more. Within these texts, one of the most common framings is "*el pacto gay*" or "the gay pact" which were Romeo & Juliet-style suicide, where both lovers kill themselves because of insurmountable trouble (either they cannot be together or that they have HIV and know they will die). In one article from 1997, the headline in red reads "'Gay' Pact of Love and Death!" (Figure 18). The accompanying image is of a bed, a fan, and two pillows. One contextual line of blue text explains that two boys killed themselves in a hotel and the other details the evening, "*They entered room of the residency, they wrote a letter, they were speaking for a long time, later they took syringes, and they injected themselves with cyanide with formaldehyde. The police found the*

bodies of the victims on the bed." These captions do not explain the image, but it is inferred that this is the bed where the act took place.



Figure 18, El Espacio, 13 May 1997
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

Adjacent to these narratives, is *crímenes de pasión* ('passion crimes'), which rather than framing the deaths as a double suicide, is normally an angry lover killing either their own lover after a quarrel, "Passion, Love, and Death!" (Figure 19), as well as "*They killed for love*"; the object of their affection after rejection, "*They killed two young boys, in Bogotá, for rejecting their sexual advances*"; an ex-lover and their new boyfriend, a "*Bloody homosexual triangle*"; or the child of their lover, '*Lesbian drowns son of lover'*. All of these framings position the LGBTIQ person as responsible for their own murder or the murder of others in their community, *intracommunal violence*. This coverage introduces new discursive phrases that characterize this community with immoral behavior and equate "gays" with rage, jealousy, and murder. One headline reads "Gay ire*"*, another "Gay fury", and another "The jealousy of a 'gay' is mortal."



Figure 19, El Espacio, 2 October 2003

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

In addition, to these representations of intracommunal violence spurred by passion, there are moralizing narratives within this broader eroticism. One such narrative is that of perversion—these are perverts that are out of control. Sometimes there is direct reference to perversion "*more on the lives of these perverted youth*." Other times, there is a focus on immoral behavior of the deceased. The headline next to a deceased gay man's head "He used to adore sex with *sardinos*"[98] (Figure 20). And then there is a more passive narrative of moralizing judgment tied to a bacchanalic association with sexual impropriety. This narrative is perhaps most evident by how often the word "orgy" is used to describe these death scenes. Orgies gone wrong, also referred to as a "mortal orgy", "diabolic orgy" (Figure 21), and "orgies with the demon" (Figure 22). As the association with same-sex relations caused many globally to blame LGBT people for their own acquisition of HIV, similar social narrative processes were at work here, but with brutal murder.

[98] *Sardinos* being slang for young boys.



Figure 20, El Espacio, 7 December 1991
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 21, El Espacio, 6 December 1991
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 22, El Espacio, 26 October 1993
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

5.2.5 Securitizing Poorly Behaved 'Locas': Demons, Drugs, and Crime

The second major narrative of this newspaper coverage is securitization. Beyond just representation of a sex-crazed, bacchanalic community that is killing itself (with both HIV and brutal violence), there was an association of this community with dangerous illicit economy. Coverage of LGBT violent victimization included drug deals and robberies gone wrong. In the 90s, as the fear of super-predator crime was spreading through the United States, in Colombia, fear started of LGBT gangs that were wreaking havoc among cities. El Espacio called these gay gangs *"Locas"*, or crazy women. One headline in red reads "*'Locas* attack" (Figure 23). The accompanying image is of a dead trans* woman, bloodied on the pavement. The context in blue adds "*here's how the gay brawl went*" and "*shots, screams, a cry, and finally two corpses on the cold pavement*." Thus, the coverage infers that the murder of these two trans women was from fighting with other trans women. According to El Espacio coverage, the '*locas'* did not just target their own community, but the broader community as well. A frontpage headline of the paper reads "*Locas*, for sex, kill two young boys" (Figure 24). A subtitle in black adds "*the boys*

did not want to make love to them." In another headline in red "'*Locas'* and robbers!" (Figure 25), with its context in blue adding "*they used paralyzing gas*" and *"they assaulted a taxicab driver and stole his car. The very 'broke ones' said cynically that they were very 'judicious' and that they did it out of necessity*."



Figure 23, El Espacio, 4 March 1994

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 24, El Espacio, 25 September 1990

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 25, El Espacio, 21 September 1998

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

Here again, these victims are not being presented as innocent but deserving of their deaths because of their involvement in illicit behavior. This connotation, seldom proven and often based on their sexual orientation and gender identities, once again reaffirms the idea that they were responsible for their own demise. A connotation easily reinforced when the framing is intracommunal violence and no armed actor is ever mentioned. Of note is the similarity to narratives around sex workers, who are often forced to work in situations of extreme violence and precarity, and thus experience disproportionate violence. In these narratives, many of these victims were sex workers as this was a main income stream for many trans* women and gay men in an industry that was often controlled and regulated by armed actors (CNMH 2015, 2019; Gallego-Montes 2020). Thus, putting them under their watch, and further reinforcing the unsaid assumption that they had an involvement with their own death.

Related to this commentary on the criminal behavior of "locas", in another set of headlines, the newspaper uses language to frame groups of trans* women as gangs. In framing these groups of trans* women as gangs, these newspapers were likely noting the propensity for trans* women to form family units as a result of familial and societal discrimination. These 'chosen family' dynamics have been well documented in literature on queer articulations of kinship (Weston 1994; Ritholtz & Buxton 2020), but to an uneducated observer, these group formations can appear threatening, especially when publicly associated with crime and 'subversion.' One article is titled "Three hours of fighting" and its subtitle reads "*The homosexuals wanted to rule the streets*" (Figure 26). In another frontpage story, a title in red shares "Czar of the *travestis*!" (Figure 27) and the context in blue adds "*They killed him with a stab to the heart*" well as *"He was called Héctor, but they used to call him 'Soldier'. He charged all the 'locas' taxes in order to work in his estates.*" Another headline refers to someone as a "Sinner, homosexual, terrible *sicario*[99]" (Figure 28). This language of organized criminal groups criminalizes even the association of LGBT people being together. Their behaviors are framed as tied to these illicit activities and thus, so are their identities. It is in this framing that not only blames LGBT people for the violence they experience, but also facilitates the process of legitimizing violence used against them. By securitizing not only their existence, but their deaths, violence against this community can be justified in the language of social cleansing— 'difficult efforts must be undertaken in order to reign in a community that is terrorizing itself and the broader community.'

[99] A *sicario* is a hired killer.



Figure 26, El Espacio, 8 February 1994
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 27, El Espacio, 30 April 1999
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 28, El Espacio, 9 March 1989
Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

5.2.6 Brutality as a unique element of anti-LGBT violence

This media representation exemplifies the brutal coverage of brutal violence against LGBT people. As further detailed in the following section, brutality exists in many forms in the Colombian civil war. In this sense, the presence of brutality was not unique to victims of homophobic violence, but it was certainly more likely or represented. There are few ways to prove such an assertion—as noted elsewhere, very few studies of violence in Colombia identify cruelty or brutality as variables for analysis (Suárez 2007, 2022). One option, however, is to consider broader narratives of this violence. Despite a range of contexts, certain interpretations remain constant. For LGBT people, a present narrative has been the centrality of brutality in this violence. Such a theme came up repeatedly in expert interviews, where brutality takes a central role in the analysis. And in my own analysis of reports through my personal database of anti-LGBT violence, I found 243 cases out of 752 cases, included some form of brutality. These are starting entry points to further explore the level of brutality in this violence.

Another hint at the centrality of brutality of this violence is the proposed public interpretations that exist. Even in this media archive, there is a perceived conflation between brutality and homophobic violence. One news coverstory shares in red "A Homosexual Cut into Pieces*"* (Figure 29) with more details in blue "*The authorities try to identify him by an arm".* The news story in the paper later explains that a body part, a hand, is found in a river in Bogotá. According to the text, "*the hand is too delicate to be a man's, too big to be a woman's"* (Figure 30). This provides a hint (based in prejudice not science) that it might belong to a homosexual, but to the author, the 'smoking gun' is that it was just a hand found. The sub-text being that only LGBT people were dismembered; only underserving lives were treated such a way. Such a perspective reflects a similar reality only a few hundred miles northwest of Bogotá, in Puerto Boyacá, where dismemberment was a brutal violence associated with LGBT victimization.



Figure 29, El Espacio, 25 July 1991

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.



Figure 30, El Espacio, 25 July 1991

Source: National Museum of Colombia. Photo of Newspaper Coverage by Author. January 2023.

5.3 Broader Dynamics of Brutality in the Colombian Civil War

Colombia's internal armed conflict has been marked by the brutal victimization of civilians. Brutality and cruelty played a role in both cycles of violence with some scholars drawing connections between the two periods. In this section, I draw on the work of two prolific

Colombian scholars María Victoria Uribe and Andrés Fernando Suárez, who both detail the relationship between massacres and cruelty in the Colombian armed conflict with attention being paid to the variation in this relationship overtime (Uribe 1990, 2004; Suárez 2007). Within Colombia, brutal and cruel acts of violence are considered their own repertoire of violence known as *sevicia* (sometimes written in English as 'saevitia' after its Latin origin), which is defined by courts as excessive cruelty and the multiplicity of trauma (El Tiempo 2018). This term has a legal origin that derives from Spanish colonial legal code. A recent Colombian court decision formally provided a definition of the term, which clarified that in cases of homicide, acts of *sevicia* "make the victim suffer atrociously with a level of suffering unnecessary to bring about their end" (El Tiempo, 2018). The Colombian government's forensic body similarly defines *sevicia* in cases of homicide as the "the causing of damage beyond what's required to kill" (*quoted in* Suárez 2007, 21). These definitions relate to the proposed definition of cruelty as an intentional act of violence at both the physical and psychological level. *Sevicia*, then, can be defined as a form of extreme violence that includes both cruelty and brutality. In Colombian analyses of *sevicia*, certain actions are routinely associated with the repertoire: namely corpse desecration and mutilation.

While acts of *sevicia* occurred in both phases of the Colombian Civil War, their form and meaning were different because of changing sociocultural relations. María Victoria Uribe's seminal work on violence during *La Violencia* (1948-1957) recounted at least 250 massacres (1990). She found that the brutality during these massacres were a result of cultural practice—for example, if someone died with their eyes open, then they were not dead and had to be killed again (*rematar*), resulting in corpse desecration. Acts of body manipulation occurred after death

(with the victims being shot in the back of the head) and reflected *campesino* life in a similar manner to the butchering of animals:

> La Violencia wasn't simply about killing Others; their bodies had to be dismembered and transformed into something else…In most cases they killed their enemies by shooting them in the back of the head, after which they manipulated the corpse by making a series of cuts with a machete. The objective behind these cuts was to disorganize the body, depriving it of its human nature and turning it into a macabre allegory. What belonged inside the body was placed outside it—the fetus in a pregnant woman was extracted and placed on her midriff; men's tongues were exhibited like neckties by pulling them out through a hole cut in the trachea—and insides were replaced with what belonged outside—the fetus was replaced by a rooster, and men's testicles were stuffed in their mouths. They also placed on top what belonged on the bottom—dead men's penises were cut off and placed inside their mouths—and, conversely, displaced what belonged on top to the bottom—a head would be removed and placed on the corpse's arms. In the "flower vase" cut, which produced an absolute inversion of the folk anatomy, the corpse's head, arms, and legs were cut off, the thorax was emptied of its contents, and the limbs were then stuffed inside the thorax like flowers in a vase (2004, 88).

Gonzalo Sánchez (1990) has argued that this bodily manipulation in Colombia produced symbols that were easily intelligible to other potential victims: decapitation related to curtailment of thought, fetus extraction from the uterus became a symbol for eliminating the future. This generalized violence had a socially transformative element by creating fear and producing social isolation among rural peasantry through acts of brutality that did not necessarily include cruelty. Armed actors' use of necroviolence was brutal because it went against cultural traditions for respectful treatment of the dead, but their actions did not combine the physical and psychological associations of cruelty because the victims were already dead. Brutality, however, is still effective. María Victoria Uribe argues that these massacres were technologies of terror that were used to expel rural inhabitants from their land and consolidate territorial control. Armed actors targeted people in order to displace them and control their land. The mutilation of corpses followed a logic of domestic animal butchery that had sizable semiotic impact due to cultural associations with these practices.

María Victoria Uribe compares these dynamics of violence during *La Violencia* with violence from the second cycle of violence (1958-2016) in Colombia where she found "acts of barbarity, shamelessly publicized in television news broadcasts and newspapers, have transformed Colombians into beings filled with fear: fear of war, of violence, of blood, of losing one's own family, even of watching the news on television" (2004, 81). In this second cycle of violence, armed actors committed the same type of bodily mutilation as the first cycle, but this time, the victims were still alive. Thus, acts of animal butchery were performed on living human beings. As such, the repertoire of violence was torture and mutilation of the living, as opposed to post-mortem corporeal desecration. The semiotic impact of these violent practices did not just recall the previous wave of violence and the allusions to domestic animal butchering but also introduced a new horror to the public through acts of extreme cruelty.

Cavarero's (2009) theoretical work on massacres provides a blueprint into differentiating these two cycles of violence as detailed by Uribe. Cavarero argues that massacres can have different meanings for the perpetrator, victim, and witness. In her analysis, she finds the term "terror" as insufficient for this dynamic because of how it privileges the perspective of the warrior:

> Terror is a well-known political instrument employed for purposes of intimidation…Such an exercise in distinction always refers back, however, to a certain conception of terror as a political strategy with precise goals, aiming, in various ways and with greater or less violence, at spreading fear and managing its effects (2009 44).

As such, terror becomes a placeholder for any type of violence with semiotic impact. To better delineate different forms of violence, Cavarero presents a new word, "horrorism". To Cavarero (2009, 32), "horrorism is characterized by a particular form of violence that exceeds death itself". She centers repulsion in instances of horrorism and disconnects the concept from terrorism by claiming that terror makes one flee in fear, horror makes one freeze in disgust.

Acknowledging this dichotomy, then, centers the experience of the victim and witness. It considers not only their physical reaction to an act of violence but also the psychological, making the concept useful in analyses of cruelty.

Thus, as María Victoria Uribe notes, the terror of the first cycle of violence in Colombia escalated into horror in the second. Mutilation is always a brutal act because it transgresses cultural expectations of bodily integrity; however, it becomes cruel when applied to living victims through acts of torture. The armed actors legitimized these acts of violence by declaring a new target. Uribe writes that these were actions taken against enemies, namely informants, for the purposes of winning the war, but local populations knew of too many proximate examples of people being targeted randomly to believe such justifications. Still, this justification for targeting produced a new logic of fear associated with contagion. People became afraid of their personal connections with victims and the knowledge of both brutal and cruel violence compounded their fears. Uribe finds that the heightened public awareness, and the associated news coverage, related to this horror produced a new level of fear that was widespread and again resulted in displacement, facilitating armed groups' territorial control efforts.

The presence of *sevicia* can change the interpretation of a massacre. Andrés Fernando Suárez (2007) in his study of massacres in the Urabá region of Colombia during this second cycle of violence identifies similar logics to Uribe. Here Suárez disentangles the relationship between massacres and *sevicia*, finding that *sevicia* only occurred in a small portion of massacres. Interestingly, he finds that *sevicia* was more likely to be present in massacres when there was not a clear reason why the group was being targeted—often the victims had all the characteristics of

potential guerrilla sympathizers (adult male farmers without any obvious political affiliation), but there was no proof of their collusion. Massacres that occurred without sevicia were most often committed against known guerrillas or "enemies." As a result, sevicia became a method to produce a collective identity associated with the enemy. Suárez notes that this identification as the enemy, which legitimized violence against them, often occurred after acts of sevicia. Furthermore, in his analysis of this violence, he noted that the forms of sevicia being used were different from La Violencia:

> These massacres are thus characterized by a low diversification in the repertoire of sevicia as compared to the massacres of La Violencia. But it's not just that. Contemporary sevicia seems to end with the rupture of the body, while that of La Violencia exceeded the rupture of the body to rearrange the body as well (2007, 26, translation my own).

Suárez thus identifies a difference in the utilization of brutality that matches Uribe's differentiations: the focus of brutality during *La Violencia* occurred after death and included reconfigurations of deconstructed bodies, while in the contemporary cycle of war it occurred before death. In this second cycle of violence, massacres that exhibited *sevicia* had a constitutive nature through which new identities could be forged that transitioned innocent civilian victims into enemies-in-waiting.

The interventions of these scholars on *sevicia* in the Colombian civil war reveal a grammar of brutality that changed over the war's duration. Though at first the violence and brutalization of *La Violencia* and those of the more contemporary civil war appear indistinguishable, with an attention to context, variations appear, and more insights on impact can be drawn. With an eye to the grammar of brutality, the results may be the same— technologies of terror (and also horror) cause civilians to flee— but the processes differ. Massacres of *La Violencia* become tied to a cultural framework that allows for a certain semiotic interpretation tied to animal butchery. In the

second cycle of war, massacres prompt flight, but the use of *sevicia* becomes a constitutive force in a Schmittian sense to infer guilt and produce a supposed enemy.

Thus, *sevicia*, or cruel and brutal violence, can be understood as a factor present in violence against all populations during the Colombian civil war and is useful in analyzing dynamics and impacts of violence. However, it begs the question of why such extensive media coverage of cruel and brutal violence against LGBT people if this was a broader phenomenon? I contend that this media coverage fixated on marginal populations because it was culturally acceptable and thus, reinforced preexisting beliefs. The brutality could be covered without concern for offending armed actors or government narratives of the war. Also, it was popular with the broader population, who bought the issues and contributed toward EL ESPACIO's success in a competitive industry. Further, it is also possible that, in urban areas, this brutality against civilians could have been perceived as only acceptable toward marginalized populations, and as such, acts of brutality against LGBT people were ubiquitous but acts of brutality against broader populations remained a rural phenomenon.

5.4 Social Abjection in the Coverage of EL ESPACIO

In their representations of *sevicia,* these media archives reveal the productive capacity of brutality to transform society. In this interpretation, I identify brutality as a mechanism for social transformation through a form of dehumanization related to the processes of abjection. I argue that witnessing brutal violence (*i.e.*, violence that goes against established socio-cultural norms) provokes disgust (personal abjection) which then facilitates an opportunity for moral justification

of this violence that socializes civilians against the targeted victim populations (social abjection). These processes of abjection reinforce my overall argument of how anti-LGBT violence not only reifies difference but changes the identity of the victim, affecting their social position and redrawing the boundaries of the boundary of politics.

In this media coverage, the display of mutilated corpses produced a first, primary abjection, a personal abjection, associated with brutality, as viewers have an immediate reaction from seeing a corpse which violates their sense of self. A secondary abjection, a social abjection, which required the viewer's attention, occurred through the narratives of eroticism and securitization, which reinforced an association of LGBT people with sexual vice, violence, and illicit activities. These three associations were easy to frame as threatening to the broader public as a result of the paramilitary-imposed moral orders and existing social prejudice in much of the country. Given the broader social silence of this marginalized population at this time, these pictures of brutality were one of few introductions of this group to the general public and reified their difference. This process of brutal violence reinforcing difference, producing stigma, and moralizing a group's victimization is the process of social abjection. In focusing on their final moments and developing a public imaginary of mutilated corpses felled by passion, crime, or degeneracy, the process of social abjection cleaved LGBT victims of violence from the body politic of their community. Similar to how abjection allows individuals to reinforce their sense of self by rejecting the abject, the process of social abjection also provided opportunity for the broader community to reaffirm their sense of sense (or boundaries) by participating in the rejection of this population. Their violent exclusion produced public identities more akin to representations of social pathology by a culture affected by war than individuals worthy of respect, dignity, and

inclusion. The assumed public support for graphic display of mutilated LGBT bodies, given the tabloid obsession with producing them over decades, echoes Susan Sontag's recognition that "images of the repulsive can also allure" (2003, 95). The graphic brutalization of LGBT people, thus, in a society already at war still made headlines because they were fascinating. As a result, brutality becomes a communicative mechanism to facilitate the process of social abjection, which legitimizes collective violence against an immoral minority and produces a collective identity associated with the enemy.

The photos present in the coverage of EL ESPACIO reinforce an existing narrative of LGBT people in Colombia as moral degenerates, deviants, and subversives. The reinforcing comes from the specific narratives of hypersexualization, illness, crime, satanism, and brutal violence. These narratives dehumanize LGBT people as 'less than', and potentially threatening to, the upright and moral cis and heterosexual citizens (non-subversives) of Colombia. The violence covered by the EL ESPACIO in such gruesome detail demonstrate the power of brutality to not only attract attention of a broader audience but also to produce narratives of morality. By tying the murder of these individuals with 'amoral' behavior, such as sexual impropriety, crime, and violence, these media narratives legitimize their death.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter studied media coverage of anti-LGBT violence to present how brutality can be considered a social process. It considered this media coverage as spectacle in order to recognize that a logic of violent display permeated its graphic coverage of brutalized murdered LGBT people. Brutality becomes a way for acts of anti-LGBT violence to connect with broader social

narratives around LGBT people. These narratives eroticize or securitize anti-LGBT violence, which facilitates both personal and social abjection. The chapter recognizes that acts of brutality occurred throughout the Colombian war but recognizes the broader cultural association of brutality as either a unique or overrepresented form of violence against LGBT people. It concludes with a close analysis of how this media coverage connected to the processes of abjection, which cleaved LGBT populations from the body politic.

Chapter 6 Social Cleansing in Puerto Boyacá & the Magdalena Medio Boyacense

"If this river could talk, it would have nothing to say."[100] – Fisherman of the Magdalena River, Colombia

"*Death exists in the past tense, disappearance in the present.*" [101] – Avery Gordon

6.1 Introduction

It was close to the sleeping hour in Puerto Boyacá when Mama Mía, an 18-year-old trans woman, heard a knock. She opened the door to find her friend, Jhon*, who asked if she would come with him on an important errand. Mama Mía's sister told her not to go. It was late and leaving the house would violate the town's paramilitary-imposed curfew. Mama Mía reassured her sister, "I'll be back soon" she said as she kissed her cheek and walked out the door. The date was 12 January 2002, the last time Mama Mía was seen alive.*

Mama Mía's family searched for her. Her sister together with their mother, scoured the town seeking her whereabouts. During a previously tense period in the town's history, Mama Mía had received a threat from a paramilitary to leave and so she temporarily fled for Bogotá with her friend, Vicky, another trans woman. But Mama Mía hated the big city, was cold in the mountains, and soon longed to return to her 'tierra caliente', the hot lowlands along the Magdalena*

[100] Quoted in CNMH 2019a, 54.
[101] 2008, 113.

River. After her disappearance, Mama Mía's family hoped that she had just left in the cover of night after receiving a threat from Jhon. They listened eagerly for alleged sightings of their lost daughter and sister, but they worried— it was unlike her to not check in.

Soon after Mama Mía's disappearance, a fisherman found a dismembered leg in the river. The leg had a tattoo that her sister recognized as belonging to Mama Mía. In that moment, she accepted that her sister suffered the same fate as other gay men and trans women in the town: disappearance, dismemberment*[102]*, and discard into the river. Their mother did not accept this fate for her daughter until six years later when multiple paramilitaries confessed to their involvement in her murder during the transitional justice peace process. According to these confessions, years later, they killed her because she sold drugs. Mama Mía's family rejects this allegation and assert that she was killed for being trans*.*[103]

The *Autodefensas de Puerto Boyacá* ('Self-Defense Forces of Puerto Boyacá', AUC-PB) prototyped violence against LGBT people through a form of anti-LGBT violence that I label

[102] The role of dismemberment in these acts is interesting and contentious. In their transitional justice participation, few paramilitaries of the AUC-PB recount their reasonings for dismemberment and so it is not known why this practice occurred, nor why it was so commonly used against LGBT people and other victims of social cleansing. In their analysis of the patterns of violence, the Justice and Peace Tribunal found that acts of dismemberment were most often associated with the presence with one mid-tier combatant, alias *Colorado*. Thus, suggesting, in line with the work of Mueller (2000), that perhaps it was the presence of a sadistic individual that introduced a new level of brutality introduced into the dynamics of violence in the region and this new level of brutality was only permissible by the organization, as well as the community, when it was committed against lives not worth 'grieving' (Butler 2006). Nevertheless, after the initial introduction of this repertoire by the AUC-PB, it became more and more frequent in other parts of the country.

[103] This story was adapted from accounts presented in the CNMH (2019a, 213-216) report and trial documents (Castellanos Roso 2014).

social cleansing. In this region, the paramilitaries were able to socially embed and impose their anti-subversive conservative ideology. Puerto Boyacá is widely considered to be the founding site of paramilitarism in the region, certainly for the second generation of paramilitarism when the rural iteration of *Muerte a Secuestadores* (MAS) was founded there in 1982. Since the 1980s, the town and its surrounding area had been a base for paramilitary groups and the center of a conservative heartland financed by cattle ranchers, largescale landholders, narcotraffickers, and multinational corporations. It was in this living laboratory of counterinsurgency that certain methods, particularly those tied to brutality, were trialed before being spread throughout the country. Puerto Boyacá was where things such as the public establishment of a moral order against subversion, the dismemberment of murdered 'deviants,' and the requested participation of community members were first seen and have since become associated with this region.

Puerto Boyacá is a port-town of about 50,000 in the Boyacá department in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia. The AUC-PB in 2005, were based in Puerto Boyacá and controlled a territory of about 150,000 with other ports and river towns included in their realm of influence, which was known as the Magdalena Medio Boyacense. For much of this period, they were closely allied with two other paramilitary two groups—the *Autodefensas de Magdalena Media* (AUC-MM) and the *Bloque Central Bolívar* (AUC-BCB). These three groups controlled the region of the Magdalena Medio and while the AUC-PB and the AUC-MM had near domination of their regions, the AUC-BCB was in a much more contested region where guerrilla groups including the FARC and ELN were present.[104]

[104] See Figure 35 at the end of this chapter for a map of the region that includes the territorial control of paramilitary groups.

Named for the Magdalena River, Magdalena Medio is an important region to the country. To start, the Magdalena River serves as Colombia's main artery, originating in the South, flowing through the center of the country, and then spilling out into the Caribbean Sea in the North. The river flows where large swaths of the country meet— serving as a crossroads for nine departments. The river is a major source of food, transportation, and industry. It is a lifeline to the nation's fisherman and farmers. Its large swaths of navigability enable transport in a dense jungle environment. And its proximity to hydrocarbon resources makes it vital to Colombia's energy export industry. Colombia's major oil city, Barrancabermeja, is located on the Magdalena River, about 75 miles north of Puerto Boyacá.

The natural resources of the Magdalena River, along with its strategic location, contributed to its centrality in the Colombian conflict. The region of the country was first economically developed and settled by the Texas Petroleum Company (TPC) in 1936 once its natural resources were discovered. The Colombian government at the time permitted a corporate colonialization of the region, which was so densely forested that it was inaccessible to the state. The TPC became a major landowner and employer in the region—though much of its land acquisitions are alleged to have been acquired through violent means (Salinas & Lancheros, 2008). At the time, ranchers also began to start buying up large swaths of land for cattle raising. In the face of land dispossession and a precarious economic system that saw the material benefit of the region's resources collected in the hands of the few, the region developed a large *campesino* class that was dependent on largescale landholders for their livelihoods. The violence and inequality embedded in the local economy created the grounds for discontent and the nascent FARC and ELN guerrilla groups found support among this population in the 1960s and 1970s. During this

period, the region became known for its association with leftist insurgency and the TPC worried that its resources were at risk. The government further gave the corporation permission to use coercive means to protect its assets—often with private security forces that were just one form of precursor to the AUC paramilitaries.

The dynamics of the region changed with the arrival of FARC Front IX (also referred to as *Frente Ricardo*) in the 1980s, which differed from the original FARC front in that it began to rely on extortion, kidnapping, and drugs to finance the rebellion (CNMH, 2019b, 24). This change in financial structure led to higher levels of civilian victimization and much of the population turned away from supporting the insurgency. This growing popular discontent, along with the expansion of private security forces financed by narcotraffickers, laid the groundwork for paramilitarism to become a private security resource with a public benefit. This first generation of paramilitaries, then known as civilian defense units, became tasked with ridding the areas of guerrillas and securing local resources. At the time, the state permitted these groups because they believed that support for the FARC was coming from foreign communist influence and not domestic socio-political discontent (Salinas & Lancheros 2008). They were funded by a mix of local political and business elites, including largescale landowners, who were quickly transitioning from ranchers to drug lords with active interest in the region for its proximity to coca fields and transport networks. From the 1980s on, paramilitarism cemented itself throughout the region. Through an extremely violent campaign of 'selective terror' that sought to curb any social organizations, leftist insurgency fled the region, pushing deeper into the jungle. When the insurgents ceded this territory, many of their supporters chose to leave with them or were forced out of the area.

This chapter considers the anti-LGBT social cleansing practices of the last phase of the second generation of paramilitaries in Puerto Boyacá, the AUC-PB from 1994 to 2006. During this time, the group was led by Arnubio Triana, alias *El Botalón* ('the boom'). By this point in the region's history, it was a base zone for the paramilitaries. The town and immediate surrounding vicinities were not contested and were comfortably under control of the group, who benefited financially from this control through taxation and the illicit trade of hydrocarbons and drugs. Nearby zones in the departments of Santander and Bolívar were still contested, but other paramilitary groups led the majority of counterinsurgency operations there. During this period, with control already established and the paramilitaries embedded in society, the AUC-PB still performed brutal acts of social cleansing in the name of their desired moral order aligned against subversion.

This chapter frames anti-LGBT violence by the AUC-PB as *social cleansing*. It considers the pattern, factors, and factors of social cleansing in order to demonstrate the transformative impact that this brutal violence has on communities through the process of social abjection. It then concludes with a consideration of the analytical utility of social cleansing as a type of political violence that is separate from other forms of collective violence.

6.2 The Process and Pattern of Anti-LGBT Violence in Puerto Boyacá

The process and pattern of socially cleansing LGBT people under the AUC-PB mirrored Mama Mía's story. First, the person would be warned, either in person or in the text of a note or pamphlet. This warning usually entailed very homophobic language and included a request to either curb a specific behavior tied to one's sexual or gender expression or leave town. Then, if the person did not leave, eventually they would get a knock on the door in the evening. The

unexpected arrival would be a familiar face—someone they knew but did not immediately associate with paramilitaries—with a request to come with them. The interlocutor would bring the victim to the waiting paramilitaries who would blindfold the person and transport them to *transmisores,*[105] a green space on the river outside the town that operated as their torture site. The person would then be brutalized and killed. Their body showed signs of torture, was often dismembered and dumped into the river.

In Colombia, this practice was called 'forced disappearance.'[106] The dynamics of this violence with its multitudinous repertoires—threats, torture, homicide– were ultimately defined by the absence of the body. Though gay and transgender people were not the only ones to face this end, when there were reports of violence against LGBT people in this town, forced disappearance was a common repertoire. As such, it was a disproportionate practice in the type of violence committed against LGBT people. Additionally, though the practice appeared throughout the country, many attribute its origin to the paramilitaries of the Magdalena Medio region (CNMH 2019a). The desecration of the physical body and its disregard in the river became a noted practice associated with social cleansing. In line with Butler's (2006) work on lives worth grieving, the culture narrative this violence produced was that these bodies were so unworthy of dignified treatment that they did not even warrant proper burial (CNMH 2019a).[107] It became a way to further cleave this population from the body politic and subordinate their own humanity through a process of social abjection. These practices and understandings were reflected in the

[105] *See* Figure 33 at the end of the chapter for an image of the site, which translates as 'transmitters', or 'the place from which something (or someone) is sent.' The farm and area got this name from the two cell towers nearby.
[106] Forced Disappearance is a well-established repertoire of violence in Latin America, along with the verb-phrase "to be disappeared." Enforced disappearance is normally associated with state repression.
[107] This was a common narrative provided to me in expert interviews in 2020 and 2021. Other groups targeted for social cleansing by the AUC-PB were drug sellers/users, prostitutes, and accused criminals.

language used by the paramilitaries, LGBT people were called ‘undesirables’ and ‘disposables.’ The associated practices of forced disappearance in Puerto Boyacá even became a discursive shorthand – when Mama Mía was first threatened along with her two friends, Vicky and Papuchina, they were told to leave town or ‘end up in the river’ (Castellanos Roso 2014, 101).

Throughout their presence but becoming particularly acute in the period of 1994 to 2006 when Arnubio Triana was the commander, the AUC-PB led a constant and targeted campaign of violence against LGBT people that they framed through the context of social cleansing. Though the most commonly associated form of this ‘cleansing’ was forced disappearance, other repertoires included threats, homicide, torture, and displacement (Barón 2011). Notably, there were very few reports of sexual violence by the AUC-PB, though other paramilitary blocs in the Magdalena Medio region were known to use this repertoire against LGBT people (CNMH 2019a).[108] The recurrent trend of threats followed by a ‘send a familiar face out to search for this person’ demonstrated a level of premeditation that rejects any randomness (CNMH 2019a). The related discourses of vice, poor comportment, and infirmity all demonstrate an ideological basis for this form of violence tied to moral orders. As such, it can be said that this violence made sense to the group as either a strategy or what Elisabeth Jean Wood (2018) would call a ‘policy’. Additionally, the paramilitary position on LGBT lives was known to the town. The community would sometimes get involved with these acts of violence, with neighbors tattling on one another or local elites requesting a cleansing of a given area or person. LGBT people reported how they modified their behavior in response to such generalized social repression with many leaving town after a friend was disappeared (CNMH 2019a).

[108] Particularly the Bloque Central Bolívar, which was active in contested landscapes in the city of Barrancabermeja and its outskirts in the departments of Bolívar and Santander.

Not all members of the LGBT community were targeted in the same manner. Nancy Prada of the CNMH (2019a) identifies three elements that exacerbated one's vulnerability to being targeted: first, those who publicly transgressed gender expectations, particularly for those assigned male at birth (*i.e.*, gay men and trans* women); second, those who were poor or economically vulnerable; and third, those involved in community leadership activity. The commonality between all three of these activities was that they facilitated a level of visibility in a homogenous community. Transgressions of gender norms were easy to see—in many stories of violence victimization it was either trans women or drunk gay men who were targeted because their dress (in the case of trans* women) or effeminate, rambunctious behavior (in the case of drunk gay men) drew attention to them. Being poor meant constantly searching for work and being at risk of coercion into an informal economy controlled by paramilitaries. And community leadership, of any kind, put a mark on a person's back because any form of collective organizing was seen as a threat to paramilitary hegemony as well as associated with guerrilla support. Thus, it was not that the AUC-PB necessarily desired a complete extermination of non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities, they instead sought to curb their expression through the implementation of a respectability politic reinforced through lethal, brutal violence. They publicly justified this stance through a Cold War logic: moral discrepancy was a pathway to communism that threatened the town. In doing so, they were able to establish the mission that famously greeted any visitor to town: "Welcome to Puerto Boyacá, land of peace and progress, Colombia's capital of anti-subversion" (Salinas and Lancheros 2008, 259).[109]

[109] See Figure 34 at the end of the chapter for an image of the sign.

In much of their post-facto justification of violent action, the paramilitaries of Puerto Boyacá (AUC-PB) accused many of their victims of involvement in a life of 'vice.' Vice became a catchall for selling drugs, performing sex work, or behaving in a manner contrary to their social expectations. In their war on vice, queer and transgender bodies served as a battleground — particularly gay men and trans* women. Though the data from this region is very poor (due to years of state absence, paramilitary impunity, and corruption of political bodies produced underreporting to state institutions, as did the associated shame of reporting such acts and fear of reprisals), there is a strong local and national narrative around LGBT victimization in this region of the country (CNMH 2019a; Salinas & Lancheros 2008). In fact, the judicial decision tied to the AUC-PB demilitarization was the first to ever acknowledge targeting by paramilitaries of LGBT people on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity (Castellanos Roso 2014). And in the history of the region, the presence of the AUC-PB became equated with the 'criminalization' of non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities.[110] Those who transgressed gender roles, most often effeminate gay men and trans women, were often warned to be more like the "well-behaved faggots," those who blended in and did not cause trouble as a result of their discretion.[111] As described in a CNMH focus group by a demobilized paramilitary, who was gay but hid it:

> "*[they used to say] you can do whatever you want, but behave yourself. Behaving well includes…. that you do not set a 'bad example' to children (...) that the expression of your condition is not easily seen. Be what you want, but here in this context, do not give us anything to talk about*…" (CNMH, 2019a, 90).

[110] This point was reaffirmed to the author in multiple expert interviews in 2020 and 2021.
[111] Of course, such an expectation was not only unjust but also impossible to meet. Two gay men caught intimately in a private space were still murdered by the paramilitary who intruded on their private moment in Puerto Boyacá (CNMH 2019a, 191).

The process of social cleansing of LGBT people in Puerto Boyacá was framed through a moral order aligned against subversion. The violence perpetrated by this group was not hidden but rather admitted to in a way to demonstrate their authority and legitimize their violent pursuit of a moral order. In a town already aligned with much of these values—particularly after a violent history of guerrilla victimization—these acts of social cleansing reified an existing anti-subversive conservativism in the region that cleaved LGBT people from the body politic. As such, the violence committed by the AUC-PB can be tied to the process of social abjection because of how their brutal anti-LGBT violence was effectively framed around moralizing and dehumanizing narratives that legitimized paramilitary violence and further reinforced the marginalization of LGBT people.

This process of social cleansing can be applied to Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood's (2017) patterns of violence approach in a manner that establishes a routine approach tied to social cleansing (see Figure 31 for a summary). Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017) identify four elements to document patterns of violence: repertoire, target, technique, and frequency. As detailed in Chapter 3, I further argue for a fifth element: characteristic. The repertoires used by the AUC-PB were lethal violence, forced disappearance, torture, displacements, and threats. The target were marginalized populations, labelled 'subversives,' including LGBT people, drug users, street prostitutes, accused rapists, ex-criminals, community leaders, and assumed guerrilla sympathizers. The techniques include private violence with high semiotic impact, disappearance, and necroviolence (particularly dismemberment) at a remote site, *transmisores.* For the dead bodies not dropped in the river, they would be left in public settings with a sign that revealed their crime, such as for being a "sinner" or "drug-user." The frequency of these events is hard to assess because the data

is so limited, but the reports were constant for the entirety of Arnubio Triana's tenure between 1994 and 2006. The violent perpetuated by the AUC-PB during their cleansing campaigns could be characterized as brutal, necroviolent and predictable (in the sense that they had a public logic which potential targets could identify).

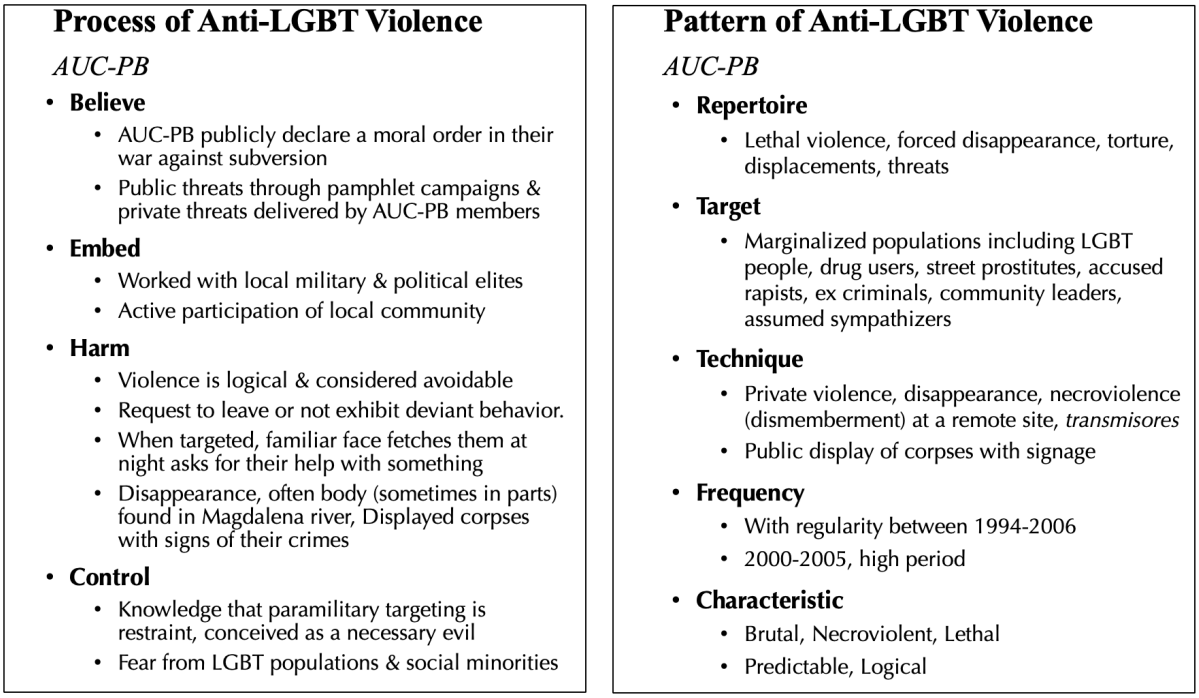


Figure 31: The Process and Pattern of Anti-LGBT Violence by the AUC-PB

6.3 The Factors of Anti-LGBT Violence and Social Cleansing in Puerto Boyacá

The AUC-PB met all the factors needed to conduct a social cleansing form of anti-LGBT violence. From the beginning, they adopted an anti-subversive conservativism that was born in the region. Leaders of the AUC-PB and the lower ranking officials believed that the deviant populations were prone to subversion and thus, a threat to the broader public. The group was also

responding to a broader social conservativism that was aligned against the inclusion of LGBT people. LGBT people were already at the margins of society—often unable to find employment or meaningful inclusion in the community. As such, when the AUC-PB began to mobilize against LGBT populations through social cleansing campaigns they did not find community resistance; in fact, they found community support. The AUC-PB were thus able to embed into an existing conservative political and social structure in Puerto Boyacá that was only strengthened through acts of social cleansing.

The violence against LGBT people in Puerto Boyacá required a level of social intimacy that came from the unique position of the paramilitaries in the town. In Puerto Boyacá, the paramilitaries were from the area and thus, knew everyone. By the time Arnubio Triana took over the AUC-PB in 1994, he was leading the third cohort of paramilitary in town. They had complete control over all social and political infrastructures in the region and were in close coordination with the police and local military brigades (HRW 2001). In an area plagued with insecurity and violence from insurgent groups, their presence was welcome to many (Hristov 2009). The AUC-PB, along with their predecessor organizations, had effectively displaced nearly all guerillas in the region, transforming the region into a conservative heartland (Barón 2011; CNMH 2019a, 2019b; Salinas & Lancheros 2008).

By the 1990s, paramilitarism in Puerto Boyacá had ‘won’ and the region became associated with conservativism that had limited space for political or social contestation. So strong was this association that people from the region who left were often assumed to be paramilitaries (CNMH, 2019a). The contemporary project of Colombian paramilitarism is widely considered to

be founded in Puerto Boyacá, where these civilian defense units and private militias began to organize into political organizations aligned with the state in a war against 'subversion' (Hristov, 2009).[112] By the time the Arnubio Triana took over the AUC-PB in 1994, Puerto Boyacá was already calling itself the capital of anti-subversion in the nation. This successful embedding of paramilitaries into the town produced what I identify as a 'horizontal cleavage' (see Figure 32). In this form of cleavage, both the local elites and broader population aligned with the paramilitaries against 'subversives.' In this form of cleavage, social cleansing became easy to legitimize through an 'us' versus 'them' mentality that justified acts of violence against those associated with 'subversion,' meaning 'deviant' populations. In this context, where paramilitaries were viewed as aligned with the people, their targeted campaigns against social minorities became a form of public service in which they could legitimize their presence, through low-cost, highly visible acts of violence.

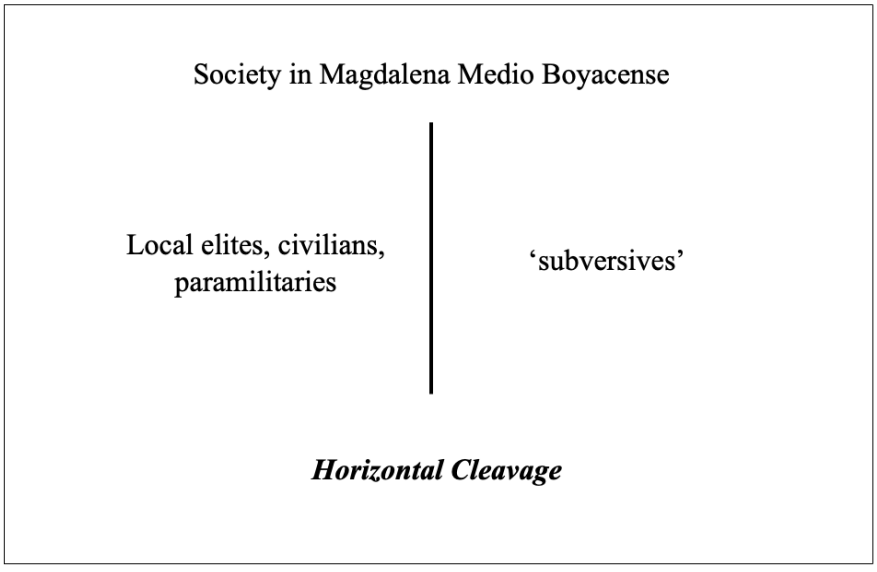


Figure 32: Horizontal Social Cleavage in Puerto Boyacá and surrounding region

[112] Interview, expert, 2020.

During his time as the commander of the AUC-PB, Arnubio Triana ruled over a near uncontested landscape where he and his combatants could focus their efforts on personal enrichment, mostly through drug trafficking and illegal hydrocarbon trade. During this period, Triana still imposed a tight grip on the town, but the violence was restrained in terms of who was targeted. The AUC-PB changed this approach in 2002 when the Álvaro Uribe government, with the support of the US government, began its Democratic Security Initiative which sought to take back the monopoly of violence in the country and curb the illicit drug trade, targeting both guerrilla and paramilitary groups. With this program, paramilitary groups engaged in narcotrafficking such as the AUC-PB became an enemy of the state. Commanders like Triana then transitioned to a warlike posturing where they not only had to take on 'subversion' but also government informants. From 2002, until their demobilization in 2006, the AUC-PB massively increased their civilian victimization with a focus now on both 'vice' and 'government informants.' Still, however, they enjoyed a close relation to the civilian population who, in the wake of state absence, had become dependent on the AUC-PB for much support, including security, education, and justice (Barón, 2011).

6.4 Anti-LGBT Violence and Social Control Efforts in Puerto Boyacá

The second generation of paramilitaries had three forms of operations: base, occupation, and takeover. In Puerto Boyacá, they maintained a base operation. In this sense, they used the town and surrounding region as a 'base,' where they could rest comfortably knowing that this landscape was relatively uncontested. In a base operation, they could attempt to extend their

influence to other regions but focused on other activities such as maintaining the right strategic environment to facilitate their control and enrich themselves.

For most of their history, the AUC-PB's fundamental preoccupation was subversion, which meant guerrilla insurgency. The group had a very clear idea of what facilitated subversion— moral decrepitude, social organizations, and political activism. As a result, the AUC-PB were focused on curbing any behaviors that might contribute to these three categories. They imposed a very strict moral order that was based on conservative values that were seen as foundational to their vision of a Colombia without subversion. A range of social behaviors were banned, but in general, there was a near complete ban on any behaviors that transgressed conservative expectations of one's gender. Men could not wear earrings or have long hair. Women were expected to be largely in the domestic space and banned from wearing miniskirts (CNMH 2019b). For LGBT people, it meant a near total ban on any visible behavior in public life and a constant reminder to be a 'well-behaved faggot.' Even private behaviors were banned if LGBT people were caught, or their behavior was talked about. This extended to intimate sexual relations and drug use (CNMH, 2019a). The AUC-PB forced a regime of regular STI testing of sex workers, both cis and trans, in their quest for moral hygiene (and also to protect their troops who purchased these services).[113]

In their focus on moral impropriety, the AUC-PB had a strong social norm against rape, which went against their proposed moral order and social control strategy— given that rape, while coercive, is unpopular among civilian populations. Throughout Triana's leadership period, rape

[113] Publicly, the AUC-PB banned sex work, but many of combatants bought sex; interview, expert, 2020.

was consistently punished with death—for both civilians and combatants. The norm was so strongly reinforced that even lower ranking paramilitaries of the AUC-PB were aware of it. In 2003, two low-ranking members of the AUC-PB raped a woman and warned her that if she told their commander, they would kill her (Castellanos Roso, 2014). The threat reveals not only that the soldiers were aware of the commander-mandated rules against rape, but they were particularly worried about their commander finding out. In line with Elisabeth Jean Wood's (2018) typology on sexual violence during war, in this context, rape is presented as a practice—meaning it happens because a commander did not have good enough control over his combatants, but not because it was organizational policy. In fact, the opposite was true.

This norm against rape is tied to the AUC-PB strategy. The AUC-PB sought to present themselves as an alternative to the state and so they pursued social control through persuasive and coercive means: they funded schools, threw parties, and cracked down on minor delinquency (Barón 2011; CNMH 2019b). When an elderly woman moved to the region, a group of paramilitaries visited her, gave her their number, and instructed her to call her if she was ever in trouble— they told her that they were more effective than the police and could be there in 15 minutes (CNMH, 2019b). Akin to Stathis Kalyvas' (2006, 2012) control-collaboration model, the paramilitaries most likely wanted to engender support that could then produce informants that shared information. But in AUC-PB, many times they did not even need formal informants. Not only were they hyper present in the town so that they knew everyone, but the community themselves often performed policing. Social cleansing and other selective acts of violence against LGBT people often occurred as a result of community intervention and request, who held prejudicial beliefs about LGBT people and associated them with crime, insurgency, HIV/AIDS,

drugs, prostitution, and other forms of 'moral decay' as a result of the moralizing narratives against them (CNMH, 2019a; Gallego-Montes 2020).

In addition to the focus on sexual and gender behavior, paramilitaries also banned all social organizing and political formations. This ban on non-sanctioned forms of public, social, and political life was a residue of the more contested period of Puerto Boyacá's history in the '60s and '70s when unions and community organizations were often affiliated, even sometimes publicly aligned, with guerrilla organizations. As such any form of community leadership became synonymous with guerrilla insurgency. Again, the AUC-PB were able to monitor this type of behavior closely because of their close relations with civilian populations.

In controlling these three types of behaviors, the paramilitaries were seeking complete control over the public (and sometimes private) lives of the town's inhabitants. During contentious periods, this control over public life focused on mobility: checkpoints in and out of town, curfews at night. These controls were both strategic and ideological. Strategically, it allowed the paramilitaries to nearly dominate the local population and arrange them to minimize resistance. Ideologically, it allowed them to design an artificial social life that represented an idealized Colombia in line with their vision of a righteous and healthy nation. In their controls on social life, controls that civilians knew and followed out of both support for the conservative ideals as well as fear, these paramilitaries were treating the social body of the town as representative of its political body. If the people of Puerto Boyacá acted in a righteous and moral way, they were contributing their part to the war against subversion in the country.

There was a level of hypocrisy to these paramilitary ideals as they installed a moral order, while engaging in drug and hydrocarbon trafficking. AUC-PB paramilitaries also raped, engaged in homosexual activities, bought sex, and committed horrific acts of violence. Publicly at the time and in judicial testimonies later, these actors validated their behavior through the legitimizing rhetoric of war against vice and subversion. But the commitment to this ideology becomes questionable. This ideology created the narrative and the targets of the strategy—remove the undesirables, behave morally. But the combatants themselves did not always act in accordance with these ideals, calling into question the mobilizing capacity of this violence. Most likely, the upper echelon of commanders cared about these ideals and that was enough to instill the norm, but many lower-ranking paramilitaries joined the organization for other more personal reasons: as a form of revenge against the guerrillas or to receive an income.[114] In Puerto Boyacá, the norm mattered because of the close social proximity between combatant and civilian. For over three generations, the AUC-PB and the preceding organizations recognized that much of the community cared and were supportive of these ideals. As noted earlier, the community participated in much of the violence against LGBT people because many actually supported these ideals enforced by the paramilitaries. Leaders in the community, including the church, during this period believed traditional gender roles and the correlation between immorality and communism. Many believed that being gay or transgender was a mental issue and a sin. And from the '80s onwards, many associated LGBT people with HIV/AIDs and drugs, and thus were disgusted by these populations and undergoing their own processes of social abjection (CNMH, 2019a). Thus, acts of social cleansing by the AUC-PB were not just coercive threats, they were also proper acts of securitization that reflected the opinions and beliefs of a 'silent majority.'

[114] Interview, journalist, 2021.

6.5 Conclusion: Anti-LGBT Violence as Social Cleansing

The AUC-PB pursued an approach to social control that sought a transformation of the local environment into a conservative heartland aligned against 'subversion'— perhaps better expressed as an exacerbation of an existing social condition as opposed to a complete social transformation. This approach required anti-LGBT violence to take the form of social cleansing, which relates to the factors identified in Chapter 2. First, the AUC-PB had adopted a socially transformative ideology that recognized the social body of the town as a legitimate focus of wartime efforts. This ideology required them to establish a moral order in which they could publicly frame their desired goal of a population aligned against subversion through the cleansing of any deviant behaviors or identities. Second, the AUC-PB had to socially embed, attempting to achieve high moral and social cohesion with the population. The adopted ideology hooked into an existing social structure that was already prejudiced against 'deviant' behaviors and identities. It would be much more costly for the paramilitaries to attempt to exclude a population already included in the body politic. By focusing their violence on those already excluded, they were more easily able to legitimize their actions and their presence through a moral framing. The paramilitaries also enjoyed high social cohesion, allowing them to socially embed into the local population so that they would have the information and support necessary to conduct social cleansing. Because the target audience is an 'invisible minority', or rather a minority community policed for their behavior, community participation was needed to effectively target.

Social cleansing, thus, becomes a political phenomenon tied to both social control and social transformation during war. Though rooted in ideology, it had strategic potential to legitimize armed actors and demonstrate their violent potential. This conceptualization of anti-LGBT violence as social cleansing recognizes the semiotic importance of its brutality, meaning that this violence was both expressive and instrumental. Brutality became the mechanism for it to achieve this end as it facilitated processes of abjection. Brutality ensured its visibility and social impact. Brutal acts of violence, even if occurring in private, had witnesses. It was talked about in town. It became a warning. And it also facilitated both a personal and social abjection through which witnesses became abhorred by both the gruesomeness of the violence as well as the victims' alleged deviant behavior. The moralizing framings of the paramilitary's violence allowed for a rationalization process that encouraged them to think that to be victimized in such a brutal way meant that the victims must have deserved it. With this rationality established, civilians began to participate in the violence.

It is worth separating social cleansing from other forms of collective violence because of its unique logic. Akin to other forms of cleansing, political and ethnic, it seeks to rid a certain group from an area through collective violence. But different to these forms of violence, this 'cleansing' can take place on a more metatheoretic plane in that some 'deviants' can avoid persecution if they simply cease with their behavior or expression of their identity. Thus, in addition to following a destructive and protective logic, social cleansing also pursues a normative logic. This normative logic might help further explain the expressive importance (further reinforcing the need for brutality) of the violence because in order to enforce norms, it must have semiotic impact.

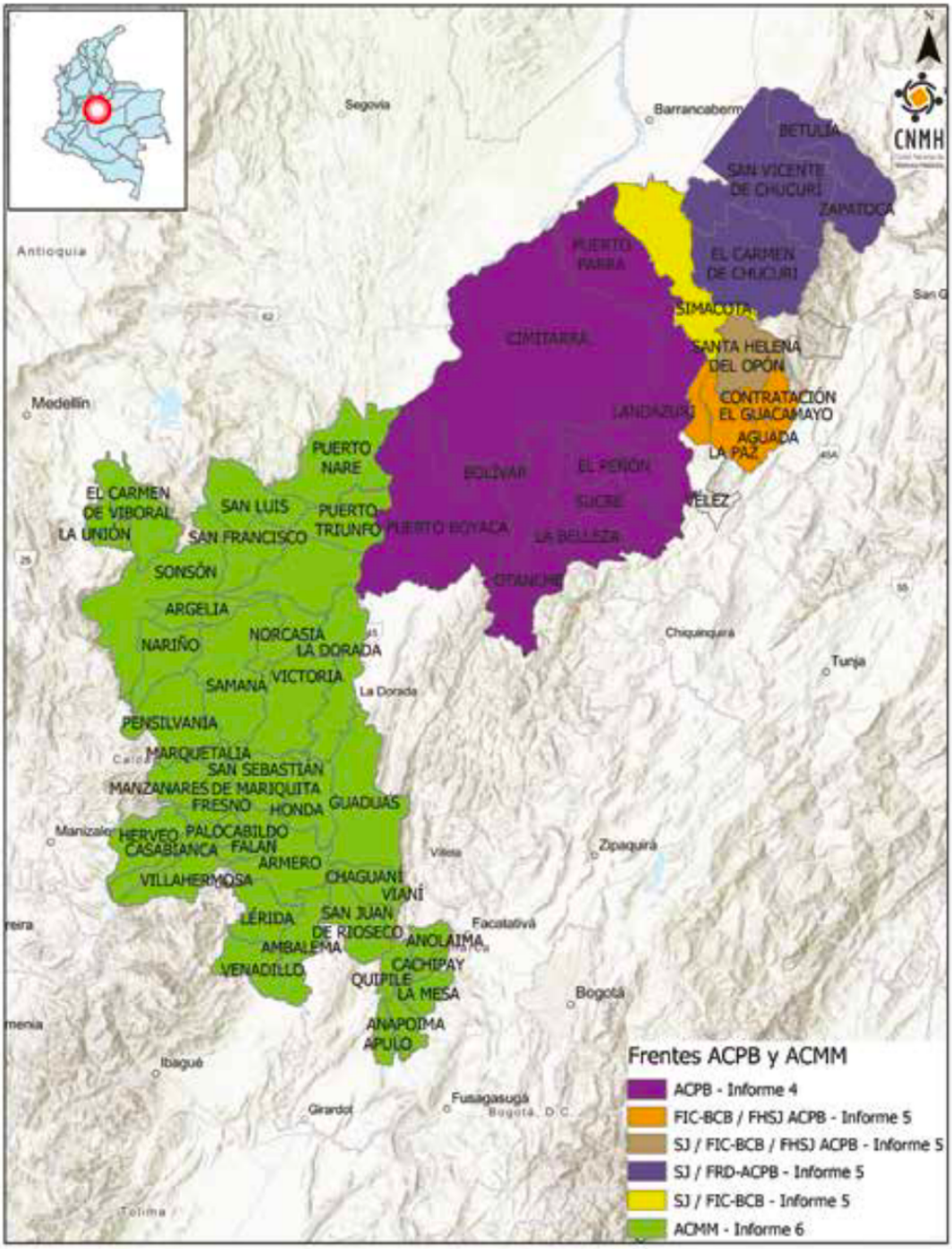


Fuente: Fiscalía 34 de la Unidad Nacional de Justicia y Paz

Figure 33: Transmisores, the torture site of the AUC-PB next to the Magdalena River outside of Puerto Boyacá (image source: CNMH 2019b).



Figure 34: The welcome sign to Puerto Boyacá, "Welcome to Puerto Boyacá, land of peace and progress, anti-subversive capital of Colombia" (image source: Campos 2019).



Fuente: CNMH, elaboración propia, 2019.

Figure 35: Paramilitary fronts in the Magdalena Medio region (image source: CNMH 2019b).

Chapter 7 Social Brutalization in San Onofre and the Montes de María

"*When you kill someone, you already know you have died as well*" – Ex Paramilitary in Colombia[115]

"*With an audience, torture becomes an art, the torturer an author, the onlookers an audience of connoisseurs*" – Susanne Kappeler[116]

7.1 Introduction

Paola, a trans* woman, lived with Marcelina* and Angelika*, two other trans* women, in a little house in the outskirts of El Carmen de Bolívar, a market town in the Montes de María region of Colombia. One day in 2002, a group of men she did not know arrived at her door holding firearms. Given the recent wave of paramilitary activity in the town, she assumed that these men were paramilitaries. They asked to come inside, and Paola knew she had no other option. She opened the door, and they sat around her kitchen table. They asked if she had anything to eat—she offered the little food she had: some rice, meat, and plantains. They accepted, ate, and left.*

The same men came back the next day. After Paola opened the door, they walked right in and sat down again at the table. One of the men approached Paola with a wad of cash and asked her to go to the market to get the ingredients for a specific dish. They also told her and her housemates that "if they behave well, then

[115] (Civico 2016, 77)
[116] (2013)

nothing would happen to them." The men then held a meeting where they compiled a death list of alleged guerrilla supporters in town. Paola headed to the market, returned, cooked, and watched the men eat.

Again, the men returned, but this time after dinner. With alcohol on their breath, they sat around Paola's table and joked with each other. One approached Paola as she cleaned the dishes. He asked if she could find one of her 'friends' to come over. The insinuation was clear—the man was asking for Paola to find a trans woman involved in sex work to come over. When she hesitated for a second, he followed "or it can be you." Shaking, Paola went out and found a friend willing to engage in the transaction. She felt shame for having to bring her friends into this mess and for not being able to warn or protect them.*

The presence of these men in Paola's house lasted for years and as time passed, they grew bolder. While they never physically harmed Paola, there was a psychological harm: an indignity and stress that grated her. She took pills to go to sleep every night to forget what she heard that day. From her kitchen table, these men planned attacks on the town. They scheduled operations where they would target other LGBT people in town. They periodically reminded Paola that if she behaved and did not tell anyone of their behavior, nothing would happen to her, as she later described their comments 'they would not have to hit, rape, or kill me if I obeyed.' Soon, murders began to take place at her house, and she said

nothing as she watched the dead bodies pile into a truck at dawn. She cried often and prayed not to be next. And then one day, they were gone. [117]

Paramilitarism did not arrive to the region of Montes de María until the 1990s with the incursion of the *Bloque Heroes de los Montes de María* ('Heroes of the Montes de María Bloc', AUC-HMM), as part of the broader 'second generation' of paramilitarism in the country that was aided by the CONVIVIR civilian security program. This bloc, though independent with its own commanders (Edward Cobos, *alias Diego Vecino,* and Uber Enrique Banquéz, *alias Juancho Dique*), was organized and commissioned by the bigger Bloque Norte led by Salvatore Mancuso, the top paramilitary leader in the country (Jiménez López 2010). As such, many paramilitaries came originally from other 'paramilitary hotspots' in the country such as Córdoba and Antioquia, and local townspeople recall not knowing who the paramilitaries were in town (UNDP 2010).[118] The paramilitaries arrived to a region famed for its leftist social organizing and with a two-decade-strong guerrilla presence (Porras 2014). Interested in securing a strategic region for narcotrafficking that had a very conservative political elite, who requested paramilitary support, the paramilitaries arrived to an unwelcoming civilian population but a welcoming state (including the police) and political class.

Montes de María is a mountainous subregion of the Northern Colombian coast on the Caribbean Sea that consists of the Sucre and Bolívar departments. The AUC-HMM at their height of power in 2002, based themselves in the town of San Onofre in Sucre and attempted to exert control over

[117] This story was adapted from reports (Caribe Afirmativo 2019, 105) as well as witness and expert interviews in 2020, 2021, and 2022.
[118] Interviews, witnesses, 2022.

the subregion's 350,000 people (Suárez, 2016). In this period, they remained closely aligned with the Bloque Norte which acted as a sort of umbrella organization in the entire North of the country (L. M. González 2014), where there was variation in the level of contestation. Montes de María itself is split into three zones – the coast, the mountain, and the foothills—and the AUC-HMM developed their three fronts in accordance with each zone. On the coast, the paramilitaries had near complete control and minimal contestation. In the mountain and the foothills, control was much more contested as FARC guerrilla groups embedded themselves in the southern jungle (Suárez 2016).[119]

The landscape of the Montes de María ranges from coastland to fertile plains, jungle, and mountains. The area has been agriculturally productive with the most extensive industries being cattle, palm oil, and tobacco. Narcotrafficking groups took an interest in the region in the 1990s because the area was between two zones of great importance. First, it was right above the coca fields in southern Bolívar and Bajo Cauca (Antioquia). Second, it was on a sleepy coastline West of Cartagena with limited surveillance. These two factors meant the region was useful for the transportation and export of drugs. Furthermore, the political conditions of an absent state and very powerful (and corrupt) political elite in a contested zone, meant that the narcotraffickers and the paramilitaries could make easy inroads. The region does not have any big cities, El Carmen de Bolívar is the biggest at 70,000 people, but still a few hours' drive from Cartagena and Barranquilla.

[119] See Figure 39 at the end of this chapter for a map of the region by municipality and Figure 40 for a map of the region by zone.

This chapter considers the anti-LGBT violence practices, recognized as *social brutalization*, of the second generation of paramilitaries in San Onofre and the broader Montes de María region, the AUC-HMM, from 1994 to 2006. During this time, the group was led by Commander Rodrigo Mercado Pelufo, alias *La Cadena* ('the chain') and Lieutenant Commander, Marco Pérez Guzman, alias *El Oso* ('the bear'), in San Onofre and the broader coastal area. During the AUC-HMM's reign in Montes de María, it was a contested landscape where the group had very limited legitimacy. At the time, the paramilitaries were aligned with local political elites, but not with the broader population. As such, the group did not have broad networks in the region, could not socially embed with the local population, and had to rely on extreme forms of coercive violence, such as massacres, in collaboration with the police and the state military. The group tried to establish a moral order, but with limited buy-in from the population, they had to rely on very repressive tactics that were so strict as to banning women from talking on the street for fear of gossip (CNMH 2011). They used the language of social cleansing and selectively targeted LGBT populations in a manner akin to social cleansing, but the violence was more public, more torturous of the living, and harder to predict.

This chapter frames the anti-LGBT violence by the AUC-HMM as a different form of collective violence referred to as *social brutalization*. It considers the process, practice, and factors of social brutalization in order to clarify its difference from social cleansing, but also reveals a fundamental mechanism of spectacular and brutal violence: its capacity to control populations and transform social relations.

7.2 The Process and Pattern of Anti-LGBT Violence in San Onofre

Paola's story of enforced servitude represents many of the dynamics of paramilitary violence against LGBT people in the Montes de María subregion of Colombia. Here, the AUC-HMM utilized a combination of lethal and non-lethal violence to brutalize the local population into submission. According to data from the Colombian Government, the most reported repertoires of violence were threats and sexual violence. The second most reported were torture and murder. Survivors and witnesses of violence in the region detail a unique pattern of violence that included public forms of humiliation and degradation, among other spectacles.

When the paramilitaries arrived in Montes de María, they immediately started to target LGBT people with threat campaigns. Pamphlets began to appear throughout the town listing the names of LGBT people and threatening them with death unless they left. As one LGBT person in the region described, "*Since we did not leave, we received those damn papers in our houses: 24 hours to abandon your life, your friends, your family, everything. We were very afraid that they would kill us, just as they killed so many of our peers*." LGBT people also began to receive phone calls and threats like, "*they were going to fill us with lead so that we would think about the coffin",* and *"they were going to send to kill us like some dogs" (*Caribe Afirmativo 2019, 50). If any recipients of threats went to the local authorities to report the threat, the authorities would ask for their phone number to register their complaints. At night, the same victims would receive phone calls from anonymous numbers informing them that they knew of their trip to the local authorities and again threatening their life.[120] From these threats, LGBT people began to

[120] Interview, witness, 2022.

understand that, to survive, they would have to avoid the paramilitaries at all costs. As one interlocutor explained to me, "they did not want to see us [LGBT people] in public spaces."[121]

Sexual violence was a key element in the pattern of violence in Montes de María. As established in a court case of one of the AUC-HMM paramilitary commanders, paramilitary leadership made it clear that the go-to punishment for cis and heterosexual women and LGBT people should be torture and sexual violence as opposed to fines and forced labor for cis and heterosexual men (Blanco Blanco 2018). Reports from the region detail the various, horrific acts of sexual violence perpetrated against the community as a form of punishment. Throughout the region, paramilitary leaders maintained locations to perpetrate these horrific crimes—farms outside major urban areas and even sites within town (Suárez 2016). One of the paramilitary commanders used a shed at the entrance of his farm where he would keep victims locked up for days.[122] A trans* woman reported that she was raped and forced to perform sexual acts multiple times and during these episodes, the paramilitary said to her "*miserable faggot, bastard*" and "*this is what you like*." Other victims reported more gender-specific harassment during acts of sexual violence such as lesbian and trans* men hearing "*I'm going to make you a woman, you butch bitch,*" and a trans* woman hearing "*you're not even a woman*" (Caribe Afirmativo 2019, 101-102; Comisión de la Verdad 2022). This commentary during a sexual assault reinforced the notion to the victims that they were being targeted, even punished, for their sexual orientation and gender identities.

Tied to the act of sexual violence was kidnapping. Many times, LGBT people would be picked up by a truck while they were out in public. This truck would then bring them to another place,

[121] Interview, witness, 2022.
[122] See Figure 38 at the end of this chapter for a photo of the entrance gates of Perez's farm, *el Palmar*.

such as the aforementioned and highly feared farms, where they would be raped, beaten, and/or brutalized. Townspeople began to give these places nicknames, with the most feared being the *la última lágrima* ('the final tear'), a spot near a paramilitary commander's farm where people went and never came back (Caribe Afrimativo 2019; Comisión de la Verdad 2022; Fernández 2007).[123] In these acts of sexual violence and kidnapping, there were additional elements of cruelty and brutality. The paramilitaries made it clear they wanted the victim to suffer during the affair. Sometimes the person was beaten prior to the rape, other times the sexual episode was made to be even more uncomfortable. In El Carmen de Bolívar, the paramilitaries used plastic bags and potato chip bags as condoms (Caribe Afirmativo 2019). After the kidnapping, if the person survived and was not killed, then they would normally be dumped on a public street, half-dressed and wounded. The person would then have to somehow get home and many, shortly after, would leave town, as they understood the rape as a sign of worse to come.

AUC-HMM violence had punitive and performative elements to it. The most famous act of violence against the LGBT population is the opening anecdote of this dissertation's introduction: the boxing match where gay men and trans* women were forced to box in order to 'restore their masculinity' (CNMH 2011; Fernández 2017). This notorious event was the first of many boxing matches held at the paramilitary commander's farm and in subsequent episodes, rapes of those forced to box also occurred in front of a smaller 'public' (CNMH, 2015). The spectacular nature of this violence meant that it was on everyone's radar. One interlocutor recalled hearing about the corpse of a trans* woman found hanging in a tree while at high school in a town in Montes de María.[124] Another interlocutor recalled a military helicopter flying over the nearby town of El

[123] Interview, witness, 2022.
[124] Interview, witness, 2022.

Salado and dropping pamphlets with the name of LGBT people and the insignia of the AUC-HMM, the interlocutor recounts "*They named people who were part of the LGBTI community. They said they were going to kill them for being gay, that they were going to kill them for not being part of mainstream society.*"[125] In response to such public and violent reminders of their difference, many LGBT people did not leave their homes. The violence was so constant and targeted that many isolated and cut themselves off from the community. A recent commentary with an interlocutor remembered that period as similar to the pandemic, "*I quarantined inside, and my mom had to bring me everything I needed. I was afraid to even look out the window*."[126]

In Montes de María, the paramilitaries committed to a spectacle of violence that was horrifying in its nature. Acts of sexual violence against women and LGBT people as well as humiliating forms of violence against LGBT people became an established pattern that served as a strategy of the group in line with Elisabeth Jean Wood's (2018) conception of rape as a 'policy.' Their actions did not match the standard routines of anti-LGBT violence as social cleansing and took on a new form of violence against social difference that I label social brutalization. Stathis Kalyvas (2006) argues that violence during war initiates a process of "generalized brutalization" or a broader pattern of violent acts that transgress prewar social norms surrounding bodily integrity and violence. Combatants during war then become brutalized and more prone to violence because of this process of desensitization. I add that living under such regimes of violence has an impact on civilians as a result of these processes of abjection and thus, social brutalization refers to violence that reconfigures the social norms of a population living in highly violent contexts. Social brutalization creates a personal abjection because of how the illogical,

[125] Interview, witness, 2022.
[126] Interview, witness, 2022.

gruesome violence produces horror and disgust in the population. This violence does not achieve social abjection, however, because there were no justificatory moralizing narratives for this violence that could legitimize it and reinforce the difference of the targeted community. The lack of restraint in targeting, meant that non-LGBT people, particularly women, were also fearful of being targeted and as such, could not reassure themselves by focusing on their difference, or rather, the safety that comes with not being LGBT.

Considering the patterns of anti-LGBT social brutalization helps establish its difference from anti-LGBT social cleansing (see Figure 36). The repertoires used by the AUC-HMM were sexual violence, public humiliation, lethal violence, torture, enforced servitude, and threats. The targets were broadly women as well as marginalized populations including LGBT people, street prostitutes, community leaders, assumed sympathizers. The techniques included spectacular stigmatizing violence, such as the public boxing matches, as well as sexual violence, torture, and lethal violence occurring at a remote site such as the farm, *El Palmar.* Similar to the case of Puerto Boyacá, the frequency of these events is hard to assess because the data is so limited, but the reports were constant for the entirety of Perez's tenure between 1996 and 2004. The violence perpetuated by the AUC-HMM during their attempted cleansing campaigns could be characterized as brutal, spectacular, sexual, and unpredictable (in the sense that they did not have a perceivable logic which potential targets could identify).

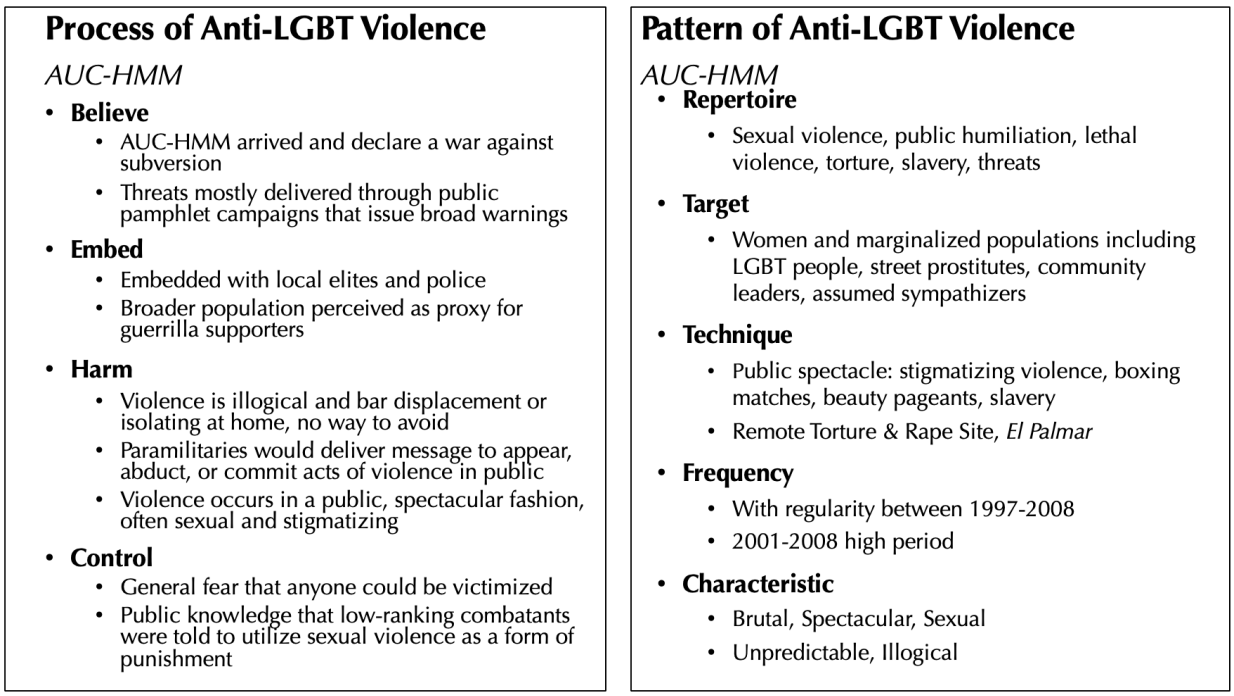


Figure 36: The Process and Pattern of Anti-LGBT Violence by the AUC-HMM

7.3 The Factors of Anti-LGBT Violence and Social Brutalization in San Onofre

Montes de María has been the site of one of the strongest class struggles in Colombia. Nearly all development in the region came from largescale agriculture with the support of the state. As such, the region's development was privatized and coordinated to best serve business interests. This dynamic produced a large *campesino* class that worked these farms to survive. In the 1960s and 70s, these *campesino* classes began to organize in reaction to the elite capture of the region's economy. The *Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos* (ANUC), *Línea Sincelejo* became one of the strongest labor organizations in the country and inspired a push for land reform in the region. The collective action of the *campesino* class reinforced a strong sense of cohesion of this group and also led to a 'mini cold war' with the elite business class, who had captured the political system. In this 'mini cold war,' the ruling class viewed these *campesinos* as subversive

insurgents, further entrenching this social cleavage (UNDP 2010). Beyond a class politic, there was also a racial politic at play. Montes de María, as well as the broader Caribbean coast, has one of the country's largest Afro-descendent populations. These populations were underrepresented in the elite ruling class and overrepresented in the *campesino* class. Within the *campesino* class, there was general respect for racial diversity, but such tolerance was horizontal, not vertical, in terms of class structure. While within the *campesino* class there were high levels of racial integration (and many people identify as Afro-descendent, regardless of skin color), this integration, representation, and respect for diversity were not seen in the local elites (CNMH 2011; CNMH 2015; UNDP 2010).

At the same time of this large-scale class mobilization, guerrilla groups began to form in the region. These guerrillas included national groups like the FARC, as well as small, local groups. Though the ANUC publicly rejected the guerrillas, the guerrillas still found support among some of the local population. In the early 1990s, many of these smaller guerrilla groups signed a disarmament agreement with the Colombian government, where their number one condition was more government-sponsored social investment in the region. In their absence, the FARC moved in and took near control over the jungle regions in the region's South and East, which had very little state presence and was hard to access (UNDP 2010). During this time, the FARC continued its pattern of civilian victimization, which focused on extortion and kidnapping as well as the violent targeting of public institutions, such as police stations and army barracks. In response to this threat, and with the support of the government regional security initiative CONVIVIR, ranchers and other political elites raised civilian defense units that had a presence in the region, but they did not formally mobilize until 1996 when there began a national mobilization of

paramilitary groups in the country which eventually became the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), with a bloc in the region established as the AUC-HMM (Fernández 2017).

The paramilitaries maintained their alliance with the business and political elite, which extended this conception that the *campesino* class of Montes de María were all leftist guerrilla supporters. As one interlocutor from a town in the region shared, "*People could not say that they were from [town] because that meant they were guerrillas*."[127] To rid the region of subversion, the paramilitaries pursued a 'scorched earth' campaign where they publicly announced their targeting of guerrillas, but then collectively targeted the entire civilian population. The region became one of the most violent in the nation, where civilians have shared that they were victimized by the paramilitaries, the guerrillas, police, and the state military.[128]

This inability of the AUC-HMM to embed resulted from a 'vertical cleavage' that existed in the society (see Figure 37). In this form of cleavage, the local elites and the paramilitaries aligned not only against 'subversives' but also the broader population, which they viewed as sympathetic to subversion. Anti-LGBT social cleansing became impossible because the paramilitaries were unable to receive the necessary information to discriminately (or collectively) target and the realm of targets was also too broad to be easily justifiable. In this context, where paramilitaries were viewed as aligned against the people, their targeted campaigns against social minorities began to extend to all populations that they considered to be a threat to their anti-subversive conservative ideology, including women. As a result, the paramilitaries pursued highly brutal spectacular violence that attempted to reflect an alleged moral ordered aligned against subversion

[127] Interview, witness, 2022.
[128] Interview, witness, 2022.

in order to coerce the local population into submission. This violence was highly visible, stigmatizing, and costly in its attempt to transform (and reform) the local population. Its horrific nature caused a process of personal abjection but did not facilitate a social abjection due to a lack of moralizing frameworks. When the state publicly turned against the paramilitaries and narcotrafficking under Uribe's Democratic Security Initiative, many of the AUC-HMM leadership resisted the disarmament deal and had to be captured in 2004 and 2005 (Blanco Blanco 2018). The AUC-HMM remained a consistent presence in the region until 2008, well after its formal demobilization, and only ceased its practices when it became absorbed into another BACRIM in the region (Comisión de la Verdad 2022).

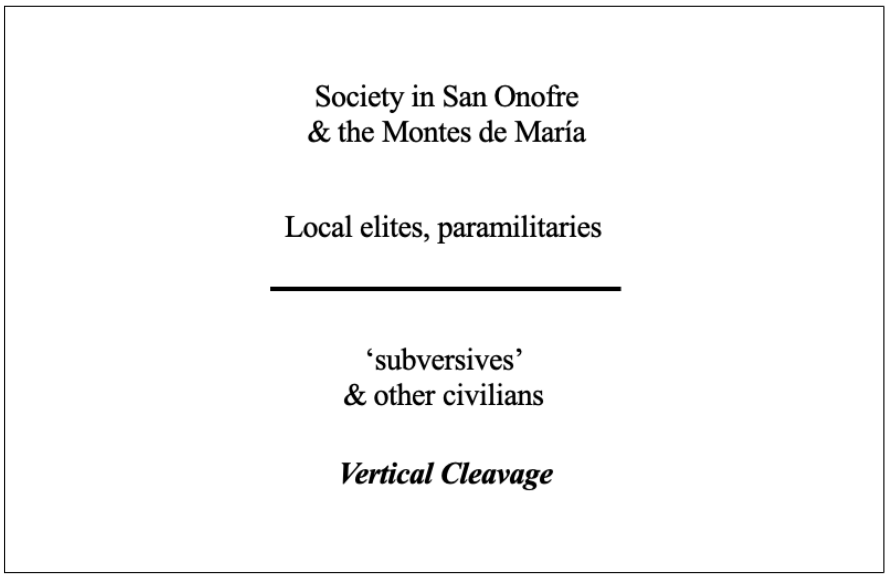


Figure 37: Vertical Social Cleavage in San Onofre and surrounding region

7.4 Anti-LGBT Violence and Social Control Efforts in San Onofre

The AUC-HMM engaged in two forms of paramilitary operation in Montes de María: occupation and takeover. In an occupation setting, the armed actors maintained a constant presence in the region and sought to exert control over a population they deemed at best, persuadable, and at worst, hostile. In this type of operation, violence was used to dominate in order to effectively control the population and curb any dissidence. It took both an offensive and defensive posturing. This type of operation was present mostly in the coastal zone of Montes de María (in the Sucre department, including San Onofre) and to an extent in the urban areas of the mountain zone (in the Bolívar department, including El Carmen de Bolívar). In a takeover operation, the paramilitaries were on the offensive, trying to establish control in a zone they perceived as guerrilla-controlled or supportive of insurgency. The paramilitaries used highly coercive violence in takeover operations, including massacres. For the AUC-HMM, their focus was gaining control of key towns in the mountain zone, and some in the foothills zone, which they saw as the gateway for the FARC to enter the region (Porras 2014; Suarez 2006; CNMH 2011).

The AUC-HMM strategy to maintain and take control involved brutal violence. In areas of occupation, they meted out public acts of violence as a form of punishment for any misbehavior that they perceived to be tied to subversion. These perceptions took gendered and sexualized forms in the public space. Women were banned from gathering in public for fear of gossip (CNMH 2011). Men had to have short hair and no earrings. LGBT people were banned from any public display of their sexuality and gender identity (Fernández 2017). Any type of social

organizing was banned (UNDP 2011). The AUC-HMM enforced these rules through public forms of humiliation and more intimate forms of violence. This violence was often framed in a punitive discourse, the paramilitaries were doing it to punish the victim for a perceived infraction, which was often tied to identity (Blanco Blanco 2018; Manrique Rueda 2020). Homophobic, transphobic, and racist commentary by the paramilitaries framed many of their violent episodes (Fernández 2017). In assessing the pattern of violence, two elements become clear: its spectacular and sexual nature.

The AUC-HMM performed a lot of violence that meets Lee Ann Fujii's (2013, 2021) conception of extra-lethal violence as well as violence on display. Rather than commit just the level of harm required to complete the act, they would often incorporate a particularly cruel or brutal element in a public manner. Beyond threatening and beating LGBT people in order to control them, public boxing matches were organized to humiliate them (and sometimes out them) in front of the town (CNMH 2015; Fernández 2007). The boxing matches produced an offense in a unique local way for two reasons: first, the local sports department helped arrange them, revealing the capture of local political institutions by the paramilitaries, and second, this region was famed for its boxing culture and as such, the paramilitaries were now weaponizing that culture (and source of pride for the community) against the LGBT community. Acts of sexual violence often had brutal elements including a common practice of kidnapping a person and locking them in a shed for days (Suárez 2016). Destructive and painful objects, such as broomsticks and bottles, would be used during episodes of rape. After the rape, the victim would be left naked in public place—sometimes even tied up. The public element of this violence, as well as its sexual nature, produced a stigma and shame that these victims carried long after the act ended (Caribe

Afirmativo 2019; Comisión de la Verdad 2022).[129] The cruel and unusual elements of this violence were standard in areas of occupation and through court cases and paramilitary admissions, it was clear that the orders to use rape as a punishment and target LGBT people came from the very top of the chain of command (Blanco Blanco 2018; González 2014). In takeover zones, this public form of sexual violence and cruelty still occurred but along with more collective lethal violence, such as massacres. For example, in 2000, paramilitaries committed acts of rape and torture in public places like a soccer field over a five-day period during the massacre of 60 people in El Salado, a town which was thought at the time to be a guerrilla base in the foothills zone (Suarez 2016, 2022).

These forms of brutal anti-LGBT violence had a massive impact on Montes de María society. While Montes de María may have been considered a socially conservative or 'homophobic' region, the region with its rich history of activism, also had a public and present gay life in the 1990s, where drag shows took place and some LGBT people lived out and proud.[130] Visibility placed a target on the back of this population, as the paramilitaries could target them easily and use them to signal messages to a broader population. Baca and Villamil (2021) refer to this dynamic as the 'ripple effect,' where one or two selective acts of stigmatizing violence against a visible minority had a broader impact despite the relatively limited number of targets. Public humiliations of this population would thus be recognized by the entire town and not necessarily a welcome event. Rather than simply controlling and regulating life, these acts of violence ruptured the town's spirit and subjugated the population.[131] Despite a history of public life,

[129] Interview, witness, 2022.
[130] Interview, witness, 2022; Interview, expert, 2020.
[131] Despite its impacts on public life, resistance did take place within the region—often at great risk to those involved (CNMH 2011, 2015; Zulver 2022).

LGBT people stopped going outside for fear of being the next victim (Caribe Afirmativo 2019).[132] They knew that they did not have to do anything to be victimized; their identity was enough. Many cis and heterosexual women too, though targeted in less public ways, also refrained from engaging in public life out of fear of sexual violence. Being victimized meant not only recovering from a violent act, but it also meant carrying a shame and stigma that transformed one's social relations (Fernández 2017; CNMH 2015). As a result, many residents from this region speak of the death of public life and the rupture of the social fabric during this period (UNDP 2010).[133] Very few speak positively of any armed actors, let alone the paramilitaries, police, and state military, whom they view as aligned and responsible for much of the victimization, particularly for the most horrific acts.[134]

This violence, though similar to social cleansing in whom it targets and its relation to counterinsurgency, differed in the dynamics of anti-LGBT violence. It marks a different form of anti-LGBT violence, that I call social brutalization, which uses cruelty and spectacle to not only coerce a population to leave, but also to stigmatize and horrify them into a form of submission that diminishes social life. As a result, social brutalization becomes a form of violence that represses through brutal violence in order to begin a process of social transformation through personal abjection, which results in the breakdown of established social norms. In the wake of these socially brutal campaign, a town's social life is forever transformed.[135]

[132] Interview, witness, 2022.
[133] Interviews, witnesses, 2022.
[134] Interviews, witnesses, 2022.
[135] Massacres and other spectacular events of extra-lethal violence might also be considered forms of social brutalization because of how they forever transform the social environment of a town. After the massacre of El Salado, the town's population never recovered because of traumatic associations (Janetsky & Stallone 2021).

7.5 Conclusion: Anti-LGBT Violence as Social Brutalization

The AUC-HMM sought social control through the transformation of a hostile local environment, already infected with 'subversion,' into a pacified occupied territory that followed the tenants of an anti-subversive conservative moral order. This approach varied with the anti-LGBT social cleansing efforts of the AUC-PB because of its different relation to the factors identified in Chapter 2. The AUC-HMM did have the first factor in that they adopted a socially transformative ideology which focused on the social body of a location as a central focus of their wartime exploits. They framed their actions in the veil of a moral order but then the leaders of the paramilitaries themselves did not necessarily commit to public morality given that they adopted stigmatizing, morally devoid forms of civilian victimization, particularly sexual violence. Without this commitment to a moralizing justificatory framework, the AUC-HMM failed to social embed as they did not achieve high levels of moral cohesion or social cohesion. Without this embeddedness, they could not effectively hook into an existing social structure of exclusion. In Montes de María, there was a strong history of social movements and public LGBT life. Thus, in their targeting of LGBT people, community leaders, and women, they were targeting groups that were not necessarily excluded from the body politic. As such, this violence was not particularly legitimizing and, instead, was quite costly. Finally, the paramilitaries did not achieve high social cohesion with the local community because they only embedded with elites and as such, viewed the entire community as aligned with subversion. This meant that the entire community felt they could become targets of violence and as such, the majority did not cooperate with the paramilitaries. This violence, then, was effective in transforming the local landscape and

producing social control through coercion, but it was not a legitimizing exercise for the paramilitaries.

Given how different this anti-LGBT violence looked from the social cleansing efforts in Puerto Boyacá and the Magdalena Medio Boyacense, it is not apt to describe it as social cleansing. Further, this violence was not particularly effective in socially cleansing only certain identities and behaviors, given that the range of targets was so widespread. It might have produced displacement and certain groups might have been more likely to leave given the public threats, but in essence the displacement was collective. Still, this violence was unique from much of the violence witnessed throughout the Colombian civil war, given its mix of brutality, spectacle, and public acts of humiliation. This anti-LGBT violence links to social cleansing in that brutality seems to be a central mechanism, but here brutality is mixed with spectacle and cruelty to produce a different political phenomenon. Social brutalization efforts by the AUC-HMM caused widespread personal abjection in the population but did not cause social abjection against LGBT people. This violence was disruptive in its horrific potential. It turned neighbors into strangers and silenced many in the wake of stigmatizing acts of violence that went against any moral codes. It represented well the metaphor used to describe it: this was a violence used to rupture a tightly knit social fabric.

Social brutalization thus becomes a form of collective violence that transforms social environments through brutal and spectacular acts of violence. This violence further differs from social cleansing and other collective forms of violence in that though it may target certain collectives over others, it is not necessarily destructive, protective, or normative. Instead, this is a

violence that is repressive and predatory violence that seeks to repress communities into submission through illogical stigmatizing acts of violence that breakdown social relations because of how they produce shame. It is in this unique conceptualizing of a collective, yet somewhat indiscriminate, violence, that the paramilitary practice of massacres can become better considered. Massacres follow a similar logic of collectively targeting an entire population for their association with subversive behaviors. Social brutalization thus becomes a form of collective violence, perhaps more indiscriminate than other forms of collective violence, that can facilitate a process of personal abjection to large swaths of society that must live in the wake of its trauma.



Puerta de entrada a El Palmar. Colectivo de Comunicaciones de Montes de María para CNMH, 2016.

Figure 38: Entrance Gate to the El Palmar Farm, AUC-HMM base where acts of sexual violence and torture took place (CNMH 2016 image source:)

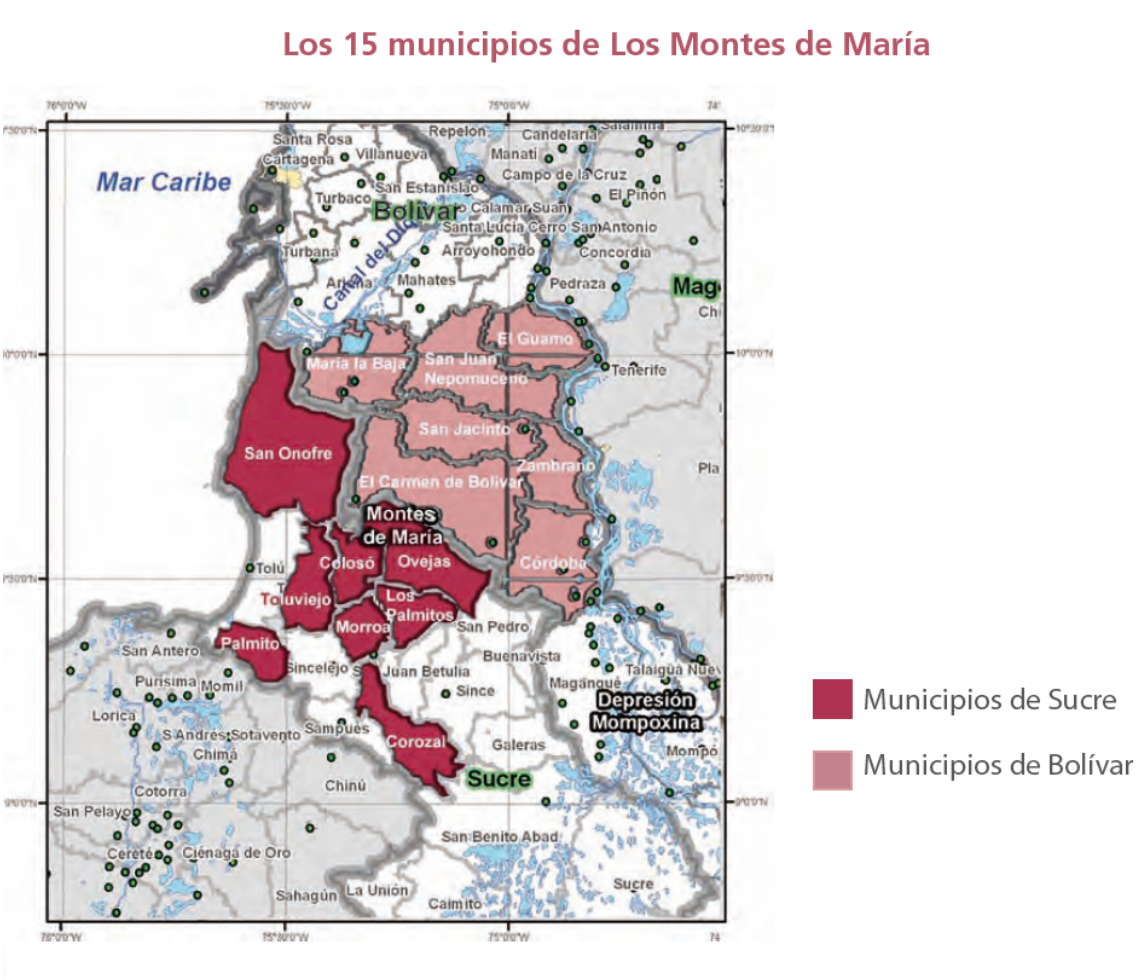


Figure 39: Municipalities in the Montes de María region (image source: UNDP 2010).

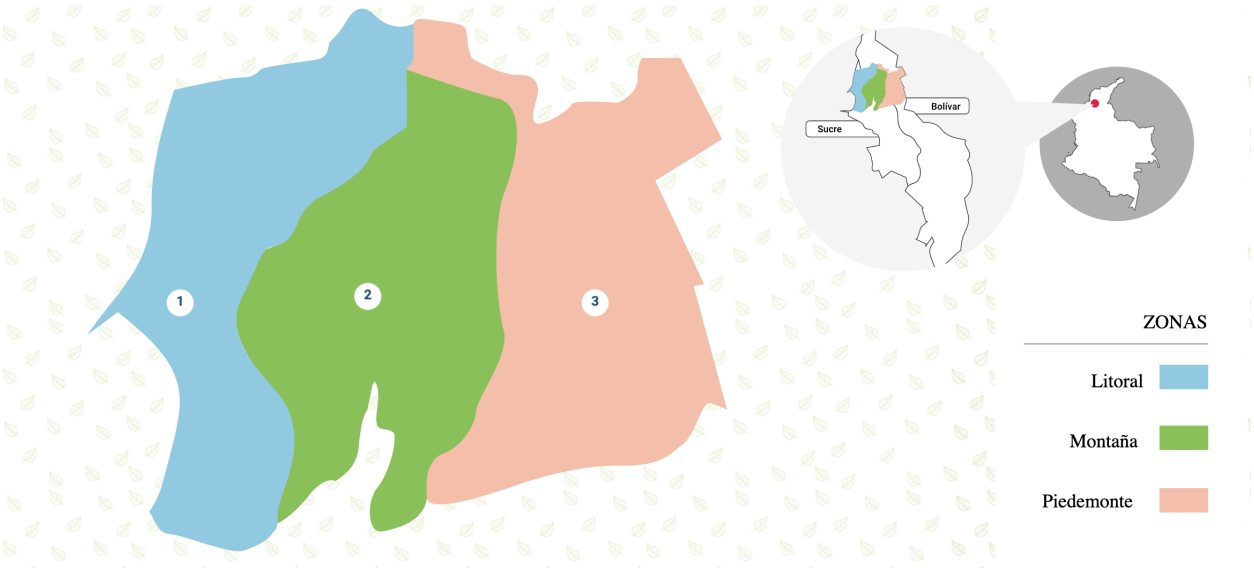


Figure 40: Zones of the Montes de María Region (image source: Suárez 2016).

Chapter 8 Conclusion

"*Hay un future, si hay verdad*" – Comisión de la Verdad[136]

"*Trust is the last thing people relinquish in war*" - Juanita Leon[137]

Nearly twenty years after the peak of paramilitarism in Colombia, I find myself at a community center for the LGBT community in Montes de María. I am here on assignment for a potential journalistic piece about the region's LGBT community today. It is a very hot day, and I am straining to hear Cami over the whir of the fan. Cami, a 30-year-old gay man, is telling me about his journey to activism as he does his makeup. He is giving himself a full beat: eye shadow, eye liner, lipstick, highlighter. I am impressed by how his makeup stays so immaculate in this heat as my own sweat carries my sunscreen into my eyes. More impressive than his contouring game, however, is Cami's story of resistance. After years of threats and violence, Cami turned to traditional dance as a way to resist the control that the paramilitaries, guerrillas, and state forces had exerted over his life. Now part of a prominent queer dance troupe that has performed all over the country, Cami is getting ready with a few friends to put on a little drag show in town. I ask Cami if his outspokenness and advocacy put him at risk. In the wake of the 2016 peace deal with the FARC, there has been a renewed level of violence against social leaders in Colombia's 'periphery territories', areas with limited state presence and links to armed actors. Cami responds, "We know that the [narcotrafficking] groups are here, but so far, they have left us alone."*

[136] ('There is a future, if there is truth').
[137] (2009, 117)

As we speak, beaming nearby is Cami's friend, Yeraldín, a renown women's rights activist in the region. A survivor of sexual violence during an infamous paramilitary massacre in a nearby town, Yeraldín has transformed the stigmatizing politic of paramilitary rape by reclaiming the title of 'survivor' as a framework for mobilizing the region's women. Unfortunately for Yeraldín, the success of her advocacy has made her a target for the nearby narcotrafficking group, el Clan de Golfo, who send her threats daily. With the support of two armed bodyguards provided by the government, Yeraldín continues her work on behalf of the women of Montes de María and has been essential in establishing an alliance between feminist organizers and the LGBT community. A few months after my visit to this town, Yeraldín's house was lit on fire.*

8.1 Introduction

Optimistic observers of Colombia label this current period of the country's history as 'post-conflict.' But as evidenced from Yeraldín's story, violence remains a constant presence in many people's lives. The government human rights ombudsman recently shared that at least 145 social leaders were killed in 2021 with many of their murders linked to existing armed groups (BBC 2022). In the wake of the continued victimization of activists, the relative peace felt by Cami and the broader LGBT community in this Montes de María town presents an interesting puzzle. Why are the next generation of armed actors in Colombia targeting a feminist activist but not a queer one? If one were to consider past victimization trends in the region, one would expect both groups to be targeted. But in today's Colombia, that is not the case. While answering this modern-day puzzle in Colombia is beyond the purview of this dissertation, the puzzle's existence reaffirms the importance of this dissertation's contribution.

To date, much of the theorization of anti-LGBT violence in Colombia has been to focus on its occurrence and less on its variation. These approaches have recognized this violence as a form of gender-based violence to the point where the government Truth Commission report chapter on gender-based violence is split into two sections: violence against women and violence against LGBT people (Comisión de la Verdad 2022). However, as this dissertation has shown, a focus on variation can reveal subtle logics tied to anti-LGBT violence and reinforce the need to analyze this phenomenon as a distinct matter of politics. The absence of anti-LGBT violence by armed actors in the aforementioned Montes de María town, along with the continued occurrence of other gender-based violence, becomes an intelligible phenomenon of interest to scholars of political violence when we recognize that anti-LGBT follows a unique logic that does not match perfectly with logics of sexual violence or gender-based violence focused on targeting women. The importance of complicating the concept of gender-based violence and its relation to anti-LGBT violence becomes even more apparent when conducting a paired comparison of the two case study sites.

In what follows, I will conduct a paired comparison of the two case study sites in order to emphasize the three contributions of the dissertation to the broader literature on civil war, beyond those focused on gender-based violence. First, brutality during war can be tied to logics of violence beyond socialization and principal-agent dilemmas. Brutality can have a semiotic component that identifies it as a tool for social control—both in a coercive and justificatory sense—because of its relationship to the processes of abjection. Second, this analysis shows the productive potential of brutal violence to transform the identities of victims. This transformation, often one inferring guilt, can be tied to a socialization process that attempts to legitimize armed

actors to a broader population. This logic of brutality's social effects extends beyond LGBT populations and could potentially be applied to other victimized populations. Third, considering characteristics of violence helps to identify subtle variation that can reveal new logics of war. These logics would be missed if the main variable for analyzing variation in violence is repertoire, such as focusing on just lethal or sexual violence. Given that the same repertoire of violence can be used in different ways, such as a public execution versus one done in private, there is a need to formally conceptualize these 'different ways' in a manner that deepens existing frameworks of analysis.

This conclusion proceeds as follows. First, I will revisit the theoretical framework of the dissertation through a comparison of the two case study sites. Second, I will summarize the argument of the dissertation. Third, I will revisit the contributions of the dissertation in order to reinforce the importance of this subject for scholars of civil war studies and policymakers. And fourth, I will consider the generalizability and scope conditions of the argument by analyzing a limited universe of cases.

8.2 A Paired Comparison of the Case Study Sites

To confront the puzzle of paramilitary violence against LGBT people during the Colombian civil war, I have had to establish two claims: first, that this violence was tied to the politics of war and not just an exacerbation of social prejudice; and second, that this violence occurs as a form of social transformation tied to an anti-subversive conservativism focused on the social body of a

nation. These claims ground an interrogation of this dissertation's puzzle: why does this violence vary in form in different parts of the country?

Variation, as it relates to violence against LGBT people, can be difficult to analyze. First, poor data collection on this population meant that patterns are not necessarily evident from large-N analysis. Second, the variation in this violence might not occur in the most common measure, *repertoire*, but instead in a new measure that I call *characteristic*. From the limited government victimization data and NGO reporting that exists, I identify the most reported repertoires of violence against LGBT people in Colombia to include threats, murder, displacement, sexual violence, and forced disappearance. Though they may be reported separately, these repertoires are not mutually exclusive in practice. An act of sexual violence or a threat can precede displacement. Forced disappearance can result from a homicide.

To accurately consider variation in paramilitary violence, I argue that consideration must be made to not only what types of violence take place, their repertoires, but *how* these types of violence occur, their *characteristics*. The two anecdotes shared at the start of this dissertation, of Andrés and Luz, might only register moderate variation when considering repertoire: both identify threats and torture, while Luz's case would also register homicide and forced disappearance. But such analysis is an inadequate reflection of the difference in the forms of violence that occurred. Andrés' violence was what Lee Ann Fujii (2021) refers to as "violence on display;" it was a spectacular act of violence that had a socio-political impact fueled by shame that Andrés, still living, carries to this day. This impact extends well beyond the temporal conditions of the act itself (Bardall et al. 2020). The act both humiliated him and outed him to his

community. For Luz, her murder happened in private, until her disappearance was noticed, and her corpse discovered by chance. These acts too, of her disposal in the river and the desecration of her corpse, had a socio-political impact in her town, where the horrific treatment of her corpse chilled discussion of her memory. These characteristics, the nature of spectacle in Andrés or the brutal treatment of Luz's corpse, impacted the social relations of the towns where they occurred.

In this dissertation, I argue that the different paramilitaries operating in these regions shaped the characteristics of their violence in relation to their social positions. These armed actors utilized brutal violence against LGBT people to facilitate processes of abjection that transform the social environment of a contested landscape. I argue that the variations in the characteristics of violence result from different phenomena. I typologize these variant approaches to anti-LGBT violence as *social cleansing*, *social brutalization*, and *social prejudice.*

To analyze this variation further and revisit my theoretical framework, I compare my two case studies sites through a "paired comparison" (Tarrow 2010), a political analysis of two cases that differ on the dependent variable. I structure this companion along my theoretical framework. As such, to compare these two cases, I analyze court documents, historical memory efforts, government data, and interviews with LGBT people, witnesses, and former paramilitaries in relation to three elements: the process and pattern of anti-LGBT violence, the factors of anti-LGBT violence, and the social control efforts related to anti-LGBT violence. For each element, I undertake a comparative analysis between the two case study sites.

8.2.1 Paired Comparative Analysis – The Process and Pattern of Anti-LGBT Violence

In the Magdalena Medio Boyacense and Montes de María, LGBT people became the targets of paramilitary violence. In both settings, the violent victimization resulted from a dynamic mix of ideological anti-LGBT beliefs and strategic collective repression. Certain dynamics of this violence appeared similar: violence was often preceded by a threat, produced displacement when non-lethal, and included brutal acts of torture, kidnapping and corpse desecration.[138] Additionally, the violence had a broader social impact on the community where other LGBT people, associates of the victimized person, and the broader population might change their behavior in the wake of its occurrence. Witnessing an act of stigmatizing violence can have a secondary impact that extends the dynamic of victimization beyond the original victim because of the fear of association or the vicarious trauma of proximity (Carpenter 2006; Schulz 2020). In both settings, these acts of violence were legitimized by a war against subversion. Though the accusations of vice were unique to the AUC-PB, both groups stigmatized and dehumanized LGBT people as subversive, degenerate, and a threat to the local community. These public justifications produced a 'grammar of terror' (Suárez-Orozco 1992) where new social rules of wartime occupation became legible and as a result, both LGBT people and the broader population changed their behavior to follow this new order and mitigate risk.

The violence in the two regions differed in its public and sexual nature. The AUC-PB pursued a more private type of violence that was in line with the traditional dynamics of social cleansing. Though the violence was known in the town, and often came with a warning, it would not meet

[138] Threats and corpse desecration are ways that violence against LGBT people in not conflict settings are assessed as prejudice-based or 'hate crimes' (Tomsen 2013).

Lee Ann Fujii's (2021) classification as 'on display.' Nor was this violence sexual in nature (at least when it came to official paramilitary policy). While other paramilitary groups in the Magdalena Medio region utilized sexual violence as a repertoire of repression, the AUC-PB had a strong norm against rape and that is reflected in the patterns of violence. As for the AUC-HMM, the violence they performed was spectacular in nature. The group used public humiliation and torture to target the LGBT population and produce a sense of shame that many survivors carry to this day. Additionally, the AUC-HMM adopted sexual violence as a strategy of domination and meted it out as a form of punishment against LGBT populations and cis and heterosexual women. The orders for this violence came from the very top of the chain of command.

8.2.2 Paired Comparative Analysis – the Factors of Anti-LGBT Violence

Both groups entered a social and political landscape that defined their operations in the region. At different points in their history, the Magdalena Medio and Montes de María region appeared very similar: periphery regions with an absence of the state where landed business elites exerted political dominance that created a large *campesino* underclass. But by the peak of the second wave of paramilitarism in the 1990s, the regions had drastically changed. The Magdalena Medio region had over two decades of paramilitary presence, who during that time made the region hostile to leftist insurgents and their supporters. As a result, the AUC-PB were embedded in a region with limited contestation, using Puerto Boyacá and the surrounding towns as a base. With this embedded nature, the AUC-PB had a social intimacy with the general population that affected their approach to violence. Strong social relations between armed actors and local

populations impacted dynamics of violence because of social networks and local accountability (Carey and Mitchell 2017; Fujii 2009; Goodwin 2006). Given that the paramilitary commanders relied on community support to maintain their base operation, they had to make sure that their violence did not alienate the community. Strong social networks mitigated the types of violence that were possible in Puerto Boyacá even with the violence against 'legitimate target' populations, such as LGBT people.

In the Montes de María, the AUC-HMM were one of the first organized paramilitary groups to arrive in the region that was historically associated with leftist politics and guerrilla presence in the 1990s. As a result, the AUC-HMM operated in a complex environment where they did not have the monopoly on violence and could not easily embed. This contested landscape, and the fact that many of the paramilitaries in the AUC-HMM came from different parts of the country, established a wide social distance between them and the broader population. These groups repeated a historic pattern of a 'mini cold war' where a business and political elite conflated the local *campesino* population as guerrillas and saw them all as legitimate targets of violence. In that context, there was little incentive to curb the form that violence took. Paramilitary commanders ordered highly performative violence that was often sexual in nature in order to subjugate and repress a population into submission. For LGBT people, this violence conflated with existing homophobia in the community to victimize them in a unique and horrific way.

8.2.3 Paired Comparative Analysis – Anti-LGBT Violence and Social Control Efforts

The paramilitaries at the national scale sought to control both territory and people in their war against subversion, and the expansion of their illicit economy-based empire. As such, they attempted to implement a strategy of social control that could satisfy these goals. Ana Arjona (2016) argues that armed groups seek varying levels of social control by establishing a social contract between the group and residents as well as intervening in civilian affairs. Both the AUC-HMM and AUC-PB attempted a high level of social control by controlling both public and private life in their respective regions. All social organizing was banned, as were political organizations. Violence against LGBT populations was often publicly justified as a form of punishment for someone who stepped out of line. This punitive conception of violence reflected a change in the institutions of accountability in these regions, as they became a new arbiter of acceptable public behavior. Megan Stewart (2021) argues that armed actors produce social transformation through the establishment of new institutions, which vary in popularity based on their content and context. The paramilitaries created new social institutions through violence that transformed public and private life. The public justification of a war against subversion legitimized both the acts of violence as well as the actor itself. In attempting to legitimize their violence as a form of punishment, the paramilitaries were exerting themselves as a social arbiter and legitimate political body in the region. In targeting undesirables, such as LGBT people in addition to drug users, sex workers, petty thieves, and associating them with guerrilla insurgency as well as vice they were making a clear case of who should be included in the body politic and who is a threat to it. In contexts around the world, but particularly during the twentieth century Latin American dictatorships, armed actors have utilized physical bodies as a proxy for the

broader social body, which they viewed as malignantly infected with the 'disease' of communism (Fujii 2021; Lessa 2022; Stefatos 2016; Taylor 1997). As such, targeted acts of violence took on a symbolic meaning that had both political and social effects through processes of abjection. Social abjection facilitated by violence against LGBT people established an out group that facilitated a social transformation that was tied to wartime logics.

The AUC-PB and AUC-HMM, however, differed in the types of social transformation they were attempting: this difference had an impact on the type of violence they used. For the AUC-PB, they were trying to reinforce an existing social order aligned with conservative values and hostile to LGBT people. As Prada notes,

> [paramilitaries] drank from the source of their context and incorporated the same adverse dispositions towards those who departed from the heterosexual norm, first individually, then also as part of the project of nation that they tried to impose, although, in everyday life, the same paramilitaries exceeded those norms and were intimately related to gay men and trans women (CNMH 2019a, 87).

As a result, they had to conduct an inclusive form of violence that would not cause defections from the broader population but instead produce a social abjection that reinforced an exclusive body politic. They did so by publicly pursuing a 'moral order', justifying their actions not only in their war against subversion but also in a war against moral decay that led people to communism. This pursuit of a moral order restrained the types of violence that the AUC-PB could use. Rape was banned. Violence that took place in public often had very clear justifications—a dead body on the street would have a piece of paper pinned to it that would say "killed for being a sinner" (Castellanos Roso 2014, 278). This language of morality still had a coercive impact because people knew of these actors' violent potential and experienced personal disgust after witnessing the corpses of victims, but because of its clear moral logic, it was not alienating. Rather, in some

ways it was inclusive, allowing community members to participate by requesting this violence against LGBT people because they perceived it to be an available public good and because they believed in the prejudicial narratives that dehumanized LGBT people.

For the AUC-HMM, they were trying to destroy an existing social order that they perceived to be aligned with leftist insurgency and transform the region into one more conducive to their political project. In their attempts to destroy the social fabric of a society, they sought highly stigmatizing acts of violence that would disrupt people's relations with one another. This stigmatizing violence was often public and sexual in nature. Given the importance of boxing to the region and the participation of the local government sports department in the affair, the use of a public boxing match as a form of public humiliation had a local logic that shamed these forced participants even more: it signaled that a new power was in town that had corrupted local social structures in order to castigate in line with the new paramilitary-imposed social order (Porras 2014). These stigmatizing acts of violence produced a personal abjection that they attempted to connect to a broader cultural narrative that criminalized LGBT identities, beyond any general homophobia and forced women into the domestic space (CNMH 2011). The AUC-HMM justified a lot of their repressive violence as action taken against subversion and insurgency, but they did not use the same language of vice or morality even if they thought of their work as a 'necessary evil' for the national effort against subversion (Manrique Rueda 2020). They did not have the level of social intimacy that could recruit the local population to participate in their project of social transformation. Instead, they sought to subjugate the population into submission through horrific acts of violence that centered brutality and cruelty in order to stigmatize a population deemed subversive. Their horrific violence produced largescale personal abjection

that was effective in repressing the broader population through horror, but without the ability to embed, they did not achieve a social abjection which would have legitimized their presence.

8.3 Summary and Contributions of the Argument

During the Colombian Civil War, paramilitaries throughout the country targeted LGBT people in the context of their war against subversion. While the focus of public analysis has been on documenting and explaining the occurrence of this violence, there has been little attention paid to variations in forms of anti-LGBT violence. At first consideration, paramilitary violence against LGBT people appeared quite constant throughout the nation: a threat, a brutalizing act of violence, and then a displacement or a disappearance. But though the repertoires might be similar, the characteristics of this violence varied greatly depending on the group. As this dissertation has explored, the AUC-PB and AUC-HMM both targeted LGBT people with similar repertoires — but in different ways. From these case studies, as well as the existing literature on collective violence during civil war, I develop a typology to analytically frame these variations in violence. The typology identifies three possible forms of anti-LGBT violence: social cleansing, social brutalization, and social prejudice. I identify two factors which influence the form of anti-LGBT violence chosen: the armed actor's adoption of a transformative ideology and their capacity to socially embed.

The AUC-PB pursued a form of anti-LGBT violence that I label social cleansing—the violence was brutal, but it was private and always publicly tied to a moral order. As a result, the community sometimes joined in on the act, further reifying an existing anti-LGBT social order.

The AUC-HMM differed on this approach, building on a general homophobia that already distanced a visible minority from the body politic, but incorporating more elements of violence on display and sexual violence. As a result, the violence not only had the effect of harming and stigmatizing the LGBT population, but it also horrified the broader population, further intimidating and alienating them from the paramilitaries. This violence, which I label social brutalization, had a transformative element where social norms related to bodily integrity were transgressed, social relations broke down, and as a result, a broader social life was suppressed. The third form of anti-LGBT violence identified, social prejudice, I do not explore in this thesis as I conceptualize it as removed from wartime logics (due to the absence of a transformational ideology to ground these acts of violence).

I argue that brutality is central to both these forms of anti-LGBT violence. Brutal violence becomes a social mechanism for control because of the transformational impact it has on civilian populations through processes of abjection. Recognizing abjection as a form of rejection-based disgust that reinforces one's sense of self, I identify two forms of abjection that can happen as a result of brutal violence. The first is personal abjection, which results at an individual level and often from witnessing violence or its aftermath, such as a corpse. This personal abjection produces discomfort and disgust because of how it confronts one's mortality. In the wake of the horror caused by personal abjection, paramilitaries could utilize justificatory narratives tied to morality in order to legitimize this violence and further dehumanize its victims. Through this broader framing of moralistic violence against a deserving 'subversive', a second process of abjection occurs, a social abjection. In this social abjection, disgust is formed against the targeted community who is framed as responsible for their own victimization because of their amoral

behavior. This disgust cleaves the victimized population from the broader body politic, which reinforces its sense of self as 'moral' by publicly rejecting this population, thereby legitimizing the armed actor. This process of social abjection, then, can be conceived as a socializing process which legitimates the armed actor and socializes the (non-targeted) civilian population in their favor.

To date, the existing public theorization and narrative around these acts of violence were that they occurred to reinforce a social order that subjugated the lives of those with non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities. The justification for this behavior was that these groups were conservative ideologues that were pursuing a process of state building based on neofascist ideals. This existing narrative explains why this violence happens, but it does not explain why the violence takes different forms nor how this violence produces social control. By focusing on variations in both the repertoire and characteristics of violence, I aimed to connect this paramilitary violence against LGBT people to the broader literature on civilian victimization during civil war. A consideration of these variations in anti-LGBT violence reveals the intimate relationship between the social and the political during war. Such a consideration demonstrates how brutal acts of collective violence by armed actors during war can facilitate social transformation through abjection in a way that indiscriminate violence cannot. This point reinforces the growing research agenda that recognizes violence as a social process.

As noted above, this dissertation reinforces the analytical importance of understanding characteristics of violence, beyond repertoires, in our analyses of civil war dynamics. In particular, my focus on these socio-political impacts of brutality underscores the varying expressive and

instrumental impacts of violence that the literature currently overlooks. It is through recognizing the unique characteristics of violence that I can build on scholarship that recognizes violence's productive potential to transform identities, including its victims. Key to this transformation of victim identity is the concept of stigma, which I argue armed actors utilize for wartime efforts. While this project's main audience is scholars of political violence, particularly those who work on collective violence against civilians, I hope it will also speak to scholars of sexual violence, gender-based violence, ethnic violence, social transformation, rebel governance, and ideology.

I further believe, if one can accept my brief adoption of a normative lens to this research, that this research has policy implications. Though a project rooted in the past, its insights relate to Colombia's present and future. To start, currently the Colombian government is undergoing a transitional justice process with the FARC, which centers the voices of victims in memorialization and justice. The concepts presented in this dissertation can help those working in the Colombian transitional justice processes to better historicize and contextualize the history of anti-LGBT violence in the country's memorialization efforts, as well as analyze patterns of LGBT victimization in jurisprudential efforts. Furthermore, the findings of this dissertation can help policymakers better understand the contemporary return of violence and rising victimization of its LGBT communities in much of Colombia's former guerrilla-held territories by understanding the role that collective victimization of a marginalized group plays in armed actor governance strategies (Castro et al. 2020). Its insights can also help bring attention to changes in logics of violence, as evidenced by this chapter's opening anecdote in Montes de María.

Beyond Colombia, there are other potential contributions to policymakers and international organizations such as the United Nations. First, this project reinforces the idea that just because a war does not have an obvious anti-LGBT politic that LGBT people are not uniquely victimized and thus, in need of targeted support. As seen in the current war in Ukraine (where many trans people have not been able to flee the country because of issues with their documentation), LGBT people experience unique vulnerabilities that often become more exacerbated in conflict (Su & Ritholtz 2022). Further, the variation in sexual violence and broader forms of gender-based violence as identified in this dissertation illuminate the limits of assuming that all forms of gender-based violence happen in monolithic manners.[139] As such, in analyzing conflict, it is not enough to analyze violence against women or sexual violence and assume that this type of analysis will sufficiently reveal the victimization of LGBT people. Further, this dissertation reinforces the idea that considering the situation of LGBT people extends beyond this specific communities to other marginalized communities as well. LGBT people can be targeted with other marginalized groups and if LGBT people are facing unique vulnerabilities as a result of existing social structures of exclusion, it is possible that other social minorities are in a similar situation. Finally, as activists in Colombia have acknowledged (Villamil & Baca 2010), LGBT people often serve as 'canaries in the coal mine'. As such, their collective victimization could be tied to early warning systems where armed actors are targeting marginal groups first in order to 'test the waters'. As such, LGBT victimization might be conceived as a bellwether for larger acts of mass atrocity.

[139] A point further elaborated on and theorized in a recent piece by Meredith Loken and Jamie Hagen on 'queering' gender-based violence (2022).

8.4 Generalizability, Scope Conditions, and the Universe of Cases

Given the research design focused on subnational variation in LGBT victimization in Colombia, this dissertation focused specifically on violence against LGBT populations conducted by a non-state actor during an asymmetric civil war in the 20th century. The generalizability of this phenomenon could potentially exceed these scope conditions. First, the theory of the dissertation could be applied to any asymmetric civil wars that has an ideological element focused on social transformation, such as the Shining Path in Peru. The targeting of social minorities has been documented in many parties to asymmetric conflict regardless of their ideological position and thus, one could see similar logics by leftist guerrillas and Islamic insurgents. Further, these insights might apply to other forms of conflict, including symmetric civil war and interstate war so long as there is an ideologically based, socially transformative logic to the war, as seen in Nazi Germany or Francoist Spain. Additionally, this theory could be applied to other non-ethnic social minorities targeted by logics of deviance and purity during conflict, such as the killing of witches in the English Civil War. And lastly, this theory might apply to other instances of political violence beyond war, such as the repressive actions against 'subversives' undertaken by the military junta in Argentina.

As the theory for this dissertation was built through an inductive process from research in a given context, it is difficult to generalize. With that said, a starting effort would to be to identify a universe of cases where it might apply. As will be detailed below, a subsequent research agenda could move beyond the Colombian context, and thus, for now I present a few superficial

examples that might help produce more definitive conclusions on scope conditions. While maintaining the condition of civil war, I can identify four cases that would reinforce the theory and hint at its generalizability. These four cases are the FARC guerrilla group in Colombia, the 'Islamic State' in Iraq, the Franco Regime in Spain, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. These first three cases serve as other potential cases that could reinforce the theory as they all meet similar conditions, despite differing contexts. The final case, the RUF in Sierra Leone, could potentially serve as a negative case that further reinforces the theory.

There has been much documentation on how the FARC targeted LGBT people during the Colombian civil war (Comisión de la Verdad 2022; CNMH 2015; Fernández 2017; Villamil 2020). The FARC is an interesting extension of the case because the group had an opposing ideology to the paramilitaries and so their inclusion would recognize this phenomenon of a leftist rebel group in an asymmetric war committing anti-LGBT violence. The FARC had a Marxist revolutionary ideology, which was transformative. As such, they viewed LGBT people with suspicion and committed acts of anti-LGBT violence that varied throughout the country. This variation could be a result of the second condition of the theory: their level of social embeddedness. It should be noted that the anti-LGBT violence exhibited by the FARC was different than paramilitaries—it involved forced labor to restore masculinity, monitoring of HIV status, and sometimes forced recruitment. The differences in this violence could relate to differences in repertoires used by the group, as well as differences in ideology.

During the Spanish Civil War, Franco's army persecuted gay men and trans* women, sending them to prisons where they were tortured and 'reformed' (Ugarte Pérez 2008). Extending the

theory to the case of the Francoist government is interesting because of the difference in the actor (the state), the type of conflict (a conventional, or symmetric, civil war), and the region (Europe). Anti-LGBT violence during the Spanish civil war exhibited an interesting level of variation that related to target and 'intensity' of violence. After being arrested, gay men and trans* women would be placed under 72 hours of psychological review, men deemed more masculine— and thus assumed to be the 'man' in relationships—were sent to one prison. Men, as well as all trans women, deemed more feminine— and thus assumed to be the 'woman' in relationships— were sent to a separate prison where they were subjected to significantly worse torture. This case of a repressive, punitive, and reformative violence introduces interesting questions in how to conceptualize this violence in relation to the identified outcomes of the typology.

The 'Islamic State' terrorist group is likely one of the most known examples of anti-LGBT violence in contemporary civil war (Mroue 2016; Tschantret 2018). The group became infamous for their highly public and brutal murders of LGBT people, including the throwing of gay men off buildings. Extending to this case would expand scope conditions to a new type of armed actor (terrorist group), as well as region (Middle East), and would potentially connect well with the proposed theory. The 'Islamic State' clearly held a transformative ideology that they sought to impose often through sheer force and with little desire or need to socially embed. As such, their reliant use on extraordinarily brutal and spectacular forms of anti-LGBT violence would relate well to the identified outcome of 'social brutalization' in the proposed typology.

Lastly, the RUF in Sierra Leone is an interesting example of a negative case. Here is an insurgent group in an asymmetric civil war that was known for its use of brutality and sexual violence—

two characteristics of violence highly associated with anti-LGBT violence (Cohen 2016; Mitton 2015). Yet, there has been little to no documentation of anti-LGBT violence committed by the RUF in a manner that is clearly tied to wartime logics. Scholars have identified that though the RUF had a political agenda to overthrow the government of Sierra Leone, they did not necessarily have an obvious ideology (Gberie 2005). As such, the absence of anti-LGBT violence would be expected as the group did not undertake a key factor: the adoption of a transformative ideology. Without such an ideology, the collective targeting of LGBT people would be difficult to frame in relation to wartime logics. As such, this negative case would reveal that without the identified factors or conditions, anti-LGBT violence tied to wartime logics does not occur. Of course, this does not mean that anti-LGBT violence did not occur at all during the Sierra Leonean Civil War, but that if it did, it was most likely a result of or tied to the exacerbation of social prejudice.

8.5 Future Research Opportunities

This project begins an exciting research agenda on the politics of marginality during war, which I conceptualize as 'violence against social difference'. As a result, there are a series of future research opportunities related to this thesis that I can identify. The first range of research relates to testing and expanding the theory. One possible option would be to test the generalizability of the presented theory: future research could apply it in new settings or even in a comparative project akin to Dara Kay Cohen's (2016) deductive, comparative work on rape during civil war. Second, the theory could be applied elsewhere in the 'landscape of political violence' (Kalyvas 2019), such as state repression, interstate war, or intercommunal violence, as a way to assess how it adapts to different settings that perhaps still maintain a form of ideological politics.

Another way to develop this research would be to consider other targets of violence against social difference. This research project has underscored the importance in understanding variation not only in terms of repertoire or characteristic, but also in terms of target. LGBT populations were only one group targeted by paramilitary efforts. While I have argued that their social position is unique from many of the other targeted groups due to the conditions of their marginalization, I believe there are future insights possible in understanding variations in the targeting of different social minorities during social cleansing campaigns in Colombia. A future project might also look at a cross-national comparison of wartime targeting of social minorities.

Lastly, there are questions presented by this project that reveal relationships that are ripe for exploration in studies of political violence. First, as has been noted by theorists, psychologists, and scholars of sexual violence (Cavarero 2009; Dolan et al. 2020; Meyer-Parlapanis et al. 2016; Mueller 2000; Nelson 2011), there seems to be a relationship between eroticism (or pleasure) and cruelty (or brutality). When considering why one commits acts of violence, there is a question of how one's enjoyment of the act might affect its occurrence. Thus, there is more work to be done on the affective experience of perpetrators as it relates to anti-LGBT violence. Second, the opening anecdote of Montes de María today in this chapter reveals that there are differing logics between anti-women violence and anti-LGBT violence. As such, future research could explore further this tension within forms of gender-based violence. Finally, given the history and current situation of violence against social leaders throughout Colombia, there is a question of whether there is a relationship between violence against social difference and violence against social leadership.

8.6 Concluding Thoughts

An overarching goal for this dissertation has been to introduce a new form of study in political violence that has largely been reduced to footnotes of other great texts: the selective violence against a social minority during conflict. In presenting a study of anti-LGBT violence during civil war as a relevant study for all scholars of civil wars, and not just scholars of gender-based violence during war, I complicate the assumptions of how the discipline approaches the collective victimization of social identities, beyond ethnicity, and set the stage for a future research agenda on violence against social difference during war. In the spirit of Iris Marion Young (2011) and her work on intersectional approaches to justice in her book, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, I titled this dissertation *Civil War and the Politics of Difference* in order to recognize the analytical potential in further theorizing the relationship between social difference and wartime logics of violence.

Through this dissertation, I have hoped to show how civilians at the margins of society can be a focus of armed actors at the center of war as violence itself is embedded in social processes. This assertion reinforces the need to better understand how social marginality, as a political phenomenon, transforms during war. Prejudice can be exacerbated during times of war, but it can also be operationalized. As scholars of conflict, if we remain oblivious to the politics of social marginality in contested landscapes, then we risk missing a key piece of the puzzle. Perhaps more importantly, we risk rendering invisible the experiences of those people who are so often excluded from mainstream society yet still disproportionately suffer the costs of war.

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Appendix I Data Sources

List of Interviews

2020

1. Expert – Think Tank Researcher (Gender/LGBT/Peace)
2. Expert – UN Official (UN Women)
3. Expert – UN Official (UNHCR)
4. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (Economic Development/LGBT inclusion)
5. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)
6. Expert – UN Official (OHCHR)
7. Expert – Academic
8. Expert – Academic
9. Expert – Government Official (Public Prosecutor)
10. Expert – Government Official (Gender Advisor in Transitional Justice Organ)
11. Expert – Government Official (Clerk in Transitional Justice Court)
12. Expert – Government Official (Clerk in Transitional Justice Court)
13. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (Gender/Human Rights)
14. Expert – Academic
15. Expert – Academic
16. Expert – Academic
17. Expert – Government Official (Judge in Transitional Justice Court)
18. Expert – UN Official (UNICEF)
19. Expert – Government Official (Gender Advisor in Transitional Justice Court)
20. Expert – Academic
21. Expert – Government Official (Gender Advisor in Transitional Justice Organ)
22. Expert – UN Official (UN Verification Mission)
23. Expert – UN Official (UN Verification Mission)
24. Expert – Academic
25. Expert – Government Official (Director in Transitional Justice Organ)
26. Expert – Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)
27. Expert – Academic
28. Expert – Foreign Government Official (AID/Development)
29. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (Peace/Historical Memory)
30. Expert – Foreign Government Official (AID/Development)
31. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)
32. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)
33. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)

34. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)
35. Government Official (Director in Transitional Justice Organ, Second Interview of #25)

2021

36. Expert – Government Official (Researcher in Transitional Justice Organ)
37. Expert – Journalist
38. Government Official (Clerk in Transitional Justice Court, Second Interview of #11)
39. Government Official (Clerk in Transitional Justice Court, Second Interview of #12)
40. Expert – Journalist
41. Expert – Journalist
42. Government Official (Data Analyst in Transitional Justice Organ)
43. Expert – Journalist (Second Interview of #40)
44. Government Official (Director in Transitional Justice Organ, Third Interview of #25)

2022

45. Witness (Montes de María)
46. Witness (Montes de María)
47. Witness (Montes de María)
48. Witness (Montes de María)
49. Witness (Montes de María)
50. Witness (Montes de María)
51. Witness (Montes de María)
52. Witness (Montes de María)
53. Witness (Montes de María)
54. Expert – NGO / Civil Society / Social Leader (LGBT/Human Rights)
55. Expert – Journalist

List of Archival Data Sources

Government Historical Memory Reports

1. Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición. 2022. Mi cuerpo es la verdad. Experiencias de mujeres y personas LGBTIQ+ en el conflicto armado. Bogotá: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición.
2. Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2019. Ser Marica en medio del conflicto armado. Memorias de sectores LGBT en el Magdalena Medio. Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica.

3. Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2018. Un Carnaval de Resistencia en Chaparral: Memorias del Reinado Trans del Río Tuluní. Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica.
4. Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2016. Limpieza Social: Una violencia mal nombrada. Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica.
5. Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2015. Aniquilar la Diferencia. Lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y transgeneristas en el marco del conflicto armado colombiano. Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica
6. Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2011. Mujeres y Guerra: Víctimas y Resistentes en el Caribe Colombiano. Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica.

NGO Reports

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9. Caribe Afirmativo. 2021. Libro IV. Somos las más visibles y las menos visibles. Conflicto armado y personas LGBT en Caquetá. In Caribe Afirmativo. Entre silencios y palabras: Conflicto armado, construcción de paz y diversidad sexual y de género en Colombia. Bogotá: Caribe Afirmativo.
10. Caribe Afirmativo. 2021. Libro V. Somos el vallenato que se canta bajito y todos quisieran callar. Conflicto armado y personas LGBT en Magdalena Medio y Cesar. In Caribe Afirmativo. Entre silencios y palabras: Conflicto armado, construcción de paz y diversidad sexual y de género en Colombia. Bogotá: Caribe Afirmativo.
11. Caribe Afirmativo. 2021. Nos decían "Tras de Negras, Maricas". Experiencias e impactos del conflicto armado en personas Afro-LGBT del Sur de Bolívar y el pacífico sur Colombiano. Bogotá: Caribe Afirmativo.
12. Caribe Afirmativo. 2021. VIHdas Truncadas. Informa sobre violencias contra personas viviendo con VIH en relación con el conflicto armado en Colombia. Bogotá: Caribe Afirmativo.
13. Colombia Diversa. 2020. ¿Quién nos va a contar? Informa para la Comisión de la Verdad sobre experiencias de personas LGBT en el conflicto armado colombiano. Bogotá: Colombia Diversa.
14. Colombia Diversa. 2019. Orders of Prejudice: Systematic Crimes against LGBT People in the Colombian Armed Conflict. Bogotá: Colombia Diversa.
15. Caribe Afirmativo. 2019. ¡Nosotras Resistimos! Informe sobre violencias contra personas LGBT em el marco del conflicto armado en Colombia. Bogotá: Caribe Afirmativo.
16. Colombia Diversa. 2017. Vivir Bajo Sospecha. Estudios de caso: personas LGBT víctimas del conflicto armado en Vistahermosa y San Onofre. Bogotá: Colombia Diversa.

Sentences of Government Court Cases (with appendices)

Blanco Blanco, Dalgy Esther. Marco T. Pérez Guzmán y Dagoberto Tejedor Torres, No. 2016-00038-00 (Juzgado Único Penal del Circuito Especializado December 19, 2018).

Castellanos Roso, Eduardo. Arnubio Triana Machecha y otros, No. 11001-22-5200-2014-00058-00 (Tribunal Superior de Bogotá - Sala de Justicia y Paz December 16, 2014).

Jimenez López, Uldi Teresa. Iván Roberto Duque Gaviria y 273 postulados del BCB (Tribunal Superior de Bogotá - Sala de Justicia y Paz December 19, 2018).

González, Lester M. Salvatore Mancuso y otros (Tribunal Superior de Bogotá - Sala de Justicia y Paz November 20, 2014).

Roa Avendaño, Gustavo Aurelio, Cecilia Leonor Olivella Aruajo, and José Haxel de la Pava Marulanda. Marcos Tulio Perez Guzman 11-001-60-000253-2007-82905 (Tribunal Superior del Distrito Judicial de Barranquilla, Sala de Conocimiento de Justicia y Paz September 9, 2014).

Media Coverage

EL ESPACIO Newspaper - 85 articles on anti-LGBT violence (1985-2008)

Government Dataset

Registro Único de Víctimas (Unique Victim's Registry) of the *Unidad para la Atención y la Reparación Integral a las Víctimas* (Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation to the Victims)

Appendix II Descriptive Summary of Anti-LGBT Violence at Case Study Sites

In this section, I present addition data and historical context related to the two case study sites. In doing so, I further describe the targeting and victimization patterns of anti-LGBT violence in both sites. This Appendix is split into two sections: the first section relating to anti-LGBT violence in the Magdalena Medio Boyacense and the second section relation to the phenomenon in the Montes de María. For each section, I present a timeline of paramilitarism in the region, the territory with this paramilitary presence, the most reported repertoires of violence sorted by gender (as coded by the RUV dataset[140]), the incidence rate of violence for both the general (non-LGBT) and LGBT populations during the time period of focus, and a description of five selected cases of paramilitary anti-LGBT violence from the region.

1. Puerto Boyacá and the Magdalena Medio Boyacense

A. Timeline of the AUC-PB

This timeline explains the history of the AUC-PB in the Magdalena Medio Boyacense.

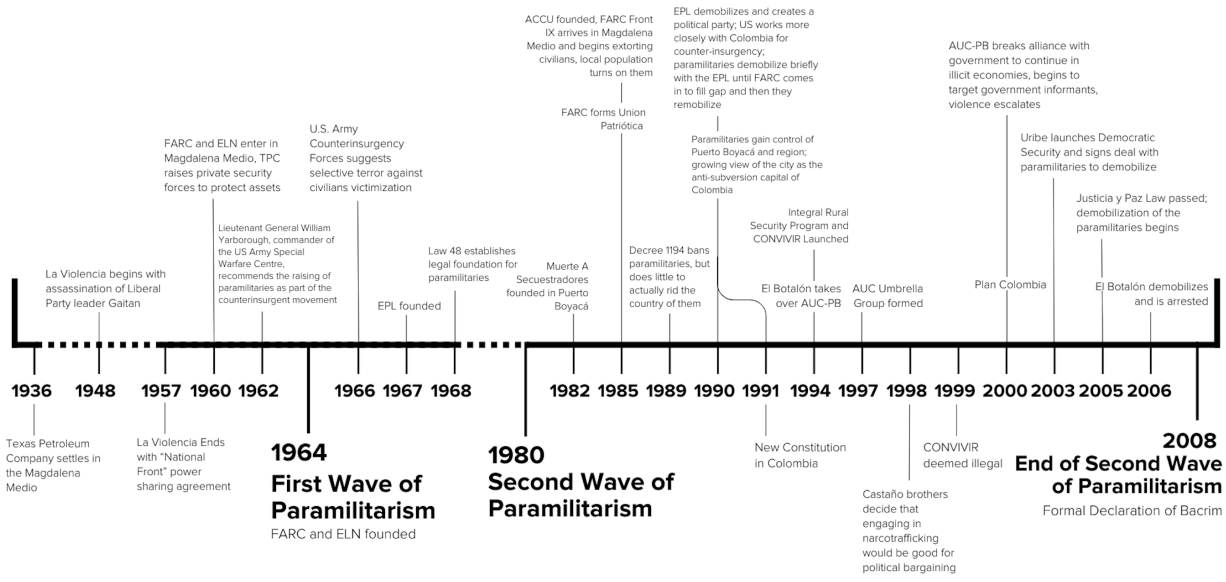


Figure 41: Timeline of the AUC-PB in the Magdalena Medio Boyacense

[140] As described in Chapter 4, the challenge to data collection on anti-LGBT violence, as well as all forms of violence in paramilitary-controlled territories, means that this data is most likely an underestimate.

B. AUC-PB Territories (by municipality):

These are the municipalities (and departments) where the second generation of the AUC-PB had a presence between 1985 and 2008.

Department of Boyacá	
Otanche	
Puerto Boyacá	
Department of Santander	
Bolívar	Puerto Parra
Cimitarra	Sucre
El Peñon	
La Belleza	
Landazuri	

Table 4: Territories with AUC-PB Presence (1985-2008)

C. Most Reported Repertoires of Violence by Gender (AUC-PB territories, 1985-2008)

This table reveals that LGBT people in areas with AUC-PB presence experienced (or reported) different types of violence than their heterosexual and cis counterparts with a higher proportion of torture, sexual, and physical violence reported.

Men 9,564	**Women** 9,203	**LGBTI** 42
1. Displacement (56%)	1. Displacement (57%)	1. Displacement (57%)
2. Homicide (16%)	2. Homicide (16%)	2. Threats (12%)
3. Threats (13%)	3. Threats (13%)	3. Torture (12%)
4. Forced Disappearance (7%)	4. Forced Disappearance (7%)	4. Sexual Violence (10%)
5. Kidnapping (2%)	5. Sexual Violence (2%)	5. Homicide (7%)
6. Material Loss (2%)	6. Material Loss (2%)	6. Physical Violence (2%)

Table 5: Most Reported Repertoires of Violence Experienced by Gender (AUC-PB territories, 1985-2008)

D. Reported Acts of Violence against the General (non-LGBT) Population in AUC-PB Territory (1985-2008)

This graph presents the incidence rate of violence against non-LGBT populations in territories with AUC-PB presence. From the history of AUC-PB activity in the region, the rise in violence in the early 2000s likely resulted from a nationwide-change in AUC strategy to escalate violence as a result of in-fighting, concurrent government negotiations with FARC, and potential government negotiations with the paramilitaries.

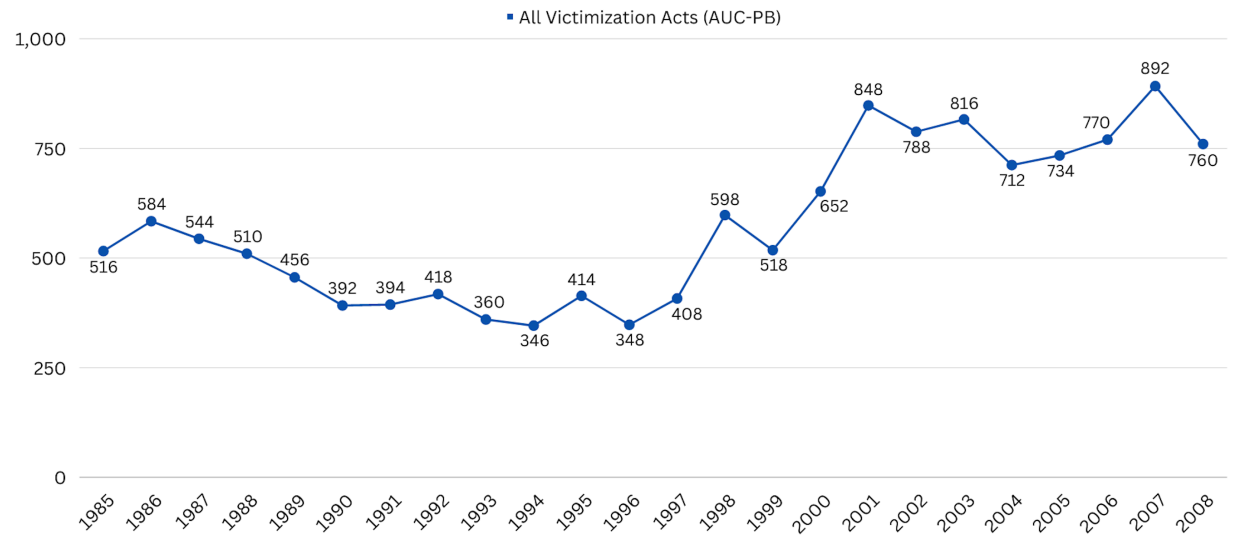


Figure 42: Reported Acts of Violence against the Broader (non-LGBT) Population in AUC-PB Territories (1985-2008)

E. Reported Acts of Violence against LGBT People in AUC-PB Territory (1985-2008)

This graph presents the incidence rate of violence against LGBT populations in territories with AUC-PB presence. Given the difficult in reporting anti-LGBT violence, particularly in territories where there was a perceived proximity between the State and paramilitaries, this graph is likely an underestimate. With that said, it should be expected that this figure not mimic Figure 42, as the logic of anti-LGBT violence in AUC-PB territories was separate to the logic of violence against the broader population, given the horizontal cleavage in society (see Figure 32). Thus, it is to be expected that the rise in non-LGBT violence in the early 2000s, likely resulting from the change in AUC-PB strategy to escalate violence, is not represented in this graph, as the logics of targeting LGBT people and broader audiences differed for the AUC-PB.

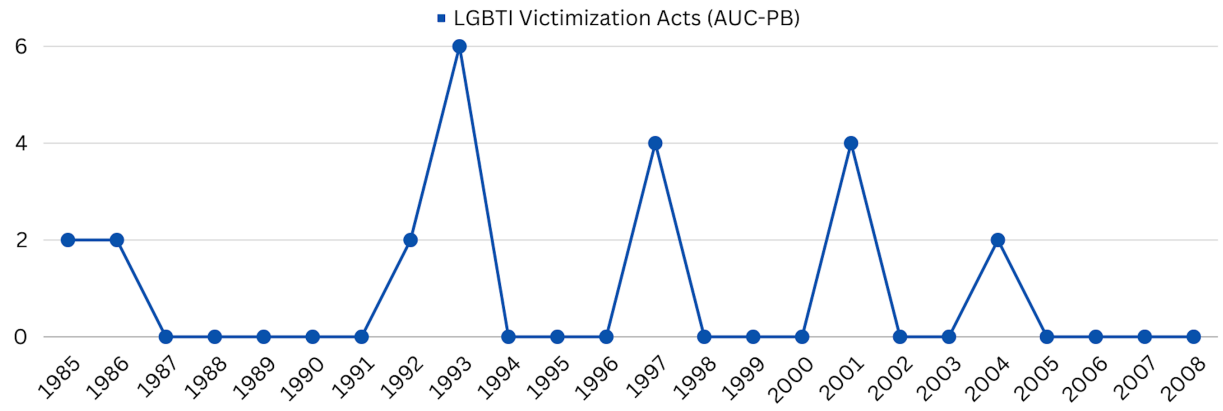


Figure 43: Reported Acts of Violence against the LGBT Population in AUC-PB Territories (1985-2008)

F. Selected Descriptions of Anti-LGBT Violences by AUC-PB from Database

This table presents a description of five separate acts of anti-LGBT violence perpetrated by the AUC-PB and detailed in archival sources.[141] The framework for this table is an adapted version of Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood's (2017) 'patterns of violence' approach, using their categories of 'target, 'repertoire', and 'technique', replacing 'frequency' with 'year' (as this table predominately looks at specific events), and then adding 'characteristic.'[142]

TARGET/ 'CRIME' (WHEN APPLICABLE)	MUNICIPALITY	YEAR	REPERTOIRE/ TECHNIQUE	CHARACTERISTIC
1. Trans* Women and Gay Men	Puerto Boyacá	2001-2003	Homicide; Forced Displacement / Firearm & Machete	Private, Necroviolent, Brutal
Description: AUC-PB killed one trans* women, disappeared another, and forced another to flee in 2003. Two gay youth were killed and dismembered by the AUC-PB in 2002. Source: CNMH. 2019. Ser Marica en medio del conflicto armado, p. 24; Sentencia, Arnubio Triana Mahecha y otros. 2014.				
2. Trans* Woman / Advocacy	Puerto Boyacá	2001	Torture; Threats; Displacement / verbal threats	Private
Description: Papuchina was a leader and activist of the LGBTI community in Puerto Boyacá, who had denounced the discrimination and violence that they had suffered to the local attorney's office, especially from the AUC-PB, who had targeted her for their sexual orientation and gender identity. After many threats, Papuchina fled. Source: CNMH. 2019. Ser Marica en medio del conflicto armado, p. 25; Sentencia, Arnubio Triana Mahecha y otros. 2014.				
3. Trans* Girl	Puerto Boyacá	2001	Murder; Forced Disappearance / unknown	Private, Brutal
Description: Murder of a minor – 14 years old. A paramilitary arrived at her door, asking for help with a supposed job. The minor left with the paramilitary and was never seen again. Source: CNMH. 2019. Ser Marica en medio del conflicto armado, p. 25; Sentencia, Arnubio Triana Mahecha y otros. 2014.				
4. Gay Male	Puerto Boyacá	2003	Murder; Forced Disappearance / Firearm	Private, Necroviolent, Brutal
Description: The body without life was thrown in the River Magdalena by the AUC-PB Commander and his other patrollers. Source: CNMH. 2019. Ser Marica en medio del conflicto armado, p. 26; Sentencia, Arnubio Triana Mahecha y otros. 2014.				
5. Trans* Woman	Puerto Boyacá	1990s (date not specified)	Threat; Torture; Forced Servitude / Violent Coercion, Takeover of Private Space	Private, Cruel
Description: They attacked her "for being a faggot", but she had to be available to cook for the paramilitaries every night when they arrived at her house. Source: CNMH. 2019. Ser Marica en medio del conflicto armado, p. 92.				

Table 6: Selected Descriptions of Anti-LGBT violence committed by the AUC-PB

[141] I selected these five cases in order to represent the range of the phenomenon.
[142] For more information on the utility of 'characteristic' in analyzing violence, see Chapter 3.

2. San Onofre and the Montes de María

A. Timeline of the AUC-HMM

This timeline explains the history of the AUC-HMM in the Montes de María.

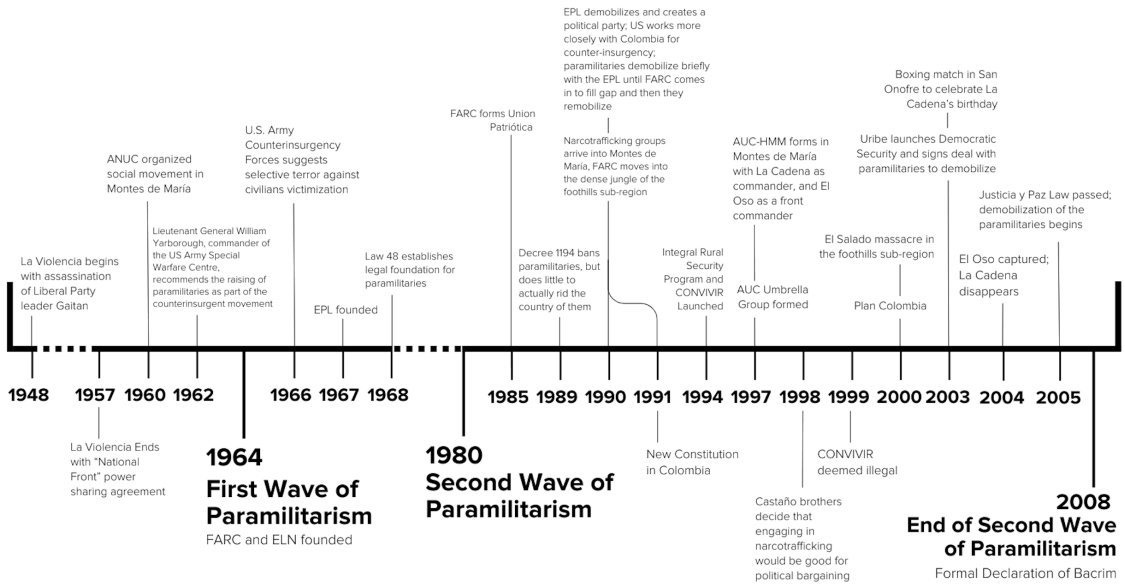


Figure 44: Timeline of the AUC-HMM in the Montes de María

B. AUC-HMM Territories (by municipality):

These are the municipalities (and departments) where the second generation of the AUC-HMM had a presence between 1985 and 2008.

Department of Bolívar	
El Carmen de Bolívar	San Jacinto
El Guamo	San Juan Nepomuceno
María La Baja	
Zambrano	
Córdoba	
Department of Sucre	
Colosó	Palmito
Chalán	San Onofre
Los Palmitos	Tolu Viejo
Morroa	
Ovejas	

Table 7: Territories with AUC-HMM Presence (1985-2008)

C. Most Reported Repertoires of Violence by Gender (AUC-HMM territories, 1985-2008)

This table reveals that LGBT people in areas with AUC-HMM presence experienced (or reported) different types of violence than their heterosexual and cis counterparts with a higher proportion of torture and sexual violence reported.

Men 26,307	**Women** 26,229	**LGBTI** 521
1. Displacement (55%)	1. Displacement (55%)	1. Displacement (65%)
2. Homicide (13%)	2. Threats (13%)	2. Threats (17%)
3. Threats (12%)	3. Homicide (13%)	3. Sexual Violence (13%)
4. Forced Disappearance (5%)	4. Sexual Violence (4%)	4. Homicide (2%)
5. Material Loss (3%)	5. Forced Disappearance (4%)	5. Torture (2%)
6. Terrorism (3%)	6. Material Loss (3%)	6. Kidnapping (1%)

Table 8: Most Reported Repertoires of Violence Experienced by Gender (AUC-HMM territories, 1985-2008)

D. Reported Acts of Violence against the General (non-LGBT) Population in AUC-HMM Territory (1985-2008)

This graph presents the incidence rate of violence against non-LGBT populations in territories with AUC-HMM presence. From the history of AUC-HMM activity in the region, the rise in violence in the early 2000s likely resulted from a nationwide-change in AUC strategy to escalate violence as a result of in-fighting, concurrent government negotiations with FARC, and potential government negotiations with the paramilitaries.

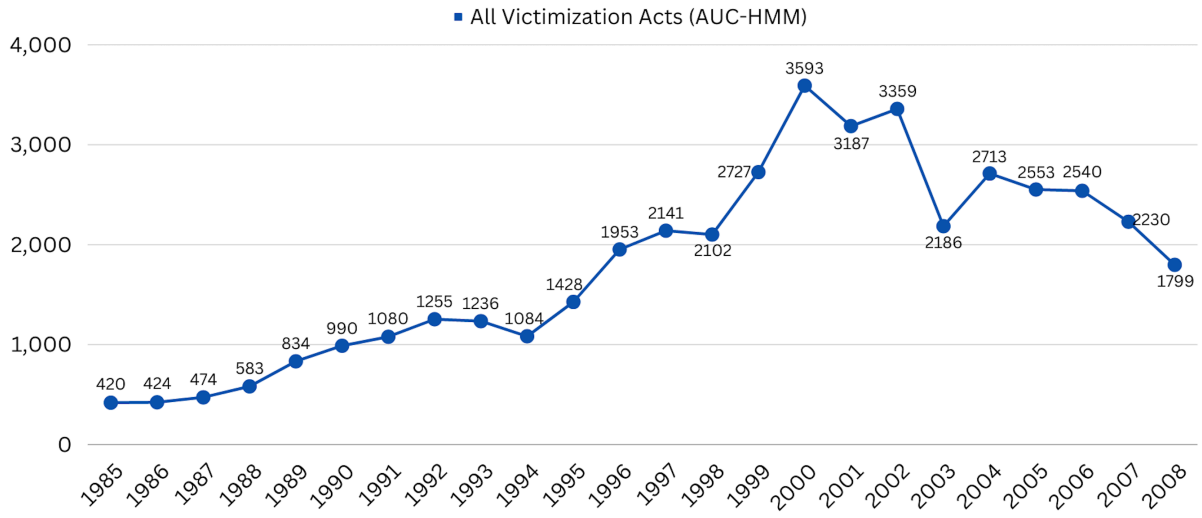


Figure 45: Reported Acts of Violence against the Broader (non-LGBT) Population in AUC-HMM Territories (1985-2008)

E. Reported Acts of Violence against LGBT People in AUC-HMM Territory (1985-2008)

This graph presents the incidence rate of violence against LGBT populations in territories with AUC-HMM presence. Given the difficult in reporting anti-LGBT violence, particularly in territories where there was a perceived proximity between the State and paramilitaries, this graph is likely an underestimate. With that said, it should be expected that this figure mimics Figure 45 (more than in the AUC-PB case), as the logic of anti-LGBT violence in AUC-HMM territories was more closely tied the logic of violence against the broader population, given the vertical cleavage in the community (see Figure 37). Thus, it is to be expected that the rise in non-LGBT violence in the early 2000s, likely resulting from the change in AUC strategy to escalate violence, is more represented in this graph, as the logics of targeting LGBT people and the broader population were more similar for the AUC-HMM (even if the repertoires and characteristics of the violence differed) than the AUC-PB.

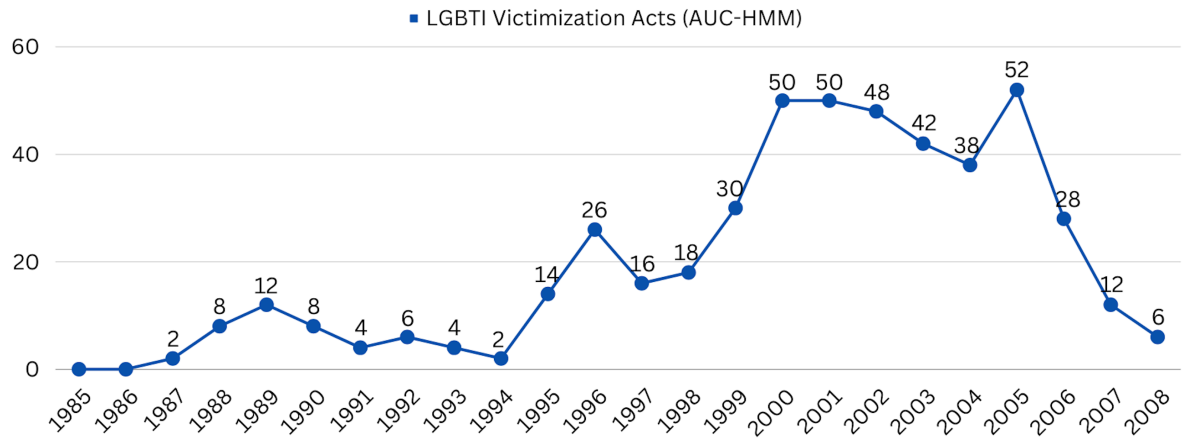


Figure 46: Reported Acts of Violence against the LGBT Population in AUC-HMM Territories (1985-2008)

F. Selected Descriptions of Anti-LGBT Violences by AUC-HMM from Database

This table presents a description of five separate acts of anti-LGBT violence perpetrated by the AUC-HMM and detailed in archival sources.[143] The framework for this table is an adapted version of Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood's (2017) 'patterns of violence' approach, using their categories of 'target, 'repertoire', and 'technique', replacing 'frequency' with 'year' (as this table predominately looks at specific events), and then adding 'characteristic.'[144]

TARGET/ 'CRIME' (WHEN APPLICABLE)	MUNICIPALITY	YEAR	REPERTOIRE/ TECHNIQUE	CHARACTERISTICS
1. Gay Men	Carmen de Bolívar, San Onofre	1997	Murder, Torture, Kidnapping, Disappearance / Blunt objects, animals, firearms	Spectacular, Cruel, Brutal, Necroviolent, Psychological Torture
Description: Arrival of AUC-HMM announced with an order from the commander, *La Cadena*, to remove LGBT people through a *limpieza social* campaign. Specifically gay men were banned from the zone and were taken from urban towns like Carmen del Bolívar to a farm run by paramilitaries outside San Onofre, where they forced these gay men to kill each other and some were thrown alive to a crocodile farm. In another case, from same time period, a gay men experiencing houselessness had his head crushed with rocks and was left to be found at the edge of a stream. Source: Caribe Afirmativo. 2019. ¡Nosotras Resistimos!, p. 57				
2. Gay Men & Trans* Women	San Onofre	2003	Torture, Kidnapping / Use of other victims, weaponization of local sports culture (boxing), creation of an audience (fellow townspeople)	Spectacular, Cruel, Public, Humiliation
Description: Imposition of boxing fights organized by the paramilitary commanders *El Oso* from AUC-HMM, in which gay men were forced to fight each other in front of the local population. Sources: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2015. Aniquilar la Diferencia; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. 2011. Mujeres y Guerra; Colombia Diversa. 2017. Vivir Bajo Sospecha.				
3. LGBT People	Carmen de Bolívar, San Onofre	1997-2008	Sexual Violence, Kidnapping, Torture, Arbitrary Detention / torture dungeons, inappropriate objects, public space as sites of torture	Cruel, Brutal, Spectacular
Description: Throughout the occupation of the AUC-HMM, the paramilitaries regularly would kidnap, torture, and rape LGBT people. The locals knew that transgressing social expectations of sexuality and gender would result in this punishment. The victims were normally abducted from town in a car or motorcycle and then taken to a solitary place (such as a farm outside of town), where they would be assaulted physically and psychological. Verbal abuse would occur contemporaneously to the physical abuse, which was often sexual in nature. Survivors report being told: "faggot son of a bitch, this is what you like"; in the case of lesbian women or trans men "I'm going to make you a woman, *machorra*"; and in the case of trans women "you are not even a woman"." Acts of sexual violence would be made worse by the inclusion of plastic and aluminum bags as preservatives. After this period of violence, victims would be dropped off somewhere publicly in town, often naked or in some form of inappropriate dress. Once, the AUC-HMM tied a gay men to a statue in the center of town, after dressing him up as a woman, leaving him there all				

[143] I selected these five cases in order to represent the range of the phenomenon.
[144] For more information on the utility of 'characteristic' in analyzing violence, see Chapter 3.

night. Victims of this violence often understood it as a threat to either leave town (displacement) or to not leave their own (arbitrary detention). Source: Caribe Afirmativo. 2019. ¡Nosotras Resistimos!, p. 53-54.				
4. Trans* Women	Carmen de Bolívar	Undisclosed date during AUC-HMM occupation (1997-2004)	Forced Servitude / Violent Coercion, Takeover of Private Space	Spectacular, Cruel, Coercive, Public-Private Hybrid (happened in private space but known throughout town)
Description: A house in Carmen de Bolívar rented by trans* women became a meeting place and torture site for AUC-HMM. The paramilitaries would order the trans women to serve them, including cooking for them, running errands, sharing messages, and facilitating meetings with trans sex workers. The paramilitaries would plan attacks on the LGBT community, such as social cleansings, and bring victims back to abuse and torture at the house. The paramilitaries threatened to harm the house's inhabitants if they disobeyed, effectively forcing them into a situation of servitude. Source: Caribe Afirmativo. 2019. ¡Nosotras Resistimos!, p. 54.				
5. LGBT People	El Carmen de Bolívar	1997-2008	Threat / Pamphlet Campaign	Public, Spectacular
Description: AUC-HMM relied heavily on pamphlets campaigns. These pamphlets would be distributed around town (sometimes by air via military helicopters). They would be signed by the AUC-HMM, or the successor group, with direct threats against individuals. One direct campaign against trans* women stated - "Son of a bitch, you bastard, if you don't leave here with your bastard friends, we'll kill you and your companions. If you don't leave in the next twenty-four hours, we'll kill your bloody mother." After the pamphlet campaigns, they would get phone calls that included threats for them to leave town. The people contacted by phones were those who had registered the threats with the local Prosecutor's Office. One survivor reported "they were going to fill us with lead ", and that "they were going to send us to be killed like dogs". Source: Caribe Afirmativo. 2019. ¡Nosotras Resistimos!, p. 50.				

Table 9: Selected Descriptions of Anti-LGBT violence committed by the AUC-HMM