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Continuities and Discontinuities in Human Rights Violations: Historically Situating the Psychosocial Effects of Migration

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Despite recent interest in the psychosocial effects of deportation, psychologists have rarely investigated the multiple forms of violence that compelled many undocumented migrants now living in the United States to “leave home.” This thematic narrative analysis of interviews with four Maya from Guatemala, part of a larger participatory and action research project, particularizes the experiences of Maya in the United States who are frequently subsumed under homogenizing constructs (e.g., “illegal aliens”) and labeled with universal psychological diagnoses that fail to reflect their complex histories, through which they give meaning to their lived experiences. Analyses focus on three major themes: violence and violation, multiple migrations, and suffering and survival. We illustrate how participants situate contemporary effects of deportation within the collective story of their people, connecting contemporary violations of human rights to earlier migrations due to extreme poverty and experiences of violence during and after 36 years of armed conflict.

What happened last year [New Bedford raid] . . . it starts to open up the wound, or the fear, that you have held [due to the massacres during the 36-year armed conflict], because these things are not easy to erase. . . . the wound is always there and when you open it, it burns anew.” (Interview, Julia, New England, 2008)

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The number of undocumented or unauthorized migrants in the United States (that is, those who enter the country without proper authorization or overstay visas) has hovered between 11 and 12 million for the past decade despite the fortification of the United States–Mexico border, the site of a large number of unauthorized entries (Massey, 2013). Additional examples of what many have called a shift from “border control” to “social control” (Kanstroom, 2007) have included workplace raids—in New Bedford, MA, in March 2007, and in Postville, Iowa, in May 2008—and subsequent detentions and deportation of hundreds of workers. In 2012, deportations reached an all-time high, with more than 400,000 migrants removed from the United States that year (Massey, 2013).

Despite the widespread recent interest among psychologists in the effects of immigration and deportation, particularly on U.S. citizen children, little attention has been paid to the forms of violence that compelled many of these children’s parents and fellow community members to leave home in search of a better life. Few psychologists have attended to, for example, the potential relationships among previous and ongoing threats in countries of origin, such as extreme poverty, armed conflict, and gang violence, and contemporary punitive immigration and deportation policies (see Brabeck, Lykes, & Hershberg, 2011 for an exception).

In 2007, the first author initiated a transnational interdisciplinary participatory and action research (PAR) project, the Migration and Human Rights Project (MHRP; Lykes & Sibley, 2013), toward documenting and systematically analyzing migration from the perspectives of sending and receiving communities, and engaging alongside U.S.-based migrants in change efforts toward policy reform. The MHRP includes over 120 interviews conducted in New England and the Southern Quiché region of Guatemala between 2007 and 2012, and a wide range of community-based actions in both countries (Brabeck et al., 2011; Lykes & Sibley, 2013). Both authors have been a part of the MHRP since its inception.

This article draws on four interviews from the larger data set to illustrate how many Maya who participated in this project situate contemporary effects of detention and deportation within the collective story of their people, connecting contemporary violations of human rights to earlier migrations due to extreme poverty and historical experiences of violence due to 36 years of armed conflict. The analyses of their stories presented below particularize the experiences of Maya in the United States who are, on the one hand, more typically subsumed under homogenizing constructs such as “undocumented or unauthorized migrants,” “illegal aliens,” or “Latino/as,” and, on the other, labeled with universal psychological diagnoses that fail to reflect the deeply embedded and sociopolitically constrained meanings they make of their lives (Martín-Baró, 1996).

This article, like the larger work of the MHRP, is informed by a transformative paradigm within critical community psychology (see, e.g., Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2009). Through our analysis of these participants’ stories we seek to contribute to a more humane treatment of undocumented migrants and more

humane immigration policies. In line with this Special Issue's focus on psychology, history, and social justice (see Hunter & Stewart, 2015), we argue that a cross-case and thickly descriptive thematic analysis of participants' narratives can inform contemporary psychological research and practice with migrants, and U.S. immigration policies in the 21st century. Similar to Opatow's (2015) analysis of Chileans' experiences of the memorializing of the dictatorship there we look to participants' individual stories of gross violations of human rights to better understand how they represent and remember the past and construct a future within the United States or within Guatemala. Before presenting our methods for selecting and analyzing these specific stories and discussing their implications, we briefly review the broader historical and economic contexts of Maya K'iche'¹ migrations.

Situating Stories: Forced Migration and Armed Conflict in Guatemala

Migration experiences for the Maya predate and were exacerbated by nearly four decades of armed conflict (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991), which ended with the signing of Peace Accords by the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG²) in December 1996. The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) report confirmed that 93% of the gross violations of human rights during the armed conflict, including more than 620 massacres and 200,000 murders or "disappearances," were linked to the Guatemalan government (CEH, 1999). Eighty-three percent of the victims were classified as indigenous Maya. According to the CEH, "racism nourished an attitude toward Indians [the Maya] as different, separate, inferior, almost less than human and outside of the universe of moral obligations, making their elimination less problematic" (2011, p. 390). The Maya frequently referred to the totality of these experiences as *la violencia*. The CEH (1999) concluded that the government had committed genocide against the Maya, citing massacres that occurred in the municipality of Zacualpa, the center of the Guatemala-based work of the MHRP and community of origin for all participants in this study.

Zacualpa, El Quiché, Guatemala, the United States and migration. The Guatemalan army's offensives in Zacualpa and its villages during the 1970s and 1980s sought to destroy one of the insurgent groups, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP). The military sought to quell civilian support for the insurgency through a "scorched earth policy." They massacred children, women and elders, burned

¹El Quiché is one of Guatemala's 22 departments or geographical and political units. The Maya K'iche' are the predominant population within the department but also live throughout the country and beyond. K'iche' refers to their ethnic-linguistic group.

²URNG and other abbreviations in this article refer to acronyms in Spanish, unless otherwise noted.

homes, crops, and clothing and displaced hundreds of thousands of survivors from surrounding villages (CEH, 1999). Additionally, the then head of state, Efraín Ríos Montt, conscripted an armed civil defense patrol (PAC) of male villagers who were between 16 and 65. These villagers were forced to fight off organized militants, to spy within their own communities, and to kill neighbors suspected of being in the EGP.

PACs controlled many of Zacualpa's surrounding villages when the town was bombed by military planes and occupied by the Guatemalan army in the early 1980s (CEH, 1999). The military occupied the Catholic Church, using it as a torture chamber and clandestine burial ground. The Maya K'iche', including multiple waves from Zacualpa, were among the more than one million "internal refugees," and an additional 150,000 officially recognized refugees beyond Guatemala's borders, who were displaced by the violence (CEH, 1999). Despite these horrors, only about 2–3% of Guatemalans who sought refuge in the United States during this period were granted political asylum (González, 2000/2011).

Earlier and more recent transnational economic policies also impoverished Mayan peasants and contributed to migrations within and beyond Guatemala's borders. Some Maya migrated beyond formal nation-state borders as early as the 1800s to work on Mexican coffee plantations. During a 1960s and 1970s agricultural economic boom, over 300,000 indigenous people each year migrated to coastal Guatemalan farmlands for seasonal work. Salaries were low and working conditions were grueling and unsanitary (Grandin, Levenson, & Oglesby, 2011). The U.S. government's role in these migrations and forced displacements included defense of the United Fruit Company's land holdings in Guatemala, contributing to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's 1954 decision to support the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz in response to his land reform program (Grandin et al., 2011).

Twenty-first century global economic conditions, drug trafficking, ongoing gang violence, and impunity continue to "push" an ever-increasing number of Guatemalans north (Grandin et al., 2011). Increased militarization of the United States–Mexican border and increasingly difficult legal constraints at home, contribute to unauthorized migrants' decisions to stay in the United States for ever-longer durations (Dreby & Stutz, 2012). It is estimated that over 1 million Guatemalans live in the United States today, many of whom are unauthorized.

Theoretical Framework

The methodologies of the current investigation and the larger MHRP reflect a transformative approach to social oppressions and marginalization. In addition, our analysis of participants' narratives was informed by "critical bifocality," that is, a methodological commitment to documenting linkages between social structures and systems that produce and impinge on the lives of participants, as well as a

commitment to identifying the ways in which participants make sense of (and resist) these systems (Weis & Fine, 2012). We suggest that the multiple iterations of violence in participants' stories can best be understood through an analysis of the complex interface of racism, gender violence, entrenched poverty, and forced migration; structural forces which the participants themselves identify in their narratives. In addition, we document how Mayan men and women, like other marginalized (and privileged) groups, narrate their individual life stories to a greater or lesser degree within collective struggles of resistance to historical and contemporary oppressions.

This analysis offers an alternative framework to one that analyzes the individual effects of violence or forced migration as trauma and/or psychosocial distress (e.g., Ornelas & Perreira, 2011). Through a cross-case thematic analysis, we situate psychosocial subjectivity within the particularized histories of the Maya K'iche'. We focus on participants' descriptions of the social and systemic forces that they perceive as constitutive of their previous and current suffering. The data generation and analysis thus proceeds "from the bottom up," and is simultaneously framed by transformative and critical community psychology.

Method

Data Collection. The MHRP semistructured interview protocol was designed to elicit narratives that could help us understand: (1) migration experiences for unauthorized migrants in the United States and those of their family members in Guatemala; and, (2) the complexities of their family relationships and compositions. We therefore began interviews by constructing a genogram or family map with each interviewee to help visualize their multiple family members, and their various immigration statuses. Additionally, (3) we elicited participants' migration narratives within Guatemala; those related to the war; and/or, other experiences of displacement.

We adapted the protocol iteratively as we learned more about challenges facing these transnational communities (e.g., Lykes & Sibley, 2013). Although all participants were asked the same questions, the semistructured interview format facilitated follow-up questions when a participant's story was either unclear or included mention of an earlier experience of migration or of violence. Interviewers followed the participant's lead in seeking more details. Interviews within Guatemala were frequently conducted at participants' homes and included many members of the extended family.

Participants. The four Maya K'iche' whose lives are narrated in this article are similar in terms of cultural traditions, histories, and familial experiences. Each participant also narrates details of key events and actions that many of the over 120 MHRP participants experienced (O'Shaughnessy, Dallos, & Gough, 2013). Before selecting them, we reviewed interviews from a subsample of participants

in the larger MHRP. Participants in this subsample were from the Zacualpa villages where we have been conducting research since 2008. These participants were also Spanish speaking, thus facilitating our understanding of their stories.³ The four participants, whose narratives are analyzed below, were selected because they provided many detailed stories in their interviews, referencing past violence and migrations as well as contemporary experiences of migration and deportation. At least one of the coauthors was present during each interview, providing additional insight about the content and context of the interview, and ensuring consistency in follow-up questions. Finally, these four participants were selected for the current analysis because they represented much of the variation in the larger MHRP sample in terms of age or generation, gender, and current location of multiple family members (see O'Shaughnessy et al., 2013), while narrating stories with sufficient detail to illustrate the dialectic between the material forces that constrained their lives—including armed conflict, forced migration, and detention and deportation—and their performances of protagonism and resistance.

Of the four cases selected, two are Guatemala-based participants who were young adults during the war: Herman (born in the 1950s, male) and Marta (born in 1955, female) (we use pseudonyms throughout). Both participants, as described below, shared stories about the suffering they and their family experienced during the war, including the loss of loved ones and multiple experiences of forced migration. Their stories elucidate how contemporary life in Guatemala, and for transnational Mayan families spread out between the United States and Guatemala, can only be understood in the context of earlier experiences.

The other two participants are Julia and Juan, members of a younger Maya K'iche' generation. Both were very young children during the armed conflict, and in their 30s at the time of the interviews. Despite their young ages during the worst years of the war, their contemporary experiences of migration and human rights violations in the United States are narrated through a lens crafted by their families' stories of the war.

Data Analysis

Interviews were conducted in Spanish and transcribed in Spanish by a native Spanish speaker. Before beginning a thematic narrative analysis of the interviews (Riessman, 2008), we read each one separately, creating summaries in English that included the interviewees' narratives of multiple actions and events, in chronological order (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2013). We separately reviewed each summary

³Many women in the larger sample spoke only k'iche'. Although all four participants in this study understood and spoke some Spanish, a bilingual Spanish-k'iche' interpreter was present during one interview to clarify interview questions or responses when needed.

and began constructing narrative themes for each participant, within and across participants' narratives, that is, topics around which participants had organized their narratives. As we developed themes, we individually wrote up memos about our ideas regarding how each theme was appearing in each narrative and across narratives, and how the themes we were identifying contributed to understanding the particularities of the Maya K'iche' migration experiences (Bowen, 2008; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2013).

We discussed and refined our individual analyses, combining themes that we had identified independently and generating three main categorical themes, which reflected how each of the four participants had organized her or his narrative. The themes reflect continuities across the four lives (Riessman, 2008). Despite efforts to particularize the experiences of the Maya K'iche' through this process, thus identifying continuities in each narrative, there were several important discontinuities—or discrepancies—when we compared each narrative to the others. These reflected different characteristics of the participants, and to a lesser extent, the different contexts in which they lived (i.e., United States and Guatemala).

We agreed that focusing, in part, on discontinuities between participants' experiences helped to highlight unique characteristics and experiences of each of the four participants, and, thus, of the variation even within this small sample of participants who are from the same communities of origin and share much of the same past. At the conclusion of our analysis, we revisited our initial analyses and our memos and agreed that these three themes, and the discontinuities within each, captured all of the information of relevance to the aims of our analysis, and that we had thus reached some level of saturation (Bowen, 2008).

Narrative Themes, Continuities, and Discontinuities

The three themes we identified were: *violence and violation*, *multiple migrations*, and *suffering and surviving*. Each participant narrated multiple experiences of violence and of gross violations of human rights, in both Guatemala and the U.S. Participants' stories also detailed repeated iterations of migration and included personal reflections on these experiences and analyses of their causes. Narratives of ongoing and seemingly ever-present suffering, as well as evidence of survival and thriving, were also continuous across all four interviewees' stories.

In addition to these thematic continuities across the four cases, we identified discontinuities related to participant characteristics and, to a lesser extent, the contexts in which they lived (i.e., United States and Guatemala). Gender and generation shaped participants' narratives of violence and violation, as well as the actions they took in response to these violations. Specifically, and as illustrated below, female participants experienced particular forms of racialized gender violence, and narratives of gross violations of human rights differed by generation.

Below we describe each theme in detail, followed by narrative summaries and excerpts reflecting the particularities of each participant's stories as well as the shared experiences and actions in their narratives. Within that presentation we identify the generational and gendered discontinuities that constrain and facilitate the narrator's understandings of these lived experiences and their effects. Following our presentation and discussion of these findings, we present some concluding reflections.

Violence and Violation

Each participant's narratives included stories of violence and of gross violations of human rights. This was not entirely surprising given Guatemala's history. What was surprising, however, is that the interview protocol focused on migration, and yet all participants connected their migrations to longer histories of violence. Within their narratives, some described experiences of violence during the armed conflict in graphic detail, while others noted, rather, its material and psychosocial consequences. Racism and the legacies of colonial times were included in some stories of the war and, as significantly, in narratives about migration to the United States and ongoing detention and deportation (as well as policing) policies and practices there.

Most attributions of responsibility for violence in the armed conflict focused on the military, the army, and the PAC, although the guerrilla was not held blameless. Members of the older generation narrated most of these stories, while the younger generation emphasized the global and transnational roots of violence—whether in arms sent by the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s or the current militarization of the United States–Mexico border.

Herman, a lay leader of the Catholic Church who was in his 50s at the time of the interview, focused on describing selective persecutions by the Guatemalan army during 1980 and 1981, despite being asked multiple questions about migration and deportation. He noted that 1982 was his community's "worst year," because there were multiple massacres⁴ then. In one such description, Herman detailed how PACs from neighboring villages and towns were joined by the Guatemalan army and surrounded the village, corralling people into a space from which they could not escape. He reported that the military had "seduced" him and others, dressing in civilian clothes and addressing them as "compañeros," the language used by the EGP who had been organizing in the area. When he and others came out of their homes, they were fired upon. Herman reported that his

⁴Three massacres that Herman narrated were also documented as occurring in his village of San Antonio Sinaché, in the Municipality of Zacualpa, on March 16, May 18 and 30, 1982 (see CEH, 1999).

wife was killed immediately but he escaped, leaving behind his two children, who were also killed. His home, crops, and possessions were burned to the ground by the military.

Herman also described a second massacre where 32 people were accused of being guerrillas, killed with machetes and shovels, and buried in a cave at *Las Joyas*. He challenged the army's accusations that they were guerrilla, saying that he "knew" that this accusation was not true, as evidenced by the large number of children and elderly among the dead. Herman described these events and his interview as "his story," the "story of my community," "my history." The massacres had, Herman said, reduced him and his people to persistent and ongoing "intense poverty"; they had been "condemned by these events, these massacres."

In Herman's reporting of the years of acute violence, he also made multiple references to deep fractures within the community. He spoke of how some members supported the guerrilla, and others, the military, describing how men who were conscripted into the PAC were forced to spy on and report any villagers they suspected of having contact with the guerrilla. He detailed the food that many within the town, himself included, had given to the guerrilla who were organizing in the area in the 1970s. Despite never having joined the guerrilla, Herman believed his neighbors reported his activities to the military, making him a target. Herman attributed the fratricidal violence to envy within and across communities; and, to evidence of conflictive relations between the Maya and *ladinos* [descendants of Spaniards; nonindigenous]:

You can't imagine what envy among brothers is like. It was pure envy because when the people from other places came here, they captured and they killed. . . . There is a problem [when] we say to them: including your own father, we are going to kill you, the same family killing its own members. . . . With those we had many problems and with folks in the town too, with the ladinos and with those from [nearby towns]. But some of them from Joyabaj [a neighboring town] are from the same race, they are naturals [indigenous], but it was the same [conflict]. . . . And the patrollers [PAC] were taking advantage of the people. . . . They would say that others were bad and would take advantage of them and kill them.

Whereas Herman detailed the horrors of both the vertical and horizontal violence that characterized *la violencia* during the early 1980s, 55-year-old Marta narrated stories of familial losses and abandonment while including briefer reports of violence during the armed conflict. Marta's mother had died when she was only 15, two of her seven children died in infancy from measles and malnutrition, and, she noted that the three men who had fathered her children had all "abandoned" her. She reported that armed men had killed her brother as he journeyed from the South Coast to Zacualpa during *la violencia*.

Marta also narrated her physical and emotional burdens, crying quietly as she reported toward the end of her interview that the father of one of her daughters had not deserted but rather had been killed during the early 1980s, leaving her pregnant with this child. She noted that these years included horrific massacres

in multiple communities surrounding Zacaulpa; the bombing of the town by the Guatemalan army who then occupied it; and the use of the Catholic Church as a military base, torture chamber, and clandestine burial ground. Marta fled to the Coast when she could, surviving with an infant and young children, traveling from time to time to Zacaulpa when family responsibilities required.

In contrast to Herman's and Marta's narratives of violence and violation, the participants from the younger generation, Julia and Juan, focused on violations experienced in the United States, although they also referenced the war throughout. Julia's descriptions of her experiences of the 2007 New Bedford raid, for example, included her father's warning that the U.S. government was not to be trusted: when he was serving in the PAC, he overheard soldiers discussing the arrival of weapons from the United States to aid in the Guatemalan army's attacks against the Maya. Shortly thereafter, the military ordered her father to shoot his fellow Maya or to be shot. Tossed into a pit rapidly dug to serve as a mass grave, he survived, reportedly because he was covered in the blood of others and passed over for dead. Eventually, he returned to his family with whom he frequently shared these experiences and his understanding of United States–Guatemala relations.

Connecting her own experiences of the war in Guatemala to the New Bedford raid, Julia noted:

When ICE [Immigration & Customs Enforcement] arrived in the factory, when we were there, I felt like, for me it was like there wasn't an option to leave. During the war, I didn't see how the war in Guatemala started but, from when I could remember, I was seeing that it was the same in the factory. They were walking around with guns and with facemasks, and I said this is what the war was like in Guatemala.

Throughout her narrative, Julia also compared the racism Maya encountered in the United States to that in Guatemala. She reported that when she took action against her non-Mayan U.S. neighbors who were robbing and threatening her family, bringing these experiences to the attention of the police, they did nothing. She attributed the police's inaction to racism. Despite these experiences, Julia narrated that the United States was a safer place to live than Guatemala: "... seeing that here there isn't violence against women, here there are more protections, and I was seeing that the children are also better protected." Reflecting an understanding of racialized gender violence, Julia described how this compared to her experiences in Guatemala:

Because we were indigenous, we did have school [but] we didn't understand Spanish. They treated us very badly. And so I didn't want [my daughter] to suffer the same as what the people had suffered before. For this reason, I thought now, with my daughter, I say, 'when you are going to school, don't get too close to ladino people because you don't know what they are thinking about you.' ... And so I am very afraid of them.

Also in his 30s when interviewed, Juan shared accounts of his father's murder during a massacre in his village. He attributed his desire to migrate north to fears from threats he experienced in Guatemala due to his human rights work and to

racial discrimination and injustice, which he believed limited his opportunities in Guatemala. Much of Juan's narrative, however, focused on U.S.-based human rights violations and racism toward the Maya. He narrated multiple struggles to find and sustain work in the United States, amidst prolonged stays.

All who leave from here [Guatemala] have a goal but when they get there [U.S.], there are setbacks because there is only work which pays poorly, and one encounters discrimination in the workplace. And often they offer those without documents the hardest work with the least protections [and no] job security. . . . and many people get sick or have an accident and neither the state nor the company covers their expenses. . . . and during their recovery they must spend money and that slows down their plan to return.

A core violation for Juan occurred in February 2008, when he was driving without a license to fulfill a work-related requirement. The police offered no clear reason for having stopped him, an injustice that Juan narrated as "driving while being Latino." He spent the next 2 weeks in detention in Maine before being transferred to Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and then Texas. Juan reported being refused bond at each site. He interpreted his arrest, experiences of his hands and feet being shackled and of being deprived meals during his detention, as exemplars of racism within the U.S. criminal justice system, and as violations of his human rights.

Multiple Migrations

The second theme, multiple migrations, was reported in terms of movement inside Guatemala (including to the capital city and to the South Coast) or outside its borders (to Mexico and to the United States). Among the four cases, differences were generational, while homogenous across gender. In addition, migration was frequently described as "forced," that is, the only way to survive, by an older generation; and, despite this continuity within the younger generation, their narratives included a discourse of "choice," that is, an opportunity for enhancing life options and/or overcoming past losses. Extreme poverty was often described as the source of forced migration or a "push factor" for migrating internally and externally, but not described explicitly as a violation of one's rights.

Juan's migration narrative focused on his desire to advance himself and his family educationally and economically, despite having multiple reasons for migrating to the United States:

I thought to take advantage to improve my economic situation and look for an option to continue to study because I have always believed that when history presents us with a difficult situation of poverty, of the death of family, and all that happened [in Guatemala], we can overcome this and turn history on its head. Despite this, I realize now that it is not so easy because there are many obstacles to overcome.

Juan described his dreams and ambitions as influencing his decision to migrate, noting that the multiple obstacles he faced in the United States, including to

advancing his career or feeling safe on a day-to-day basis, had made him less optimistic. He questioned how feasible it was for his generation to overcome poverty and loss of family members as well as other multiple losses from the armed conflict. Juan's hopes for the future were limited further when he was deported for a second time, and thus returned by force to Guatemala and separated from his pregnant U.S.-based wife.

Juan's deportation story is one of his narratives wherein his relocation occurred by force, in contrast to earlier migrations described as due to his own intentional actions and choices. In contrast, Marta's entire life story is told through a lens of forced migrations and loss. She described migrating to the South Coast to work on coffee and sugar cane plantations when she was orphaned at 15. She was forced to support herself in the wake of her mother's death and her father's decision to leave her behind when he married a second wife. An older man "took her" when she was still 15, only to, in her words, "desert her" after the birth of her first two children.

Marta's one son and two of her sons-in-law currently live without authorization in the United States where they had been for approximately 4 years when she was interviewed, seeking to earn a living and support wives and children in the villages surrounding Zacualpa. Her daughter united with one, then a second man, leaving home to get a job in Guatemala City, taking two daughters with her while leaving her son with his grandmother, Marta.

Poverty and migration form a single narrative in Marta's and her children's life stories. She indebted herself to help one son borrow the funds to travel to the United States, using her small home to guarantee a loan which he had recently repaid in full. Although she described him as "responsible" in paying off his debt, neither he nor her sons-in-law had assumed responsibility for her current well-being. Thus Marta continues to travel to the South Coast to pick coffee and cane with yet another generation, her 10-year-old grandson. Labor conditions there have always been harsh with limited earnings and less work today.

Offering a long-term view of the multiple migrations of the Maya, Marta noted differences between journeying to the South Coast and to the United States, describing the former as "not dangerous" in contrast to the latter. Her son's journey north included multiple arrests while attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, hunger crossing the desert, and huge costs to pay *coyotes*, guides responsible for the traveler's "safe delivery" in the United States. Acknowledging that she had never personally made this trip, she reported experiences about which she had heard, including those of her son and sons-in-law:

Yes, they say lots [about the journey to the States]. That there are coyotes who grab you on the journey, there are thorns when one passes [the desert] . . . it is difficult . . . Yesterday a plane returned to Guatemala City. How many people do you think were returned? You can see it is difficult, if you have no money. How will you eat and feed your children that were left behind? That's how it is with my family . . . there is nothing to buy things with. And if

they come back here, there is nothing because all their kids had was from what they sent [from the U.S.]. In contrast, there on the Coast, you have your 30 days and then you can return . . . [and] the trip to the Coast here is not difficult.

Thus, the earlier descriptions of extreme poverty that forced her migrations are described in the present as consequences of contemporary deportations. Marta's story incorporates her recognition that even though her own U.S.-based son and sons-in-law do not support her, that their remittances, like those of many workers in the United States, assure their children's survival and material well-being. Although deportations reunite returnees with loved ones "left behind," Marta's narratives confirm the ensuing poverty.

Of Herman's five daughters, three are married and have husbands living in the United States today. Their migrations have ensured his daughters, their children, and he and his wife of a "slightly better life;" he has "a small home and two cattle." Other migrants' successes are evident, he notes, in the cement homes and buildings in the town today. Within his recognition of small successes are laments of what might have been: "imagine how much better our town would be if not for the massacres and all we have lost." Herman recognizes that compared to his neighbors, he is lucky, as many have no one who has migrated to the United States, or experience family members who migrate only to get involved in drugs and drinking, forgetting spouses and children left behind. Despite recognizing these gains from migration, Herman's narrative continued to circle back to reflections on losses provoked by the war, which he narrated as related to today's migrations north.

Thus, Herman, and Marta, have survived economically due to multiple migrations, and even achieved small comforts—homes and land—from related earnings. Despite these benefits, Marta continues to experience physically trying conditions while laboring on the South Coast, and Herman continues to mourn for losses suffered during the war. For the younger two interviewees, however, repeated stories of harshness and violation, including discrimination and workplace raids, occurred in the United States. For both Julia and Juan, migration is punctuated and represented by U.S. and Guatemala-based discrimination and racism. Yet, as illustrated below, each of these participants also narrate the many ways that they resist these contemporary and more historic forms of violence and violation experienced as part of their multiple migrations.

Surviving and Suffering through Violations and Displacements

The third and final theme is that of survival and suffering. Each of the participants described him or herself as having survived and, despite all odds, as having some positive outcomes. Yet some spoke repeatedly of the social suffering (Kleinman, 1997) of their community, their history, or, in the words of another Maya survivor of sexual violence, of an "ever-present past" (Lykes & Crosby,

2014). The older generation specifically narrated experiences of survival and resistance in terms of things being “a little bit better,” while they long, as Herman described mournfully, for a world that might have been, had the massacres never happened. In contrast, the younger generation narrated their resistance through providing critical analyses of the roots of their experiences of violation, noting transnational circulations of power and critiquing U.S. military involvement in Guatemala.

Julia narrated her migration out of Guatemala and away from the violence of the *ladino* men with whom she lived, describing her determination to escape systems of racialized gender violence and to rescue her daughter from the same fate. At the time of the interview, Julia was petitioning for asylum. Her case centered on her prior experiences of racialized gender violence in Guatemala. Julia’s resistance is also reflected in the human rights discourse that characterizes her narratives of her experiences and her responses to them. Specifically, she identified ICE and the local police in the United States, and the Guatemalan military and *ladinos* as racist and as perpetrators of a racialized gender violence. In the face of discrimination and fear, Julia claimed her rights and took actions to protect them.

Juan’s narrative also included actions that reflect his awareness of his rights as a worker in Guatemala and in the United States. His analyses of how—and why—his rights had been violated are narrated through his struggles to be treated fairly as a U.S. worker, and when being stopped while driving without a license in Maine. Thus, even though Juan’s confidence in his ability to “turn history on its head” had waned in the wake of his detention, deportation, and forced family separations, his critical analysis of the sociopolitical forces that had influenced his deportation (e.g., racial profiling by the police, lack of due process for detained migrants) are evidence of his not only having survived but also resisted.

Marta’s and Herman’s narratives describe histories of labor exploitation, family loss, and horizontal and vertical violence. These systems of oppression are perceived as persistent and ongoing. Yet within their narratives of loss are hints of protagonism. Marta spoke throughout her narrative of being “very tired” from harsh physical labor over a lifetime. Yet she succeeded in buying a small house and a small piece of land in a village of Zacualpa where she currently lives, an accomplishment known to only a small number of seasonal workers. She narrates this as the fruit of her labor, a modest but very significant achievement despite or in the midst of extreme physical pain and continual seasonal migration, despite her age. She shared:

I was alone with my children and they needed to eat. They did not know how to do anything. I had to struggle for them. I survived. But today I am very sick. I have headaches, I have stomachaches, every part of my body hurts, but I have to work . . . I still have to go to the Coast because there is no money here now.

The coda of her narrative is one of loneliness, heartache, and physical pain. Yet she situates her suffering within the wider intergenerational structural poverty that characterizes Guatemala—and the absence of work that pays a living wage. Both structural realities frame interpersonal losses dating from her mother's death. Despite these seemingly insurmountable burdens, she self-presents as a worker, a survivor.

Within the strongly analytic framing of Herman's narratives are reports of personal horror, "of seeing with my own eyes that they were killing us," and of a deep sadness as well as inconsolable losses. These experiences of horror, sadness, and desperation contributed to his not caring if he was killed, as opposed to generating a resolve to survive: ". . . when they killed my wife and my children, I left, and I said to myself: 'if they kill me, then they kill me, as I can't stand this sadness.'" Nevertheless, in response to the terror that destroyed his family, Herman acted by fleeing the area in search of refuge, first in Guatemala City, returning later to his community where he was again threatened, then fleeing to the South Coast. There he described being able to earn a little money, to feed himself—but just barely.

Despite this suffering, Herman not only survived, but also came to play an important role in the ongoing healing of his community. Herman's community leadership was evidenced in his narrative of some local postwar transitions, including engagement in conversations that were directed toward conflict resolution with former guerrilla. He also described some of the local, national, and international organizations that have accompanied the community in exhuming bodies of many who were killed, in telling their stories, in developing memorials, and in seeking reparations. Despite these contributions and accomplishments, he described many people, including himself, as still living in desperation and sadness from past losses. He also described one complex legacy of those years as the ongoing distrust within and between communities—exemplified by some who were not open to being interviewed by human rights activist researchers like ourselves.

Thus Marta and Herman have, despite horrific loss and repeated internal displacements, realized the rural peasant's dream of having a home and a small plot of land. Deeply painful physical and psychological suffering are part of their "ever-present past" (Lykes & Crosby, 2014). Yet each resists—Marta through her continued migration and work on the South Coast, and Herman as the father of a growing family, parish leader, and elder who preserves the historical memory of past violence as he demonstrates his understanding of current conflicts and how to resolve them. Julia and Juan also presented stories of their resistance, describing success or failure as due in large part to the vagaries of an immigration system that is deeply fractured and widely recognized as flawed. Despite different outcomes, both framed the U.S. detention and deportation system as continuous with U.S. intervention in their country of origin during the armed conflict, suggesting that their lived stories—and those of their parents' generation—are read into their own,

infusing them with words of resistance in the face of transnational formations of racism and discrimination.

Limitations

The thematic narrative analysis we conducted facilitated the identification of continuities and discontinuities within and across participants, and a thick description of some of the material constraints on each of their lives, and of their interpretations of and responses to these constraints. Despite the contributions of this work toward the development of a historically situated psychological understanding of migration and gross violations in human rights, we note several limitations of the study. First, our decision to focus our analysis on four participants from the larger sample in the MHRP limits the generalizability of findings. Because participants were selected, in part, due to their demographic and experiential similarities in relation to the larger MHRP sample, some of the findings here can inform our understandings of the experiences of others in the larger MHRP and, to some extent, others in their communities. As importantly, this in-depth exploration of meaning-making and actions of a significantly understudied group facilitates the generation of additional research questions, humanitarian responses and policy reforms that could improve the well-being of other Maya who are part of transnational and mixed-status families, as we describe below.

Second, although we have collectively been immersed in the contexts in which this research was developed for several decades, adding to the credibility of our analysis (Morse et al., 2008), we are both White, female, psychologists from the United States, and thus outsiders to the experiences of the participants, each of whom is a Maya K'iche' member of a transnational and mixed-status family. Our positionality and these differences deeply inform how and what we can understand through this co-constructive narrative analytic process. As significantly, neither of us is fluent in k'iche', limiting our capacities to communicate directly with some of the women participants of the MHRP and forcing both researchers and participants to communicate through local interpreters or in each's second language, that is, Spanish.

As noted above, a lens of "critical bifocality" (Weis & Fine, 2012) informed our analyses. We drew on this analytic strategy, identifying linkages between participants' descriptions of social structures and systems (in the United States, Guatemala, and transnationally) as they were described as facilitating or inhibiting their individual well-being. We paid special attention to how they understood these systems and how they described themselves within them or as affected by them (e.g., lack of food forcing migration to the coast). The complex interface of racism, gender violence, entrenched poverty, and forced migration, as well as our commitment to social justice, informed our understanding of these structural forces and thus the thematic analysis of participants' narratives. Our researcher perspectives

thus, as well, shaped our understandings of their experiences vis-à-vis historical realities. Our analysis was, therefore, both grounded in participants' words and framed by our antiracist, feminist positionality. This process is consonant to that described by Isaac Prilleltensky (2008) in his analyses of the multiple circulations of power in the research context and the importance of political validity in applied psychological research focused on social justice and liberation.

Finally, confirmation of the believability and trustworthiness of these findings (Bowen, 2008; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2013) is enhanced not only by the authors' longstanding engagement in the context, but also by confirmation of our findings (e.g., connections participants make between current threats of detention and deportation and previous human rights violations in Guatemala) from others in the Maya K'iche' community. Specifically, these findings have been presented, discussed, and confirmed in community-based meetings in the United States and in Zacualpa (Bowen, 2008).

Implications for Policymakers and Concluding Reflections

Critical community psychology frames the processes through which PAR and a narrative approach to participants' stories of migration were deployed, contributing to this analysis at the nexus of psychology, history, and a search for justice. Through analysis of the four participants' narratives, we foreground their particular stories as constrained by transnational forces of militarized economic and political processes and racialized gender violence. We have documented the deeply contextualized and particularized understandings generated by these members of the transnational Maya K'iche' community. The crossnarrative themes we identified confirm historical and socio-political renderings of centuries of racism and colonial power—and, more recent war and economic repression. More importantly, this thickly descriptive cross-case thematic analysis suggests a reframing of lives wherein indigenous and undocumented migrants emerge from the shadows with powerful narratives of suffering, survival, protagonism and resistance. The participants' strength in the face of complex suffering, and multiple violations cannot be captured by individual-level descriptions of loss, stress, or trauma, nor can they be understood when excised from their historical and social contexts.

We suggest that these findings contribute to understanding the particularized stories of the Maya, capturing continuities and discontinuities that challenge homogenizing discourses of "illegal migrant" and/or traumatized victim or survivor. Although both effects mark their lives, as situated subjects they embody and perform sociopolitically and historically contextualized narratives. They position themselves in ways that force those of us who seek to accompany them through research, services, and advocacy to recognize our deeply implicated relationships to them and their communities. Moreover, the narratives analyzed here argue strongly that the tendency within transitional justice discourse in postconflict contexts to

focus on political violence, to the exclusion of documenting underlying poverty and other structural causes of armed conflict, reflects only a partial understanding of the lived experiences of those directly affected by war and gross violations of human rights, and, likewise, provokes only partial solutions to multilayered violations.

Drawing on the narratives presented here, we suggest that any policy alternatives to immigration policy and to reforms currently under consideration within the U.S. Congress should reframe the discussion and critically engage migration from the perspective of the majority, that is, “from the bottom up.” As argued above, critical analyses of migration, detention, and deportation (e.g., Kanstroom, 2007) document the racialization of these policies and practices. Political scientist Jacqueline Stevens (2009) argues that nationality and geographic borders as criteria for exclusion echo and reproduce colonial power relations, contradicting contemporary global mobility and human rights. The latter affirm the right to human dignity—and to migrate to ensure one can meet one’s basic needs and those of one’s family. The movements and meaning-making of the four participants reported above add empirical support for these ideas. Thinking more pragmatically about potential immediate solutions, the legal status of two of the four participants in this study and thousands of others—and thus their family reunification and parental access to better paying jobs and protection from detention and deportation—could be guaranteed were the U.S. government to adopt a recommendation from legal scholar David Thronson (2010). He suggests legal reforms that would permit citizen children in mixed-status families to extend citizenship benefits to parents and other family members who are (or may become) present in the United States without authorization. Current laws allow U.S.-citizen parents to extend their privileges of citizenship to their children—even those born beyond U.S. borders—but U.S.-citizen children cannot pass on their citizenship benefits to undocumented parents until the children attain 21 years of age. Moreover, the current option does not extend to “unlawfully” present parents.

Findings described herein are suggestive of short and long-term changes that could significantly change life options and well-being for hundreds of thousands of migrants. We offer this research as one small initiative to guide others who seek to situate psychology in history and in struggles for social justice.

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