

# Hidden in Plain Sight

## Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence

by Kimberly Theidon

During the last decade alone, it is estimated that tens of thousands of children have been born worldwide as a result of wartime rape and sexual exploitation, yet we know very little about these living legacies of sexual violence. I complement research in Peru with comparative data to explore four themes. Influenced by the incitement to “break the silence,” the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission actively sought out first-person accounts of rape, understood to be the emblematic womanly wound of war. I analyze what a focus on rape and sexual violence brings into our field of vision and what it may obscure. I turn next to local biologies and theories of transmission. Children conceived of rape face stigma and infanticide in many societies, which in part reflects the theories of transmission that operate in any given social context. Theories of transmission lead to “strategic pregnancies” as women seek to exert some control over their reproductive labor and to identify the father of their child. The effort to determine paternity involves names and naming practices and the patriarchal law of the father. I conclude with questions to assist in making these issues part of the anthropological research agenda.

It was late in the day at Lehman College in the Bronx, New York, when Rwandan genocide survivor and activist Jacqueline Murekatete walked to the podium to recall those lethal 100 days in 1994.<sup>1</sup> She was only 9 years old when her entire immediate family and most of her extended family were taken to the river and slaughtered by their Hutu neighbors. There was much to haunt in the memories she shared. I focus on just one. Ms. Murekatete referred to the thousands of children born as a result of rape, noting that for many women who had lost their entire families to the genocidal violence, the baby they birthed might be their only living relative. She paused before adding, “These are complicated children for their mothers.” Complicated indeed.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past two decades, there has been increased international attention to conflict-related rape and sexual violence. In March 1994, the United Nations established a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women mandated to examine the causes and consequences of gender-based violence, especially rape and sexual violence targeting women and girls. Additionally, the UN’s ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda—countries where conflict-related sexual violence in the early 1990s captured unprecedented international attention—greatly advanced efforts to codify sexual and reproductive violence. The jurisprudence resulting from these two tribunals classified system-

atic rape and other sex crimes as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and forms of genocide. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in 1998, built on and extended those advances, providing a broader basis for prosecuting sexual crimes as violations of international laws on war, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

On a complementary front, a series of UN Security Council resolutions focused on the role women play in conflict prevention, resolution, and peace-building efforts while simultaneously denouncing the use of rape and sexual violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Collectively known as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, these resolutions (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122) demand the complete cessation of all acts of sexual violence by all parties to armed conflicts, with each successive resolution lamenting the slow progress made to date on this issue. In addition to insisting on the need to protect children from rape and sexual violence in armed conflict and postconflict situations, Resolution 2122 specifically notes “the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination” (UN Security Council resolution 2122, 2013 [S/RES/2122]). There is nothing said about the outcome of those pregnancies nor about their meaning for the mothers and their children.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda has overwhelmingly focused on women and girls as victims of sexual vio-

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1. Conference “The State and Gender Violence,” Lehman College, Brooklyn, April 2, 2014.

2. An estimated 5,000 children were born from genocide rape in Rwanda (see Nowrojee et al. 1996).

lence during armed conflict. Strikingly absent in this agenda are two groups: men and boys as victims of sexual violence and children born as a result of wartime rape. In this article, I focus on the latter. During the last decade alone, it is estimated that tens of thousands of children have been born worldwide as a result of mass rape campaigns or wartime sexual exploitation (Carpenter 2007). What do we know about these children?

In what follows, I complement research that I have conducted in Peru and reports of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (PTRC) with the scant comparative research I found to explore four themes. I begin by discussing the PTRC and how it implemented a “gender focus” in its investigations and final report. Influenced by the feminist incitement to “break the silence” around rape as an intrinsically emancipatory project, the PTRC actively sought out first-person accounts of rape, with rape understood to be the emblematic womanly wound of war. I analyze what a focus on rape and sexual violence brings into our field of vision and what it may obscure. Between the trope of “unspeakable atrocities” and the call to “break the silence,” a great deal was being said. A rereading of the PTRC’s final report reveals that women spoke frequently about rape-related pregnancies in the voice of the witness rather than victim.

I turn next to local biologies and theories of transmission, focusing on both children in utero when their mothers were raped and children conceived of rape. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children conceived of rape face stigma, discrimination, and infanticide, which may in part reflect the theories of transmission operative in any given social context. Although DNA and genetic codes animate scientific discussions of inherited traits, local biologies are more apt to involve bodily fluids, toxic memories, and wounds of the soul. Looking comparatively, I explore some of the characteristics passed from parent to child via blood, semen, breast milk, or in utero. Understanding theories of transmission leads me to consider “strategic pregnancies” and women’s efforts to exert some control over their bodies and reproductive labor—and to identify the father of their child. The effort to determine paternity involves names, naming practices, and patriarchal law. I conclude with some thoughts on methods and ethics when researching “public secrets” in which a great deal is at stake in concealment and revelation. Taussig (1999) suggests that the “drama of revelation [often] amounts to the transgressive uncovering of a ‘secretly familiar’” (2). Although children born of wartime rape have remained largely invisible on the international agenda, empirical data indicate they are not so invisible in the families and communities in which they live. At the local level, these children are likely to be hidden in plain sight.

## The PTRC: Commissioning Gender

On August 28, 2003, the commissioners of the PTRC submitted their final report (PTRC 2003) to President Alejandro Toledo and the nation. After 2 years and some 17,000 testimonies, the commissioners had completed their task of ex-

amining the causes and consequences of the internal armed conflict that convulsed the country during the 1980s and 1990s. The PTRC determined that almost 70,000 people had been killed or disappeared and that three out of four casualties were rural peasants who spoke some language other than Spanish as their native tongue. The distribution of deaths and disappearances reflected long-standing class and ethnic divides in Peru.

Although the PTRC was given a gender-neutral mandate, feminists were successful in insisting the commission think about the importance of gender in their work. They argued for proactive efforts to include women’s voices in the truth-seeking process. This reflected the desire to write a more “inclusive truth” as well as developments in international jurisprudence with regard to sexual violence. Given that “perhaps the most commonly underreported abuses are those suffered by women, especially sexual abuse and rape” (Hayner 2010:77), “gender-sensitive” strategies were employed with the goal of soliciting women’s testimonies about rape and other forms of sexual violence. The results? Of the 16,885 people who gave testimonies to the PTRC, 54% were women and 46% were men (PTRC 2003, vol. 8, p. 64). Thus, women spoke a great deal, but not necessarily about sexual violence—at least not in the first person. The total number of reported cases of rape was 538, of which 527 were committed against women and 11 were crimes against men (PTRC 2003, vol. 8, p. 89). The commission’s effort to provide a “fuller truth” about the use of sexual violence by various armed groups was met with a resounding silence (Theidon 2007, 2012).

But recall that women provided over half of the testimonies compiled by the PTRC. What did they talk about? Women offered insights into the gendered dimensions of war and the ways in which the violence permeated all spheres of life. They spoke about the challenges of keeping children fed, homes intact, livestock safe, the search for missing loved ones, the lacerating sting of ethnic insults in the cities in which they sought refuge: women spoke about familial and communal suffering and about the quotidian aspects of armed conflict. When people go to war, caregiving can become a dangerous occupation. The international focus on conflict-related rape and sexual violence has been a hard-won achievement, but it comes at a cost. Even a broad definition of sexual violence results in a narrow understanding of the gendered dimensions of war and the full range of harms that women (and men) experience and prioritize.

Although women overwhelmingly refused to narrate first-person accounts of rape, they spoke a great deal about the collective legacies of sexual violence. While working on this article, I turned to volume 6 of the final report and to the chapter titled “Sexual Violence against Women.”<sup>3</sup> I found

3. The title of the chapter is reflective of certain omissions in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Men and boys as victims (not just perpetrators) of sexual violence is barely acknowledged, leading to essentialized notions of which sorts of bodies suffer which sorts of injuries. See Theidon (2016).

37 references to girls and women impregnated as a result of wartime rape or exploitative sexual relationships. Mostly these are third-party reports, and the women speaking refer to the phenomenon of unwanted pregnancies in the plural: “they ended up pregnant,” “they came out pregnant.” The army, the police, and the guerrillas of the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement are all named in the women’s testimonies about rape-related pregnancies. The PTRC acknowledges that these children may suffer as a result:

There are numerous cases of women who, being pregnant, were subjected to sexual violence and saw their pregnancies interrupted as a result of that violence. On the other hand, there are abundant cases of women who became pregnant as a result of the sexual violence they suffered at the hands of agents of the conflict; they found themselves obligated to assume a forced pregnancy, and their children still continue to suffer the consequences of the violence. (PTRC 2003, vol. 6, p. 372, my translation)

The reader is left with no further information about those consequences. The women indicate that the guerrillas frequently forced the girls and women to have abortions, and when pregnancies were somehow carried to term, the babies were “forcefully taken away” (PTRC 2003, vol. 6, p. 310). There are fleeting references to babies who died shortly after birth. The singular focus on compiling first-person accounts of rape and sexual violence in order to “break the silence” about these crimes somehow reduced children to a mere coda. What happened to all of those babies? Who else was talking about them?

### What’s in a Name

Amid the trope of “unspeakable atrocities,” a great deal was being said. In addition to women’s testimonies about rape-related pregnancies, audible speech acts of another sort were playing out all around those of us working in the highlands. I am referring to the names given to children born of conflict-related sexual violence. In any community—this is in no way limited to Peru—there is the audible effect of names, both individual and collective, that is frequently of an injurious nature. Here are some examples of these names.

*Rwanda:* Collectively labeled “unwanted children,” “children of bad memories,” “children of hate,” “genocidal children”; the individual names include “little killer,” “child of hate,” “I’m at a loss,” and “the intruder” (Nowrojee 1996:391; Wax 2004; Weitsman 2008:577).

*Kosovo:* “Children of shame” (Smith 2000).

*East Timor:* “Children of the enemy” (Powell 2001).

*Vietnam:* “Dust of life” (Mckelvey 1999) and “American infected babies” (G. Nguyen, personal communication, May 9, 2013).

*Nicaragua:* “Monster babies” (Weitsman 2008:11).

*Guatemala:* “Soldadito” (little soldier; V. Sanford, personal communication).

*Uganda:* “Only God knows why this happened to me,” “I am unfortunate,” “Things have gone bad” (Apio 2007:101).

*Colombia:* “Paraquitos” (little paramilitaries; my fieldwork in Colombia).

In Peru, among other names, children are referred to as “los regalos de los soldados” (the soldier’s gifts), “hijo de nadie” (nobody’s child), “fulano” (what’s his name), and “chatarra” (stray cat). Linguistic or cultural variation alone does not explain this widespread phenomenon in postconflict settings. Comparative ethnographic data are important because these allow us to see patterns in what at first glance might seem to be isolated cases. Time and again, across regions, names reveal the conjuncture of painful kinship and “poisonous knowledge” (Das 2000).

These naming practices seem strikingly at odds with the secrecy and silence assumed to surround rape and other forms of sexual violence. For instance, in their work with rape survivors in Rwanda, Van Ee and Kleber (2012) found that “out of shame, many women who have been raped want to hide their trauma and the way their child was conceived” (643). Concealment is a leitmotif in the literature and is generally understood as a way to avoid stigma for both the mother and her child.

In Peru, some women tried to abort with herbs, attempting to rid their bodies of fetuses they could not bear.<sup>4</sup> Others sought out *curanderos* (healers) who used various abortifacients to perform *limpiezas* (cleansings). In this instance, the word *limpieza* is a form of veiled speech that allowed women to maintain a useful ambiguity. *Limpietas* of various sorts are common for a range of illnesses; indeed, it was only with time that my colleagues and I realized the women had visited *curanderos* to cleanse themselves literally—they complained of feeling “filthy” as a result of being raped—as well as to cleanse their uteruses of unwanted pregnancies.<sup>5</sup>

Still others resorted to infanticide. There is a long-standing practice of “letting die” those babies who are unwanted, perhaps because they are born with congenital defects or are the product of rape. The idea is that *criaturas* (little babies) do not suffer when they die; one can leave them sleeping “mouth down,” gently drifting off to death. Additionally, given women’s concerns about the transmission of *llakis* (toxic memories) and *susto* (soul loss due to fright) from mother to baby, either in utero or via their mother’s “milk of pain and sorrow,” concerns about damage to their infants were omnipresent. How

4. Abortions and infanticide are phenomena widely reported in postconflict settings in which the use of rape was widespread (see Carpenter 2007).

5. Across a variety of postconflict settings, the recurrent theme of children born with disabilities is striking. For example, Carpenter (2010) noted a number of children born to rape survivors in Bosnia who were disabled, “although it is uncertain whether factors relating to the rape itself were primarily responsible” (24). I believe some of these disabilities are due to botched abortion attempts. The lack of safe, accessible, and affordable abortions does a grave disservice to these women, their fetuses, and babies.

could a baby born of such suffering and fear be normal? Many women were certain they could not. Letting these babies die reflected a desire to spare them the violence of memory—and to spare their mothers these memories of violence.

And yet amid this complicated array of hidden practices, names mark certain children and reveal their violent origins. As Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn (2006) note, “Because others usually name us, the act of naming has the potential to implicate infants in relations through which they become inserted into and, ultimately will act upon, a social matrix. Individual lives thus become entangled—through the name—in the life histories of others” (3). Naming is verbal, audible, and interpersonal; naming practices are one way of expressing, perhaps projecting, the private into public space and laying claims on others. These “entanglements” are worth contemplating.

Every woman who spoke with me or with my research assistants about rape insisted, “I’ve never told anyone before.” However, those of us who work amid secrets and silences know that “I never told anyone” is not synonymous with “nobody knows.” Indeed, in his study of public secrecy, Taussig (1999) asks, “[What] if the truth is not so much a secret as a *public secret*, as is the case with the most important social knowledge, *knowing what not to know*?” (2). Public secrets may be privately known but collectively denied such that the drama of revelation amounts to “the transgressive uncovering of a secretly familiar” (Taussig 1999:51). But for the moment, let us assume that some women did successfully conceal their pregnancies and this violence and its legacies. Even so, at some point women give birth to the secret. In that process of emergence, who and what is being made public? Who and what is being named?

Within Quechua-speaking communities, names are not simply labels for people; they are inscribed in social pragmatics, especially as a way of expressing and asserting social hierarchy. People tend to address one another not by given names but by terms denoting relationships.<sup>6</sup> Thus, one’s placement within kinship networks is continuously reiterated in daily interactions. However, nicknames are common and generally reflect some attribute believed inherent to the individual.<sup>7</sup> With nicknames, it is the qualities of the person that are being named.

Over the years, I have known several children who were the result of rape. Here I mention just one boy whose mother had been passed around by the soldiers in the base that had overlooked their community for almost 15 years. I first noticed him because he was standoffish, never joining the growing group of children who made my room a lively place. I tried to speak with him a few times, but he had no interest in conversation. After months of living in the community, I finally asked someone about him. It was late afternoon, and I

saw him heading down the steep hill toward home, his three goats and one llama kept together with an occasional slap of a slender stick. The woman sitting at my side knew him by name: Chiki. My face must have expressed my surprise, because she whispered that his mother was “one of those women.”

Chiki is a painful name for a young boy, who in turn was a painful child for his mother. *Chiki* means “danger” in Quechua, and in daily usage it refers to a warning that something bad is about to happen and should be averted. People recall the ways they learned to look for a sign that the enemy might attack. One such *chiki* was a strong wind that blew through the village, rattling the roofs and letting people know something evil was about to occur. This boy could not be a warning; it was too late to avert this particular danger. Rather, he was the product of an evil event his mother had been unable to escape. His mere being extends his mother’s memory both to the past and into the future. Her son is a living memory of the danger she survived and a reminder that nothing good could possibly come from this Chiki she had failed to avoid.

The concept of stigma is frequently applied to these children, yet is that really all we can say about these names? Stigma seems a thin explanation for a thick phenomenon, and it forecloses a broader repertoire of potential meanings and motivations. While the evidence does not allow one to make totalizing claims, these names surely have something to do with memory and memorialization and with theories regarding what is passed from parent to child. Hence my insistence on who and what is being named and made public and why.

In a fascinating piece on children born to young women who had been abducted and made “wives” by the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, Apio (2007) briefly discusses naming practices. In a sample of 69 children, she found that 49 of them had injurious names (the other 20 had been named either by the father or by medical staff who delivered the babies following their mother’s reintegration). It can be assumed that the mothers named the other 49 children, and their names depicted the plight of their mothers. “These names compile all the bad experiences of a mother into a name and give it a life in the nature of her baby,” Apio (2007) wrote. “In this way the baby is turned into a living reminder of her suffering” (101). Social workers made efforts to give these children new names, such as “I am fortunate” or “Things have turned good,” but as Apio found in her interviews with World Vision staff, the women were reluctant: “They prefer the old names” (Apio 2007:101). We are not told why. This example, however, is at odds with the idea that women inevitably seek to conceal the violent conception of these children. When it is the mother who does the naming and in doing so names the violence she survived, poisonous knowledge is moved outward into the public domain. This appears to be less about shame than it is about pressing some sort of claim on others. Is it about moving from poisonous knowledge to a demand for acknowledgment? Why are the mothers breaking this particular silence?

6. I am grateful to Bruce Mannheim for his insights on naming practices in Quechua (personal communication, April 3, 2014).

7. See Vergara Figueroa’s (1997) study of nicknames in Peru.



In the literature on rape, women frequently appear as metonyms for the nation, the community—for some collective that is allegedly attacked via the rape of its female members. The “rape as a weapon of war” approach turns on this idea and on the deployment of rape as a strategic means of achieving an end (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013). Eriksson Baaz and Stern rightly challenge this framework, noting that the uses and meanings of rape are far more variable than the “weapon of war” approach allows. If rape is, however, at times used to undermine the morale of the enemy and to destroy communities, then marking these children may be a way of bearing witness to the harm done to the collective. Naming is both a “saying” and a “doing,” and speaking these names implicates others in an act of memorialization. Might this be, at times, a woman’s refusal to accept shame and stigma, albeit at a cost to the well-being of her child? As we saw above, in their testimonies to the PTRC, women narrated the familial and communal consequences of the internal armed conflict: women were bearers of collective history. Women were also disruptive of communal histories that had frequently been elaborated by community leaders, virtually all men (Theidon 2012). Women were “counter-memory specialists” whose versions of events often diverged from the seamless accounts of the war offered up to those who came around asking about the past. These children’s names can be a form of narrating the past, of attesting to the legacies of violence in the present, and of denouncing the harm done, for which no redress has yet been found.

I return to public secrets and their revelation in language. Ní Aoláin (2000) has noted that many acts of sexual violence during war are not private acts: “Unlike the experience of gendered violence during peacetime, which is predominantly located in the domain of the private, the home, sexual violence during war is strikingly public” (78). In Peru, women were raped in front of their families and communities; at times they were hauled off to nearby military bases and returned with their hair shorn as a mark of the gang rapes that they had endured. These violations frequently occurred with the complicity of local authorities—all male—and the neighbors who turned a deaf ear to the screaming next door. I have found that officials in the military bases demanded a “communal counterpart” in exchange for the “security” they provided to rural communities during the internal armed conflict. That counterpart consisted of food, wood, and *warmis* (women). At times this demand was veiled by the term *aynicha*, a diminutive of *ayni*. *Ayni* refers to reciprocal labor exchanges by which people work on one another’s agricultural plots. It implies reciprocity but with an element of hierarchy and obligation. Communal authorities would indicate to the military officials which houses were occupied by single mothers and widows; these homes would be the first targeted when the soldiers descended from the bases at night for “la carnada”—literally, “bait,” but in this context it refers to gorging on meat (*carne*), that is, the women they would rape. Again, who and what is being named and made public?

If names can implicate others in acts of memorialization, they may also implicate others in acts of betrayal and treachery. Communal contracts involved sexual contracts, and the burden of providing the communal counterpart fell heavily on certain women and girls who were obliged to “service” the troops. These names disrupt the rules of the game—in this instance, that of knowing what not to know and what not to say. Rather than the “labor of the negative” that is vital to public secrets, with their reproductive labor, women gave birth to and insisted on naming a body of evidence. Taussig (1999) has argued that “truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation that does justice to it” (2). The names—this revelation—may not do justice but constitute a demand for it.

## Local Biologies

The soldiers, the Sinchis [specialized counterinsurgency troops], came into the room [where she was detained]. All night they beat me, mistreated me. Then they began to abuse me, to rape me. Seven of them raped me. One came in, the other left, another came in. All night long. After that I wanted to kill myself, I wanted to die. I became pregnant. I thought that inside me, the product of all that, so many of them—it will be a monster. Oh, so many of them abused me! I thought I had a monster inside. What kind of thing could it be? What was growing inside of me? (Georgina Gamboa García, testimony, PTRC’s public hearing, Huamanga, April 8, 2002, my translation)

I turn now to “local biologies” and theories of transmission. Lock’s (1995) concept of local biologies provides a way of analyzing the coproduction of biology and culture (as opposed to one universal biology on which cultures elaborate) and of capturing how this coproduction contributes to embodied experiences and discourses about the body. This allows us to explore biology as a system of signification, as a way of producing meaning. Of interest here are two trajectories: children conceived via sexual violence, and children who were in their mother’s womb when their mother was raped. How do people understand the effect of these violations on the offspring?

Georgina Gamboa’s fears about monstrosity—about what rather than who was growing in her womb—is one graphic example of a broader range of concerns women expressed in Peru. I was told that children conceived via rape were “naturally aggressive,” a trait traced back to the violence perpetrated by their biological fathers. Other mothers insisted these children were prone to seeking revenge when they grew up, reflecting the idea they were the “enemy within” and that the desire for vengeance was passed from father to son. From the scant literature available, it appears that the male children born of rape are more likely to provoke fear than are the girls, indicating the primacy of the father’s semen and blood in the transmission of traits associated with violent

masculinities (Carpenter 2007, 2010). In this case, nature trumps nurture, and biology veers into destiny.

In her comparative work on children born of rape in Bosnia and Rwanda, Weitsman considers these children as a prism for identity politics. She situates the different uses of rape within the politics of identity, especially with regard to whether ethnicity is or is not determined by the father's bloodline (Weitsman 2008:563). During the Serbian rape campaigns, "the paramount assumption underpinning these policies is that identity is biologically and paternally given" (Weitsman 2008:65). Within this framework, women were mere vessels for transmitting paternal identity, and these were occupied wombs (Fisher 1996). Different constructs of identity will culminate in different logics behind the use (or not) of sexual violence, yet Weitsman is surely correct when she states that, "Once born, the identity of war babies is inextricably linked to their rapist fathers" (2008:566). Given the centrality of the father's identity in determining the fate of these children—whether through behavioral predispositions, ethnic identity, physical appearance, or some other characteristic—it is logical that women will make efforts to exert some control over their reproductive labor and to break that inextricable link. Strategic pregnancies aimed to do just that.

### Strategic Pregnancies

The soldiers dragged my husband out of the house, dragged him to the plaza. Then they disappeared him. I followed them to Canaria to look for him. I demanded they give him back to me. Those soldiers beat me—my chest still aches from how they beat me. They wanted to abuse me, but they couldn't. After everything they did to me, I don't forgive them. It's their fault my children never went to school. Let them come here and at least fix my house! I have three children. After my husband disappeared—well, the soldiers wanted to abuse me. They tried to and I knew I didn't want to have a child from those devils. I decided it would be better to have the child of one of my *paisanos* (fellow villagers). I had the child of a widower so I could make sure those miserable pigs didn't have that pleasure [of impregnating her]. They raped in groups—they raped in line. How could a woman tolerate so many men? Not even a dog could put up with it. (Señora Tomayro, Hualla, 2003)

Señora Tomayro's words condense a great deal. Access to reproductive health care and family planning was minimal before the war and further reduced by the destruction of hundreds of rural health posts during the internal armed conflict. Rape frequently resulted in unwanted pregnancies, which could bring further pain and stigma to the mother as well as to her child. Within a context of minimal choices, women sought to exercise some control over their bodies even if the range of control was reduced to strategically getting pregnant by a member of their community (a *comunero*) rather than by soldiers lined up for gang rape.

But there is more. Women were somehow trying to preserve "community," which confers both rights and obligations. Single mothers complain about the challenges of forcing the fathers of their children to recognize the child and provide the mother with some sort of financial assistance. However, by giving birth to a *comunero's* baby, women bring that child into a familial and communal network of reciprocity and obligation. Becoming pregnant by a *comunero* affords the woman some means of assuring she has someone against whom she can press her claims and those of her child.

Yet this is not just about material resources; it is also about the emotional toll. The faces of children conceived through rape serve as reminders to their mothers of a painful past. These strategic pregnancies are protective and preventive. They are women's efforts to exert some control over the present as well as the future, over their bodies and the production of "future memories." Women like Señora Tomayro were trying to make their fetuses bearable. I now realize they were also trying to ensure the name of the father.

### The Law of the Father

The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 7.1)

One moment in which names are conferred is at birth or shortly thereafter. In contrast to nicknames, one's surname is "a first and crucial step towards making individual citizens officially legible, and along with the photograph it is still the first fact on documents of identity" (Scott 1998:71). This first step in becoming legally legible to the state (and in designating the baby's nationality) is a moment in which identities are fixed and moral careers are set in motion.<sup>8</sup> I turn now to "proper names" and the law of the father.<sup>9</sup>

In Spanish-speaking countries, such as Peru, children have two last names listed on their birth certificate and subsequent National Identity Document (DNI [Documento Nacional de Identidad]). The first surname is their father's, and the second is their mother's. For example, if one's father is Jaime Salinas Morales and one's mother is Jacinta Quispe Rimachi, the child's last name would be Salinas Quispe and recorded as such by personnel at the health post and subsequently by the municipal civil registrar—along with the parents' occupations, among other data. Where this becomes complicated is when the father refuses to officially recognize

8. I refer here, of course, to Goffman's work on stigma (1968).

9. "The idea that there is a 'proper' name (in the sense of being correct as well as being one's own) imbues the act of naming and the name itself with considerable moral force that reflects back on the name-giver as much as it influences the personhood of the name-receiver" (Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006:11).

his child and assume his parental obligations or when the mother does not know who the father is.

In their testimonies to the PTRC, women indicated that Shining Path commanders attempted to limit births by forcing girls and women to have contraceptive injections or abortions, and when women did become pregnant and give birth, the children were usually taken away. The military, in contrast, left many children behind. One communal authority bitterly complained about “los regalos de los soldados” (the soldiers’ gifts) who were born in his pueblo. That community alone had more than 50 young people born as the result of rape and whose fathers’ identities were never determined. If no father’s name is given—or the father’s name is unknown—the child may carry his or her mother’s last two names (which is still a mark of murky conception). Importantly, these documents register two surnames as a legal requirement of the state. While this is a form of reproductive governance, for women it is a crucial point at which to secure the father’s identity and responsibility to the child.<sup>10</sup>

During the internal armed conflict, members of the Peruvian armed forces engaged in widespread rape, resulting in an unknown number of pregnancies. The PTRC registered more than 70 military bases and barracks in which acts of sexual violence were committed, which allowed the commission to state that in certain times and places the use of sexual violence was systematic and generalizable (Macher 2005: 62). In my research, this assertion holds true for each community in which the military established a base during the internal armed conflict.

One component of the PTRC’s work included detailed case studies of certain regions or themes that allowed the commission to establish patterns to the violence in an effort to reveal chains of command and accountability. When it completed its work, the PTRC handed certain *casos judicializables* over to the Public Ministry for further investigation and potential prosecution. One case involved Manta and Vilca, communities in the province of Huancavelica in the central sierra. The names of these communities have become synonymous with the armed forces’ use of sexual violence during the internal armed conflict and the impunity with which they did so.

In 1983 a state of emergency was declared in Huancavelica, and military counterinsurgency bases were established in Manta and Vilca, where they remained in operation until 1998. In addition to theft, arbitrary detentions, assassinations, and torture, there was the systematic use of sexual violence against women. The PTRC determined the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence was tolerated and, in some cases, encouraged by the commanding officers stationed on site.

10. For a rich ethnographic analysis of Quechua speakers’ encounters with personnel in the health post and the discriminatory treatment they experience, see Huayhua (2010).

Just as there was a pattern to the raping, there was a pattern to the names on birth certificates. Numerous women became pregnant in Manta and Vilca, and their testimonies describe the futility of attempting to persuade commanding officers to order their subordinates to recognize and assume responsibility for the children born of rape. As one woman related, when she went to the *coronel* to ask for information about the soldier who had raped her, the *coronel* told her, “He is serving La Patria and you cannot denounce him” (Wiese 2005:61). When they could, women tried to pass these children off as their husband’s child. Many, however, were widows or single mothers, and that option was not available to them.

In the district of Manta alone, the PTRC discovered 32 cases of children whose fathers were military men who had refused to recognize them. The man in charge of the civil registry in Manta confirmed to the PTRC that these fathers were soldiers who had been stationed in the district. In these cases—which frequently involved gang rape by soldiers operating under the cloak of their *noms de guerre*—women may not have known who the father was, but did know what he was. In an effort to have these children recognized by their biological fathers, the mothers registered their children with either the *nom de guerre* or military rank of the biological father: “Soldado,” “Capitán,” “Militar.” Thus, names such as Edwyn Militar Chancasanampa began to appear.<sup>11</sup> The civil registrar also recorded the father’s occupation: “Servicio militar” (Wiese 2005:59). The *Fuerzas del Estado* (Forces of the State) left a generation born of violence in their wake, and, as one NGO worker noted, “it was considered something bad to have had a soldier’s child, and people discriminate against these children now” (Weisse 2005:60). Armed agents of the state forcefully produced these children, and representatives of the state in turn exercised the right to impose a name should the mother fail to provide one. In the health posts and the office of the civil registrar, the law of the father was enforced during the baby’s first interaction with the state.

However, although these names did and do confer stigma, women insisted on registering their children and on somehow naming the father. These were efforts to secure their children’s legitimacy on multiple levels. Women were calling on the state—in the form of personnel in the health post and the civil registrars—to assist them in holding these soldiers responsible for what they had done and accountable to the child that resulted. There is irony at work here. Women who had been raped by soldiers serving La Patria found themselves turning to state functionaries in an effort to force the state to acknowledge the paternity of their children and to assume some form of responsibility for them. Women explicitly stated to my colleague Edith Del Pino that these are “children of the state,” invoking *parens patriae* in an attempt to secure some measure of justice for themselves and their

11. PTRC, cited in *Ideele*, no. 172, 2005, 58.

children. Women found a way of putting a name to the crimes attributable to the state as it waged a counterinsurgency war on its own citizenry. These names are both an accusation and a demand, registered on the baby's first official step toward becoming Peruvian.

### A Witness in the Womb?

Woven throughout these naming practices is concealment and revelation, silence and witnessing. I now consider that other trajectory: children who were in utero when their mothers were raped. Just as people have local biologies regarding children conceived by rape, I imagine most cultural groups have theories regarding the effect of rape on pregnant women. Although it is unclear whether these children are stigmatized, certainly mothers worry about the damage done to their babies during these violent sexual assaults.

In Peru, in addition to possible congenital defects, there were concerns that these children would be prone to epileptiform illnesses and mental disabilities. One woman in the village of Cayara explained it this way:

There are lots of sick children here—some are already adolescents. My neighbor's son is already a young man. When his mother was pregnant, the soldiers abused her. The boy was mistreated even before he was born! He was born different. Halfway *sonso* [senseless]. He can't speak. It's like he's crazy. It's as though he lost his use of reason. He doesn't talk, he's different—*sonso*. He's not like a normal child.

The insistence that these children are mistreated before being born strikes me as irrefutable. Given the brutality of the sexual violence reported in women's testimonies, one can assume these babies were beaten, indeed bludgeoned, during their mother's torture. Perhaps we can extrapolate from a study conducted in Chile, where a team of researchers analyzed the effect of political violence on pregnant women. The researchers began by determining which barrios of Santiago had suffered the most political violence and disappearances during the military dictatorship, and then they selected a sample of barrios, ranging from low to high levels of political violence. They followed the pregnancies and deliveries of a group of women from each barrio and, after controlling for confounding variables, found that women who had lived in the most violent barrios suffered a fivefold increase in pregnancy and delivery complications (Zapata et al. 1992). Both the epidemiological study in Chile and the theories that villagers have with respect to the damaging effects of sexual violence and terror on both a mother and her baby are suggestive and warrant further study.

12. In *Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture*, Feitlowitz (2011 [1998]:213) interviews a young man who had been born in captivity following the extrajudicial detention of his pregnant mother. He assured the author that he retains consciousness of having been tortured in the womb.

One would also want to explore what fetuses are thought to know, to remember, and to experience.<sup>12</sup> Here I draw on a powerful Peruvian film, *La Teta Asustada* (The milk of sorrow), written and directed by Claudia Llosa. In the opening scene, an elderly woman can be heard singing in the high-pitched tone characteristic of *qarawi*. *Qarawi* are sung by women, especially elderly ones, in Quechua-speaking communities and are a form of lyrically historicizing about events. While the tone is always recognizable, the words vary according to the event as the women improvise their commentary on the spot.

The audience quickly realizes the elderly woman is on her deathbed, singing to her daughter who sits nearby. I present an abbreviated version of the lyrics.

Perhaps some day you will understand,  
How much I cried, how much I begged on my knees.  
Those sons of the devil—that night I screamed and the  
hills echoed my cries.  
A she-dog with rabies must have given birth to you.  
The woman who sings was grabbed, was raped that night.  
They didn't care for my unborn daughter.  
They raped me with their penises and their hands.  
No pity for her, watching them from within my womb.

While the film involves magical realism, these words smack less of magic than they do of reality. The mother wants her daughter to understand why she was born so fearful, having been a witness to the abuse of her mother. For women who have survived these brutal assaults and who were assured in those detention centers and military barracks that no one would believe them if they spoke—or if they did, that the shame and stigma would affix to them rather than their perpetrators—the one sympathetic witness to these events may have been watching from within. In their testimonies to the PTRC, several women mentioned how worried they had been that the sexual assault would cause them to lose their babies. Offsetting the fear of miscarrying their babies or giving birth to damaged infants was the tenacious hope that perhaps these children would survive unscathed. To have come through such brutal times and to give birth meant that both they and their babies were survivors.

Similarly, in one study of motherhood and resilience among Rwandan rape survivors, researchers found that carrying a baby to term after both mother and fetus had survived gang rape—or becoming pregnant following the genocide—figured prominently in women's narratives of strength and endurance. The capacity to bring a new life into the world, on their own terms, was a leitmotif in women's stories of survival: "motherhood situated Rwandan genocide-rape survivors, along with their children, hopes, prayers, and desires, at an intersection of different potential futures that were not overdetermined by their personal biographies involving brutal violence, excruciating pain, myriad illnesses, and disease" (Zrally, Rubin, and Mukamana 2013:430). Here is an important reminder that these children may be a source of comfort to their mothers



and their existence a testimony to mothering as a form of resilience and healing.

## Concluding Thoughts

This article grew out of reflections on my own research and on the “absent presence” of children born of wartime rape and sexual exploitation in the literature produced about every postconflict region in the world. These issues are global in scope, the questions seemingly endless, and yet what we know remains woefully limited. There are always policies—implicit or explicit—put in place to address the issue of children born of wartime sexual violence, the women who may abort or give birth to them, and the biological fathers. From state militaries to irregular forces, from combat troops to international peacekeeping missions, the question of what will be done with the children who (inevitably?) result from these encounters is a topic of discussion and policy making (Grieg 2001). I began writing in the hope of making these questions part of the anthropological research agenda, convinced that ethnographic methods are the most appropriate and ethical way to approach these issues. Beyond institutional review boards and compliance with their “technical ethics,” research on children and sexual violence raises deep moral concerns and ambiguities. Long-term anthropological research—which relies less on asking questions than it does on listening to both speech and silences—is the only way I can imagine of finding answers to the questions raised in this article and of doing so in a way that respects how much is at stake in peoples’ lives when public secrets are involved.

We might begin by considering rape-related pregnancies as a form of “reproductive disruption.” Inhorn (2008) has asked, “What do reproductive falterings and failures, miscommunications, and outright battles—or the politically and emotionally charged contestations taking place in the everyday reproductive experiences of women and men around the globe—tell us about the subtleties of culture and power in everyday life?” (iv). Framed this way, one could study children born of wartime rape—as well as the related issues of abortion, unwanted births, kinship, gender regimes, adoption policies, and infanticide—as central to exploring postconflict reconstruction and social repair. The topics have not received the sort of anthropological focus they warrant. For example, Aengst (2014) has noted that infanticide has rarely been the direct focus of anthropological works, prompting her to ask what an ethnography of infanticide would look like and what “this kind of desperation would reveal about mothering, motherhood, and reproduction” (423).

We might also use “jurisdiction” as an analytical tool. All women live within multiple reproductive jurisdictions in the sense of multiple and perhaps contradictory regimes of law, language, and practice (Richland 2013). For example, in her research on the legacies of the Partition, Das (1995) analyzes the Indian state’s policies to “recuperate” and “recover” women who had been abducted and sexually violated during the vi-

olence, tracing the national response to women impregnated by “other” men and giving birth to the “wrong” children. She found that in the sphere of the nation, identity categories were rigidified in the service of national honor while at the familiar and communal levels kinship norms were bent in a myriad of ways to absorb these women and their children into the structures of family and marriage. The multiplicity of customary norms that existed with regard to the children of victimized women were standardized into one single law by which illegitimacy was defined, frequently to the detriment of both the mothers and their children. This is a useful reminder that law can be a blunt instrument, working at odds with “practical kinship” and its useful ambiguities (Das 1995:65). Thus, we might ask when and why a state is compelled to take action on these issues and with what consequences. Why do “protectionist” legal regimes frequently do women a disservice, further instantiating paternalism and patriarchy rather than advancing gender equality?

Finally, we might attend to various life spans. Longitudinal research could tell us a great deal about these children, their experiences, and their life chances. Do the injurious names follow them throughout their lives, or are there ways of escaping the labels and changing one’s fate? How do inheritance practices work in their families? Are they considered full members of the family or treated as second-class children and siblings? In those cases in which stigma is a factor, do children born of rape pass the mark across generations? There is so much we do not know.

I envision this article as a conversation with colleagues and an invitation to think further about these questions. Exploring the ways in which children born of wartime sexual violence are named, represented, marked, and perhaps loved could generate new insights into the intersection of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, violence, and identity. Perhaps these insights could help to achieve a greater measure of justice for these women and their children.

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