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# **UMI**

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THE LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF POLITICAL  
REPRESSION: THE CHILDREN OF THE "DISAPPEARED"  
AND ASSASSINATED IN HONDURAS

by

DEBORA SOLER MUNCZEK

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in  
Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of  
New York.

1995

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACTTHE LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF POLITICAL  
REPRESSION: THE CHILDREN OF THE "DISAPPEARED"  
AND ASSASSINATED IN HONDURAS

by

Débora Soler Munczek

Advisor: Professor Steven Tuber

In Latin America, violent state power has been exercised with intimidation, jailing, murder and "disappearance." Few studies have examined the psychological effects of political disappearance and assassination on surviving family members. This dissertation, based on an exploratory study in Honduras, compares non-clinical samples of 16 children who have experienced the loss of a parent through forced disappearance with 11 children who suffered a similar loss from a political assassination. Surviving parents or caretakers of these children were also interviewed. When the interviews occurred, the time since the disappearance or assassination was ten months to nine years. Diagnostic assessment consisted of a structured interview, projective tests (House-Tree-Person, Rorschach, Thematic Apperception Test), symptom and behavior scales (child and parent versions of adapted Post-Traumatic Reaction Symptom Checklist and Child Behavior Inventory), and open-ended questions about individual and family history, feelings

about the loss, and current life.

Intergroup and intragroup (by gender) differences were quantitatively analyzed using the Urist Mutuality of Autonomy scale, an object-relations measure applied to the Rorschach. Questionnaire and symptom scales were analyzed using frequency distributions, means and standard deviations, t tests for independent samples, the Mann-Whitney U test, and reliability tests. Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that both groups were traumatized and evidenced symptoms of post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and aggressive feelings. Despite the greater length of time since the loss of their parent, children of the disappeared remained as symptomatic as the assassinated group children. Children of the disappeared presented more emotional disturbance than children of the assassinated. The lack of physical, emotional or legal resolution in cases of disappearance results in a failure to mourn their loss and be able to continue with their lives. Other themes explored are both groups' familial interactions; their physical, behavioral and emotional symptoms; their internalized sense of self, others, the world and the future; issues about separation, mourning, aggression and revenge; and the psychosocial effects of involvement (and noninvolvement) in organized protest and in groups of family members of victims of political repression.

DEDICATION

While I was doing research in Honduras I came to know some very special people. I dedicate the dissertation to them: the children and families of the disappeared and assassinated, who opened their homes and hearts to me, and the staff and members of the Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos de Honduras (COFADEH) for their invaluable help in making this study possible, for welcoming me to their organization, and particularly for their courageous work on behalf of justice and truth. Lastly, I dedicate this work to people in Central America and all over the world whose belief in human dignity and equality lead them to fight in small and large ways on its behalf.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Family and friends lovingly and patiently encouraged and nurtured me through this process. My mother, Martha Soler, opened my eyes at a very young age to social issues and social problems. My father, Herman Munczek, and stepmother, Phyllis Brill, were always there emotionally and financially, as was the rest of my wonderful family. My

husband, Marc Edelman, introduced me to Central America and shared with me his excitement and decades of expertise on the region. He guided, supported and counseled me throughout this journey, urging me to pursue my interest in psychological aspects of political repression, reading and suggesting changes in the manuscript, and innumerable times putting his own pressing work aside to take care of our child and to cook and clean, so I could work. His imprint is especially apparent in Chapter II. I want to thank my son Daniel for his exuberance in everything he does and for allowing his mom to work on her "diss" instead of play. I am also grateful to Jennifer Patton, fellow student and dear friend, for her presence and enthusiastic support throughout the writing process. Finally, I am deeply appreciative of the many other friends, both in the United States and in Honduras, who have stood by me through the years of graduate school and dissertation.

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the Problem

Most of Latin America, plagued for decades by military dictatorships or civilian governments beholden to military and economic elites, has begun reestablishing democratic institutions only in the last few years. These regimes exercised violent state power in a number of ways, including physical intimidation, jailing, murder and "disappearance." Tens or hundreds of thousands of dissenters and political opponents were assassinated or "disappeared"-- kidnapped, tortured, incarcerated in clandestine jails, and murdered, their bodies dumped at sea or hidden in unmarked graves. What are the psychological effects of these methods of political repression on the children of the "disappeared" and assassinated? How are the psychological consequences of political disappearance and assassination on surviving family members like those of other losses, such as death from accident or illness? What are the specific sequelae to a loss resulting from state terror?

Political repression impacts the entire society, but the repercussions are greatest for those most directly affected. People who are tortured or imprisoned or who have persecuted, jailed, disappeared or assassinated family members often face a double anguish. Along with the

original pain of the experience or loss, direct victims and their families must frequently contend with the social denial of these events and the accompanying ostracism and isolation. This can lead to the privatization of the loss and feelings of stigmatization and confusion. The process of grieving and coping with the consequences of the experience become particularly difficult.

The present study, conducted in Honduras, evaluates and compares Honduran children who have experienced a parent's loss through forced disappearance with Honduran children whose loss of a parent is the result of political assassination. For children, the loss of a parent is a complicated experience with numerous emotional, social, economic, family and developmental repercussions. Children are often transformed by these experiences and become significantly different persons than they would have been had the loss not occurred.

In the case of politically-motivated parental loss, it is particularly important to look at these children's families, their society and political system and consider the impact of these different ecologies on the children's experience. The social environment and political climate in which these children and their families have lived definitely shaped and, in many cases, reinforced their traumatic loss.

I hypothesized that both children of the disappeared

and children of the assassinated have been seriously impacted by their experiences and would evidence symptoms of traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and aggression, but that children whose loss was more recent would be more symptomatic. I also hypothesized that, due to the lack of physical, emotional or legal resolution in cases of forced disappearance, the children of the disappeared would present more unconscious emotional disturbance than would the children of the assassinated, who have the certain knowledge of their parent's death and are therefore better able to mourn their loss.

In addition to the quantitative hypotheses, I qualitatively analyzed the interview material (described below), focusing on different aspects of these children's phenomenological experience: their primary concerns, their emotional responses, their defensive or coping strategies, their disrupted sense of self, age and gender issues, differences between the children of the disappeared and the assassinated, and their attitudes toward social action and political organizations.

### Rationale of the Study

Although a small body of work, largely descriptive, examines the psychological effects of political disappearance and assassination on surviving family members, there are very few systematic studies with a non-immigrant,

non-refugee, non-clinical population. This research, consisting of diagnostic interviews using various scales, projective tests and questions about the children and their lives, aims to help build a body of literature on this subject. In particular, findings from this investigation have implications for comparative research on the psychosocial impact of political violence on children and for the clinical treatment of victims and their families. My investigation may also contribute to the mental health work of the Committee of Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH) and of similar groups elsewhere in Latin America and other regions of the world.

#### Definition of Terms

"Forcible disappearance," "political disappearance," "disappearance," and "disappeared" refer to a government-sanctioned military or paramilitary strategy of abducting and secretly incarcerating, torturing and often murdering political dissenters, while refusing to acknowledge these prisoners' incarceration or death.

"State terrorism," "political repression," "violent state power," "institutionalized violence," and "institutionalized terror" refer to both the real and threatened use of violence by the state against dissenters and citizens in general and the physical, social and psychological methods used to reinforce this state control.

"Psychological trauma," "trauma," and "traumatic" refer to the psychological and psychophysiological consequences of exposure to overwhelming, and usually sudden, external events that render people helpless in the face of intolerable danger, anxiety and instinctual arousal.

#### Delimitations of the Study

I limited the scope of the study in a number of ways. It was restricted geographically to the country of Honduras. The samples were restricted to children (and young adults) ages 9 or more whose father or mother was forcibly disappeared or assassinated for political reasons. The loss of the parent had to have occurred at least 9 months prior to the time of interview.

#### Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by certain conditions beyond the control of the author. While in Honduras, time constraints, lack of telephones and other communication difficulties and a physically dispersed population and deficient transportation network kept me from finding or reaching some potential subjects. Distrust of a foreigner may have discouraged a few potential subjects from discussing an already difficult, not easily divulged subject.

Lastly, I had originally conceived the project as a controlled study. Once in Honduras, it became clear that it

would be extremely difficult or nearly impossible to find subjects who met the requirements for a true control group: children who matched my test subjects on most conditions, but whose parental loss was the result of human violence that was not politically-motivated. Instead, I chose to compare two groups of children with politically-caused parental loss, children of disappeared and assassinated parents.

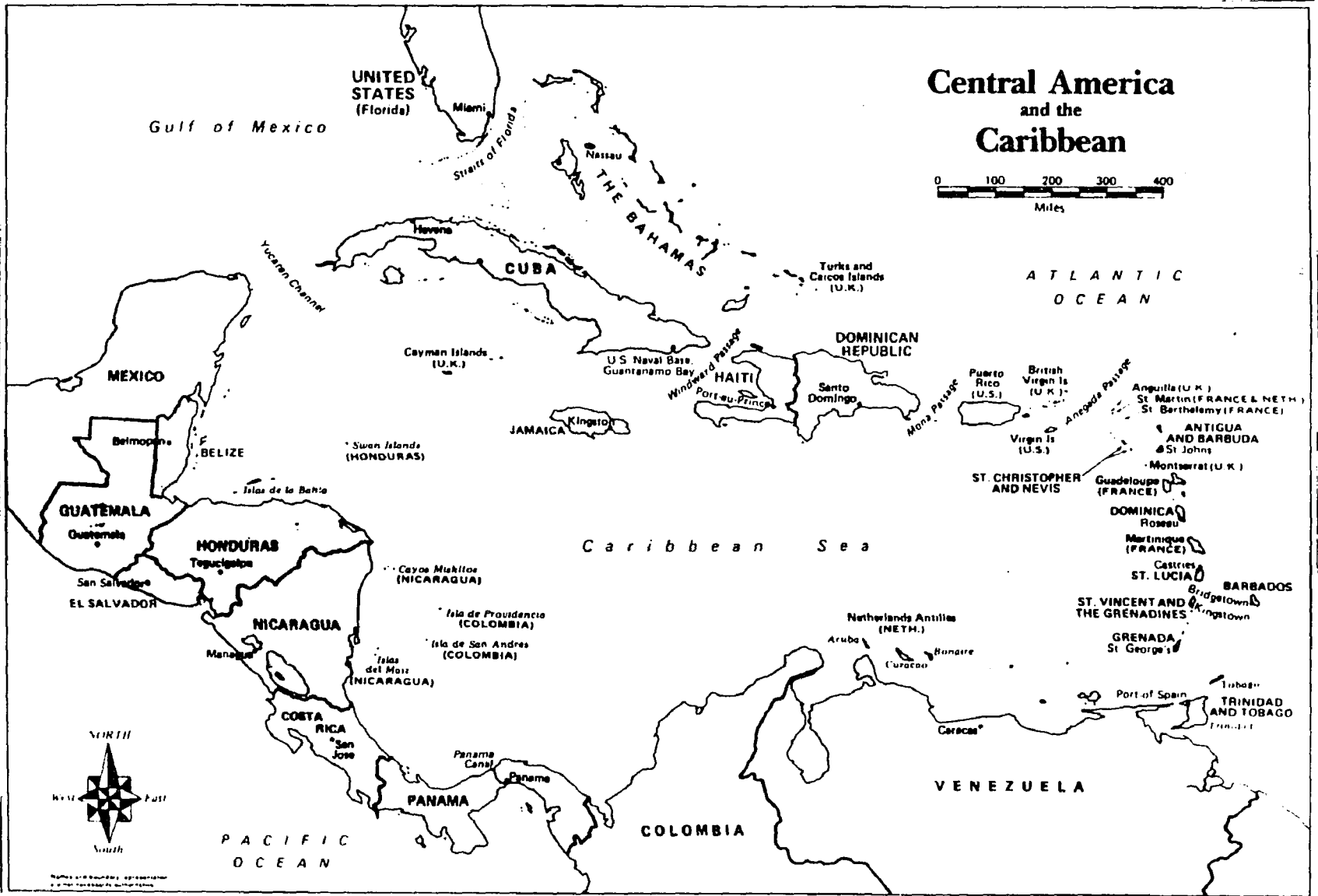
CHAPTER II. HONDURAS: GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMY, HISTORY, AND POLITICS

Physical and Human Geography

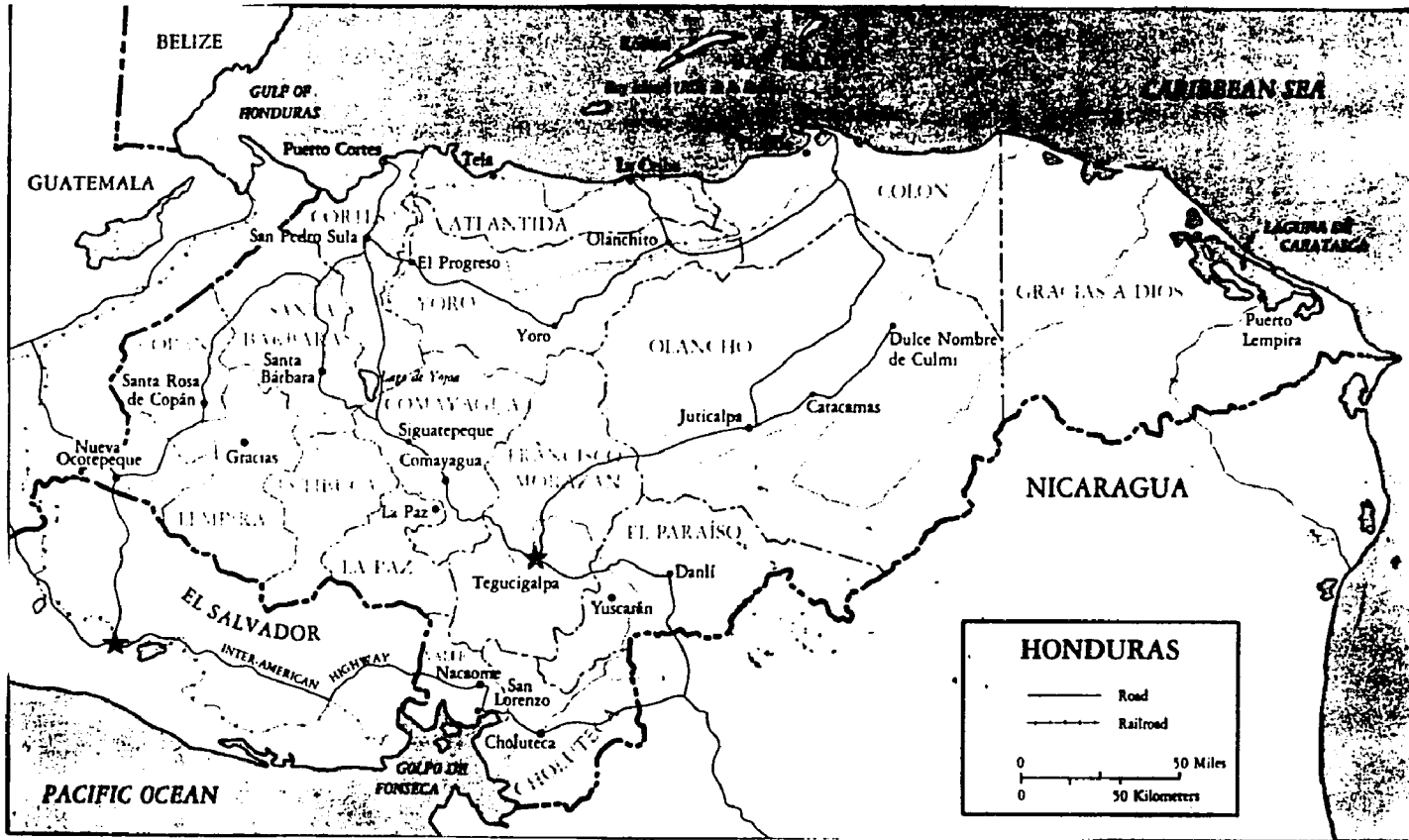
Honduras is the second largest country (after Nicaragua) in the seven-country Central American land bridge that connects North and South America (see Map 1). It stretches from the Caribbean Sea on the northeast to the Gulf of Fonseca on the Pacific Ocean in the southwest (see Map 2). On the northwest it borders Guatemala, on the southwest El Salvador, and on the southeast Nicaragua. Honduras is Central America's most mountainous country; the western and central regions have rugged mountains of up to 9,000 feet, interspersed with numerous upland valleys.

The country is only 15 to 16 degrees north of the equator. Temperatures near the coasts can be quite high, while the mountainous interior has cooler weather. For millennia a heavily forested region, Honduras has suffered severe deforestation in the twentieth century. This has contributed to a vicious cycle of higher temperatures, diminished rainfall, land erosion, and greater deforestation. The seasons are marked not so much by temperature, as is usual in more temperate climates, but by the distribution of rainfall: "summer," the dry period, is between January and May; "winter," the wet season, is from

Map 1. Central America and the Caribbean



Map 2. Honduras



June to December.

The population of 5.5 million is concentrated in the central and western upland valleys and along the northern Caribbean coast. Almost two-thirds of the people live in rural settlements. Major urban centers include Tegucigalpa, the capital; San Pedro Sula, the major industrial and commercial agricultural center situated in the north; La Ceiba, home of the former Standard Fruit Company; and a few others.

Approximately 90 percent of the population are Spanish-speaking mestizos of Indian-Spanish heritage. The rest of the population consists of members of six Indian groups (7 percent) and Afro-Antilleans (2 percent), whose ancestors migrated to Honduras over the past one hundred years and who live primarily on the north coast. Very small groups from German, Middle Eastern, North American, Asian and other ancestries are prominent in business and agroindustrial activities (CRIES, 1994; Davidson, 1994). Many people from neighboring Central American countries, displaced by political and economic upheavals in the region, also live there.

#### Central American Political and Economic History<sup>1</sup>

The countries now known as Honduras, Guatemala, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information for this section comes from Smith (1986).

Belize, as well as southern Mexico, were once the centers of Mayan civilization. Magnificent Mayan ruins throughout this region-- including the Copán ruins in Honduras-- attest to that illustrious past. However, Central America, unlike Mexico and Peru, played a minor role in Spain's American empire. The colonial economy was never very dynamic: the major export was cacao, later supplanted by indigo and tobacco (MacLeod, 1973).

Central America achieved independence from Spain in 1821. Post-independence political elites were divided into two main factions: Conservatives and Liberals, with the latter gaining control by the late nineteenth century. Liberals sought to modernize the economies inherited from the colonial era by creating free markets in land, labor and capital. This led them to expropriate church and community lands, which "freed" land for agricultural exports, particularly coffee, and created a landless or land-poor labor force. Liberal regimes also built railroads, ports, and telegraphs and sought to modernize banking and public administration. Land sales to foreign investors, many of whom cultivated bananas, financed much of the Liberals' program. In order to maintain order and a favorable investment climate, Liberal regimes often established the Central American countries' first strong states, with repressive militaries, national guards, and systems of political control that reached into even the most remote

rural communities.

Coffee and banana production soon dominated the regional economy and accounted for around 70 percent of Central American exports from 1910 to 1960. The national elites in several Central American countries owed their wealth largely to coffee production, processing and export, while foreign banana companies were constant players in national politics.

Coffee grew well in mid-altitude, mountainous zones. Bananas, in contrast, required a tropical climate, level fields and a modern transportation system to deliver the highly perishable fruit to faraway markets, particularly in North America. In contrast to coffee enterprises, which were usually nationally-owned, banana production was controlled by United States corporations, which built railroads and ports and owned the ships that transported the crop overseas. The banana plantations employed thousands of workers; they operated as foreign enclaves in Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, with their own systems of company stores, transportation, communications, education, and law and order. The small population of Central America and the severely skewed income and wealth distributions impeded the creation of an adequate market for industrialization.

After 1950, however, in several countries-- including Honduras-- there were significant changes in the economy,

political institutions and the military. Production began to diversify and internal markets expanded. Governments, under pressure for modernization from U.S. and international aid institutions and with increasing international demand for primary products, provided credits and infrastructure for new export sectors, especially cattle, cotton, and sugar. In the early 1960s, the countries of the isthmus organized the Central American Common Market. The United States' Alliance for Progress supported the Common Market's efforts to spur regional growth.

Economic transformations stimulated political changes. Agrarian capitalism and population growth increasingly threatened traditional forms of peasant land tenure. Labor, peasant and student organizations, popular associations, and centrist and leftist political parties were established. Support for reform also came from a revitalized sector of the Catholic church that acknowledged the grievances of the poor rural and urban masses and placed the blame for hunger and misery on the rich and powerful.

While considerable economic growth took place after 1950, the entrenched upper classes in most of the region showed little willingness to undertake serious reforms. The pattern of growth and deprivation exerted great pressure on Central American societies, as new social forces mobilized to push for justice and change. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, intransigent elites, backed by increasingly

powerful militaries, responded to these calls for reform with ruthless repression. This, in turn, radicalized popular groups and encouraged the formation of armed revolutionary organizations, eventually leading to civil war.

### The United States in Central America

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States began to emerge as a global power. Washington considered instability in Central America and the Caribbean an intolerable threat to U.S. economic interests and to the security of the new Panama Canal. Consequently, it favored brutal dictatorships and corrupt elites over reform-minded, democratic movements. The policies of Gunboat and Dollar Diplomacy sought to forcefully exclude all European economic or political influence from the region.

In contrast to the United States, Central American nations were small and economically and politically weak. A word from Washington could make a government rise or fall. When this failed, marines were sent to carry out U.S. wishes. Washington's displays of power varied depending on who was in the White House and on the country in question. After 1932, Franklin Roosevelt eschewed military intervention as part of his Good Neighbor Policy. But with the Cold War, Washington again justified intervention against populist and nationalist governments in Central

America and the Caribbean in the name of anti-communism.

The 1960s and 1970s brought a somewhat less hard-line approach. After 1980, however, under Ronald Reagan's administration, the United States devoted vast amounts of military, intelligence, economic and political resources to combatting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, the leftist forces in the civil war in El Salvador, and the guerrilla insurgency in Guatemala.

### Honduran History

With the Spanish conquest, Honduras became a colonial backwater, a subsistence agriculture and third-rate mining and cattle-producing region, completely dependent on colonial Guatemala. Most of the country lacks the volcanic soil necessary for large-scale coffee production. Consequently, after independence, Honduras did not develop an agrarian capitalist coffee-export oligarchy as did some of the other Central American countries.

Instead, it became a banana-based economy (mining, also in the hands of foreign capital, was the second most important sector). In fact, Honduras was considered the most typical of the "banana republics" in which large U.S.-owned fruit companies directed the internal affairs of the country. Honduran elites were relegated to providing the political, administrative and legal infrastructure for foreign capital. The banana enclave constrained, rather

than spread, development and left Honduras extremely poor.

The economic transformations that began in the 1950s throughout Central America stimulated some political and social changes in Honduras. But as popular movements became stronger, the military, landowners and banana companies felt increasingly threatened, leading to a military coup in 1963 and military-- or military-controlled-- regimes until the early 1990s (Shepherd, 1986).

#### Situation of the 1980s

The military regimes that ruled the country from 1963 to 1981, corrupt and despotic as they were, were not nearly as repressive as those in neighboring Guatemala and El Salvador or in the southern cone countries of South America. At times (1972-1975), military leaders even carried out moderately successful social reforms, opening the state to modernizing urban and industrial interests and conceding to some of organized labor's and peasants' demands for better working conditions and more equitable agrarian policies (Salomón, 1982).

In 1981, free elections brought a return to civilian government. But this nominal democratization coincided with rapid militarization of Honduran society, as the country became enmeshed in Central American geopolitics. As the war in El Salvador intensified and the covert war against Nicaragua began, Washington decided that Honduras'

strategic position in the heart of the region made it the ideal site for an expanded U.S. military presence. This goal supplanted U.S. support for internal political, economic and social reforms. In return for massive amounts of U.S. aid, Honduras permitted both U.S. and Nicaraguan contra military operations on its territory (Shepherd, 1986).

In 1981, a civilian, Roberto Suazo Córdova, was elected president. He was, however, widely regarded as a figurehead. Real power rested with General Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, an Argentine-trained advocate of the doctrine of the "national security state," the guiding ideology of repressive military regimes in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina (Rosenberg and Colburn, 1989).

During the 1970s and 1980s, Honduras did not experience the same level of broad-based domestic unrest and insurgency as occurred in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, even though it faced similar, or worse, social, political and economic conditions. In 1980, Honduras had the highest birth rate, lowest per capita income and second highest infant mortality rate in the region (Schultz & Schultz, 1994). However, many of the most active and militant popular movements were crippled or destroyed at the beginning of the 1980s through harsh, repressive measures.

Starting in 1980, scores of people disappeared at the hands of the Honduran armed forces (Barahona et al., 1990), and many others were jailed, tortured and killed (Cohn &

Thompson, 1995, June 11, 13, 15, 18). Human rights organizations, comparing the situation to Argentina's notorious "dirty war" of 1976-82 in which over 10,000 people vanished, noted that the systematic disappearances in Honduras bore "signs of the Argentine method" (Americas Watch, 1982). In 1988, Honduras earned the dubious distinction of being the first government condemned by the Inter-American Human Rights Court for politically-motivated forced disappearance.

Disgruntled junior officers toppled Alvarez in 1984 and disappearances decreased markedly with his removal and exile (Amnesty International, 1991). A recent report commissioned by the new government of President Carlos Roberto Reina documents 179 disappearances from 1980 to 1992. It also acknowledges the climate of intimidation and terror created by the disappearances, assassinations, death threats, and other repressive measures of the 1980s and early 1990s (Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos, 1994). It is likely that even more disappearances took place than were documented in this report. Recently, a former Chief of Military Intelligence, Leonidas Torres Arias, accused the armed forces of responsibility for a total of 184 disappearances (CEDOH, 1995b).

#### Current Conditions

The country remains one of the poorest in the Americas;

it is traditionally regarded as the second poorest after Haiti (Anderson, 1994). Annual per capita income is around \$US500.00 (Save the Children U.K., 1995). Although housing, some foods, and public transportation are significantly cheaper than in the United States, other necessities, such as clothing, fuel, telephone service, and especially medicine, can be equally or more expensive.

The majority of the population lives marginally and is engaged in subsistence activities, farming, day labor, and menial jobs. Officially, literacy is 73 percent (CRIES, 1994). However, this figure includes a large proportion of people who have had only minimal schooling and who would be considered functionally illiterate in the United States. Education through high school is free, but books, supplies and transportation must be provided by parents. Many children discontinue their primary or secondary schooling because their families cannot afford shoes, required uniforms and other school supplies. In addition, secondary schools are few and many are unable to attend because of the cost of travel or relocation.

While conditions in urban areas are arduous, they are even more difficult in rural areas. Basic services in rural regions-- where the majority of the population lives-- are inadequate: only 56 percent have access to rudimentary health services, 48 percent drink potable water, and 42 percent have sanitation services (CRIES, 1994). Honduras

lacks the social welfare protections that exist in most industrialized and many Latin American countries. The vast majority of Hondurans live a precarious day-to-day existence, with no savings or old age security.

Honduras is still one of the major Central American banana producers, but in recent decades some diversification of the economy has occurred. Coffee, cattle, sugarcane, lumber, tobacco, seafoods and light industry have become significant economic sectors. However, the country has benefitted less than any of its neighbors from the Central American Common Market.

The governments of the 1990s have been far more democratic than those in previous decades, and political parties and popular organizations have begun to resurface. Nonetheless, an entrenched system still exists of elite power, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, military impunity and desperate poverty. This perpetuates inequality, injustice and lack of opportunity for the vast majority of the population.

Corruption is rampant in government, business, and even labor; this constitutes a major obstacle to social and economic development (eg., CEDOH, 1994; CEDOH, 1995a). A flagrant example of corruption is the Honduran military's annual budget, which is partially secret, and some of which has been used to buy up large tracts of land and major enterprises, turning the armed forces into a major economic

interest group and reinforcing its role as protector of the elite (Salomón, 1992). The armed forces have also been linked to the frequent anonymous death threats directed at members of human rights, popular, peasant and labor organizations (eg., CEDOH, 1995b; COFADEH, 1995).

The recently-formed government National Commission for the Protection of Human Rights has begun, in an unexpectedly vigorous manner, to hold hearings and begin procedures to prosecute military officials linked to the human rights violations in the 1980s. The initial response by the chief of the armed forces, General Luis Alonso Discua Elvir, was to refuse to turn over the officials and to drive tanks and other military vehicles through the streets as a show of force (El Nuevo Día, 1995). Widespread opposition to these moves led him to soften his position. Nonetheless, human rights organizations and observers are not optimistic about the long-term prospects for bringing to justice those members of the military and government implicated in human rights violations.

### CHAPTER III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter describes four interrelated literatures on: (1) the social psychology of political repression in Latin America; (2) the victims of state terrorism and their families; (3) trauma and loss; and (4) trauma and the consequences of political repression for children.

In order to understand my subjects' experience-- losing a father to politically-motivated disappearance or assassination--, it is necessary to look beyond the child and the family unit to the larger society and political system. These children's and their families' social environment shaped and reinforced their traumas.

The loss of a parent is never an event-limited experience like losing expensive heirloom jewelry or a cherished pet which will be missed but can easily be physically replaced. The child's experience of losing a parent is tragic, not only because a loved and currently needed person is gone, but because of numerous related social, economic, family and developmental repercussions. These often transform the child's subsequent experiences and lead him or her to become a significantly different person than he or she would have been had the loss not occurred.

Social Psychology of Political Repression in Latin America

In this section I discuss some recent social science literature on psychological aspects of state terrorism in Latin America and its impact on individuals and society as a whole. This work is largely theoretical, observational, clinical and testimonial. Although quite interesting theoretically, many of the writers are overly general in their conceptions. It is sometimes unclear whether they are referring to the population as a whole, or only to certain segments, such as those directly affected by repression, the rest of the populations, the rulers, or those that carried out their dictates.

In addition, the political circumstances both between and within Latin American countries varied significantly, and included country-wide civil wars, substantial civil opposition or guerrilla insurgencies, coups d'etat that overthrew established governments, and very repressive regimes with only small mobilized opposition. Similarly, much of the literature does not specify how effects differed in these dissimilar sets of circumstances. However, the startling resemblance in these readings' descriptions of the climate of fear and intimidation that reigned in otherwise widely varying countries points to common methods by which authoritarian regimes control their populations.

Lastly, this review does not address the literature on the processes that led some individuals and groups to

conquer fear and be immune to intimidation. Although some authors address this fundamental issue, most do a far better job of describing processes of intimidation and compliance than of defiance. A problem with these ideas is their tendency toward a reactive and passive conception of human beings and society (eg., Amati, 1990; Samayoa, 1987), which fails to account for the democratizing changes that began to transform authoritarian rule in many countries. By contrast, others (eg., Dunayevich, 1986; Martín-Baró 1989a, 1990; Zukerfeld, 1986) appear to present a more active, conflictive notion of society and of individual human beings as historical agents.

There is a substantial body of work on the psychology of political control in different parts of the world during the twentieth century. In the middle part of this century, Reich (1933), Adorno (1950) and others of the "Frankfurt School" examined the cultural and psychological aspects of mass society that promoted adaptation to authoritarian rule. Arendt (1966) also made important contributions in this area, focusing on both the rulers and the ruled. In the post-World War II era, there have been numerous social psychological critiques of totalitarian Eastern bloc systems (e.g., Medvedev, 1989). Similarly, citizens' behavior in oppressive Third World regimes has been examined by theorists such as Fanon in the Caribbean (1967) and Algeria (1968) and Memmi in colonial and post-colonial Africa

(1965). In the discussion that follows, however, I will largely limit myself to recent writings on Latin America.

a. State Terrorism in Latin America

Human beings are social animals. Individuals exist within class, national and cultural frameworks. Their sense of themselves is embedded in social structures. The psychology of political repression involves both a dynamic interplay between the individual's internal world, the social context at all different levels and the representation of the social world within the individual psyche (Amati, 1990).

*State terrorism* (also referred to in this document as *political repression, violent state power, institutionalized violence and institutionalized terror*) is both the real and threatened use of violence by the state against dissenters and citizens in general and the physical, social and psychological methods used to reinforce this state control. Its purpose is to silence opposition to the social, economic and/or political conditions found oppressive by large segments of the population.

Repression in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s involved the destruction of civil, labor and government institutions and the suppression of civil liberties. Control was consolidated through violent measures, such as military coups, jailings, disappearances,

torture, assassinations and executions; economically and socially-stressful measures such as forced exile, anonymous threats, and dismissals from work; and a variety of psychological warfare methods (Faúndez, 1990).

While violent state power was, until recently and with few exceptions, a continental phenomenon, each Latin American country's experience has been marked by historical and cultural particularities. In Guatemala-- undoubtedly the worst violator of human rights in the hemisphere-- in the early 1980s, most of the more than 100,000 victims of state terrorism were murdered by the military in bombing and artillery attacks that destroyed 450 indigenous, rural communities. Many of the victims were also savagely tortured and raped (Handy, 1984). Ten thousand or more people were disappeared (Quirk, 1992). In contrast with Argentina (see below), there was little attempt to cover up government actions.

In El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, expulsions from occupied areas for "military security" reasons were common. In Argentina, 10,000 to 30,000 people were rounded up, tortured and murdered, but while their abductions may have been public, their subsequent torture and murder was, for the most part, conducted in a clandestine manner. The security forces never acknowledged these prisoners' incarceration or death-- they became "the disappeared"-- and secretly dumped their bodies in the ocean or buried them in

mass graves (Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas, 1984).

In Uruguay, thousands languished in jails for years and years, suffering torture and degradation (Jauregui & de Peña, 1993). In other countries, such as Honduras, governments were equally repressive but faced less organized opposition and therefore relied more heavily on threats of brute force and on institutionalized fear as methods of social control.

In the following section I discuss the ramifications for the direct victims of these abuses, but first I explore the social psychological environment created by these political practices.

A remarkable phenomenon is that, quite often, in these repressive regimes, many or most of their citizens passively accept and sometimes even embrace the abuse of human rights. How do these regimes achieve legitimacy, or at least compliance, when they trample on democratic ideals and institutions? In order to understand this seeming inconsistency, I will examine different dimensions of state terrorism.

Ignacio Martín-Baró (a prominent Salvadoran psychologist and human rights advocate and one of six Jesuit scholars murdered along with their housekeeper and her daughter in November 1989) pointed out shortly before his death that, even in his own civil war-racked nation, mass

murder of groups was an *extraordinary* event compared to other *ordinary* events:

The most common acts of state terrorism that take place in El Salvador usually do not make the news. They do not appear in a form that would be interesting to newspaper readers and television viewers. These comprise what I would call day-to-day terrorism: that systematic pressure applied to the whole population on a day-by-day-basis. This consists of the systematic harassment of those who think differently; of those humanitarian organizations, for instance, that try to help victims of the war. It consists of... the systematic labeling, through the mass media, of all opposition as subversive, as terrorist-- a labeling that somehow triggers a consequence, a revenge, a danger of death to those who have been labeled. This kind of day-to-day action upon the whole population-- the harassing, pressuring, labeling, moral discrediting of whoever tries to do something significant on behalf of the poor-- is what I call day-to-day terrorism. Such terrorism becomes even more oppressive when accompanied by... extraordinary acts of terrorism (1989b).

Studies in societies ruled by highly repressive regimes in El Salvador (Martín-Baró, 1989a, 1989b, 1990), Guatemala (Miller, 1993), Honduras (Almendares, 1991; Quirk, 1992, 1994), Argentina (DuBois, 1990; Graziano, 1992; Hollander, 1992; Kordon & Edelman, 1986, Kordon et al., 1995), Uruguay (Rial, 1992), Chile (Lira, 1983; Lira et al., 1984; Salimovich et al., 1992) and Brazil (Moreira Alves, 1992) suggest the emergence of a pervasive "culture of fear" (Corradi et al., 1992; Lechner, 1992) or "cultural elaboration of terror" (Taussig, 1984). Fear, conscious and unconscious, acknowledged and not, is a "pervasive state of mind" (Comas-Díaz & Padilla, 1990) in these regimes.

In the introduction to their edited volume, Fear at the

Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America, Corradi, Fagen and Garretón (1992) observe that, in advanced industrialized democracies, there is a reluctance to view fear as something other than a "personal emotion." They attribute this largely to ignorance, since free societies "do not know fear as the permanent and muffled undertone of public life."<sup>1</sup> They note that this permanent fear is present in large parts of the world, under dictatorships and nominally democratic, but repressive, regimes of all political stripes.

Corradi and his colleagues posit that successive Latin American regimes from the 1960s to the 1980s transformed their nations' social fabric. Through the systematic use of institutionalized terror-- the objectification and manipulation of fear-- they attempted to isolate and destroy civil institutions that protected citizens from abuses of state power. Lechner (1992) elaborates this point, noting that fear is intimately connected to the question of order. He argues that in Latin America, "diversity is perceived not as plurality, but as disorder." Consequently, there is a pervasive fear of the everpresent other ("chaos", "communism")" who is perceived as an invader responsible for

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<sup>1</sup>I would add that it is also these societies'-- particularly the United States'-- individualistic ethos that fails to appreciate the interconnectedness of the individual with her/his social world.

the proliferation of diverse social ills.<sup>2</sup>

"Authoritarianism 'solves' the problem of order not by the suppression but by the manipulation of fear."

Garretón (1992) identifies two types of fear: *fear of the unknown*-- which results in a sense of insecurity, and *fear of known and experienced dangers*-- which leads to a sense of intimidation. These could also be called existential and material fears. Latin America's authoritarian regimes manipulated both of these forms of fear and their accompanying rage to consolidate their control. To paraphrase Lechner (1992), the "imprint of authoritarianism" is the culture of fear.

Nonetheless, some forms of fear have always been widespread and deeply felt among the poor in Latin America. On the one hand, this fear is rooted in the uncertainties of life and individual and family survival-- fear from the threat of destitution, disaster and dread of the future (Salimovich et al., 1992). These existing fears interconnect with politically manipulated existential and material fears and lead people to feel even more vulnerable

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that the tendency to blame outsiders and foreigners for national problems is seen in all sectors of Latin American society. Boyer (1985) interviewed Honduran refugees of human rights abuses who insisted that their country's state terrorism had been imposed by foreign powers-- especially the United States and Argentina-- and that "such savagery was not characteristic of the Honduran people." Boyer observes that "their recent experience in the torture chamber doubtless created deep psychic needs to hold dearly to a positive, essentialist view of their own culture and self-identity."

and immobilized. The sources of fear are then perceived everywhere, and may include the military, government informers, neighbors, communism, chaos, violence, poverty, unemployment, and the unfamiliar.

Faúndez states:

Fear, in all its forms, is at the same time means and ends, necessary condition and obtained result. Fear... has ceased to be a normal, individual reaction that protects the subject and has been transformed into the background and nexus of social relations, of communication between people... The state has successfully created a relational environment with grave distortions and changes of rules and habits in the communication between people (1990, p. 88).

#### b. Internalization of Political Repression

At times, almost any thought or action can be viewed as a threat to the state, as a "subversive" activity that leads to incarceration, torture, disappearance or death. When the threat of brutal, annihilating repression is always present, people start to feel extremely vulnerable. Fear imbues even the most intimate social relationships (Cecchi & Sakalik, 1986).

Suspicion reigns. Anybody-- a relative, neighbor, co-worker, friend-- can be an informer and one can also always be suspect in others' eyes. "In this way, everyone is simultaneously victim and potential assassin" (Galli, 1986, p. 35). Lira (1984, 1988) refers to it as "an altered sense of reality," which undermines the objective validation of one's own experiences and knowledge. Hollander (1992)

describes it as a "kind of paranoid character disorder [that] comes to look like a national trait." All agree that threats by repressive, violent regimes lead to states of hypervigilance that result in alienated relationships and communication. "The 'alienation or death' dilemma," as Galli (1986, p. 35) remarks, "resembles the persecuted-persecutor psychotic paranoid system, but with a great difference: there is no delirium for either persecuted or persecutor. These ghostly representations approximate the social reality."

Political repression is internalized in many ways. It is better not to think too much, not to question, not to analyze. Reflective, critical and anticipatory capabilities are inhibited. This results in profound conformity and self-censorship. Thought and behavior become conventional, stereotypical and uncreative. Individuals and social life itself become very rigid (Cecchi & Sakalik, 1986; Comas-Díaz & Padilla, 1990; Galli, 1986; Martín-Baró, 1989b). Hollander notes that silence, inexpressiveness and inhibition all result in depolitization:

One of the most outstanding features of a terrorized population is the compulsion to deny reality, to refuse to bear witness to the sinister drama that oppresses the entire nation. Denial shields the individual from his/her conscience and the internal or external demand to act in defiance of the systematic violation of basic human rights (1992, p. 281).

Other individual and collective consequences of political repression include an increase in social

polarization; everything is conceptualized in terms of "them" and "us." Personal autonomy and self-confidence are weakened; people are constantly looking for external clues as to how they will be perceived, so as not to feel endangered. "But paradoxically, this goes along with a reinforcement of individualism;" the individual is isolated and must take care of him or herself without looking to others or organizing for mutual support (Martín-Baró, 1989b). Consequently, in this alienation from others, human life is devaluated.

Samayoa (1987) stresses that the psychosocial trauma of war and political repression consists of a process of dehumanization, including a decreased sensitivity to the suffering of others, a paranoid defensiveness and a loss of hope and sense of life's meaning. In Honduras, I interviewed residents of a community near the Nicaraguan border that had experienced brutal repression during the Contra war. Several people commented that during this period of violence, they frequently encountered dead bodies on the street, sometimes those of acquaintances or friends. Yet when they went home, they would not mention their experience to family members and would "try not to think" about what they had seen. What had they felt? Invariably, the answer was "fear" and "terror," but they believed that speaking about it would only increase their fear and the threat to their own and their families' safety. To go to

the authorities was out of the question because the security forces were perceived as the actual perpetrators or the protectors of the responsible parties.

Repressive regimes' "policies of extermination" equate the disappearance of people with the disappearance of dangerous ideas (Cecchi & Sakalik, 1986). In Chile, torturers were told that their country had a cancer and that it was their job to excise it (Ritterman, 1987). Such conditions leave people with the illusion that only greater obedience to authority will guarantee survival. However, for most Latin American countries that have at least partially emerged from the yoke of military dictatorship, popular uprisings, organized opposition and international solidarity have been key elements in the transition to democracy (Cecchi & Sakalik, 1986). Quiescence and submission certainly did not bring about change.

#### c. Authoritarian and Demagogic Propaganda

Propaganda campaigns are other means by which repressive regimes socialize people to comply with oppressive, authoritarian rule. Dunayevich (1986) discusses the Argentine regime's authoritarian and demagogic attempts to suppress independent and critical thinking and to replace it with fraudulent, vacuous ideals. The authoritarian discourse (often called the *Doctrine of the National*

*Security State* and the canon of Latin American militaries<sup>3</sup> since Brazil's 1964 military coup) is "prescriptive, imperative, and valuative." Through the use of repetitive, tautological, hypnotic formulas and slogans and through distorting, omitting and falsifying information, these regimes convince their populations, the "citizen soldiers," that they are the legitimate authority protecting national security from the chaos and illegitimacy of former governments or of those opposed to their dictates (Dunayevich, 1986; Riquelme, 1990). "The speaker of this monologue... tries to occupy the place of the ego ideal of the listener, suppressing it as an independent and thinking being" (Dunayevich, 1986).

Demagogic propaganda uses words and phrases like "we," "our common interest," "heroes of the nation" and colloquial or popular phrases to decrease the political distance between rulers and ruled and to obscure differences between the interests and actions of the repressive state and its population. The regime is identified with order, globality, unity, and the goodness and correctness of God. The implication is that this state power has no failings or weaknesses. Brutal police and military campaigns are sanitized and legitimized with, as was the case in Argentina, names like "Operation Liberty" and "Independence"

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<sup>3</sup> Military doctrine identifies the military with the nation. The military then seizes power and *is* the nation (Garretón, 1992).

(Dunayevich, 1986).

While everything good, wholesome and nurturing is ascribed to the regime, everything bad, destructive and threatening is ascribed to its critics and potential or real enemies. To question the regime on any level brands the critic as foreigner or foreign-influenced, conspirator, enemy, unethical, immoral, and inhuman (Kordon and Edelman, 1986). Since national identity is equated with political identity, all ideologies other than the official one are viewed as unpatriotic. The questioner, the critic, and the political enemy of the regime are then treated as belonging to no country and not deserving any country's protection. Therefore, their incarceration and murder is justified (Dunayevich, 1986). Martín-Baró (1989a) calls this systematic screening and distortion of reality the "institutionalized lie."

Another message may be that political dissidence is a form of social deviance and psychic disturbance, an inability to adapt to social reality. In Argentina, during 1974-83, public opinion was effectively manipulated through the mass media-- including radio, television and newspapers-- to create the impression that all opposition to the regime was proof of deviance. A major goal of this campaign was to discourage the families of the tens of thousands of the disappeared from publicly demanding their relatives' reappearance. Slogans, such as "How did you

raise your children?" and "Do you know where your children are at this moment?" attempted to shift the responsibility for the violent repression from the kidnappers and victimizers to the kidnapped and their families. The message was that these people's political activism and consequent death or disappearance were directly or indirectly the result of poor upbringing and lack of parental controls (Kordon & Edelman, 1986; Riquelme, 1990).

The media and government spokespeople also insinuated that these disappeared people had voluntarily abandoned their families and friends, were clandestine or abroad, and therefore, did not deserve to be remembered. These families were told that they should be ashamed of their disreputable relatives and keep quiet about their absence. Yet, while on the one hand implying that the disappeared had left of their own accord, on the other hand the regime called for a collective decision to accept their death without any requirement of accountability.

Another message was that political dissidence was a form of psychic disturbance, an inability to adapt to social reality. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, a group of relatives of the Argentine disappeared that held weekly protest marches across the street from the presidential Palace, were labeled the "crazies of Plaza de Mayo." "Paradoxically, the one labeled crazy is the one who denounces contradictory, psychosis-inducing, hidden messages, the one who refuses to

go along with society's denial" (Kordon and Edelman, 1986, p. 35).

d. Aggression Distorted and Transformed

Zuckerfeld (1986) posits that people's identification with these oppressive regimes occurs, in part, through the transformation, distortion and projection of aggression. Appealing to people's preexisting sense of guilt, the violent, corrupt state never defines itself as the aggressor. Instead, the aggressor insists that it is being victimized and the truly victimized population on some level accepts this rationalization. Once the aggressor state has reconceptualized itself as the aggressed, all subsequent violent actions are in self-defense and can be committed with impunity. The lack of response to the aggressed is therefore not caused solely by impotence to brute force or a sense of guilt, but because at a more primitive level something has undermined this capacity: through cognitive and perceptual distortions the aggressor comes to be idealized.

In the process of "idealization of the aggressor," power is first attributed to the aggressor and then the aggressed submits to this power. Consequently, the regime's initially "arbitrary power becomes enthroned." The aggressor is able to assume control not only because it has real power, but also because this power has been bestowed

upon it in the popular imagination. It is both the denial of the regime's aggression and the idealization of this power or aggression that allow the population to accept the policies behind slogans such as "loss of liberty is to guarantee democracy," "dictatorship is a process of reorganization," and "submission is order" (Zuckerfeld, 1986).

e. The "Archaic Nucleus" and the Unconscious Search for Security

Amati (1990) points out that, under conditions of institutionalized violence, "everyone accepts more and more that of which they disapprove." Amati hypothesizes that, from a psychoanalytic perspective, this acceptance of the unacceptable is linked to a search for security through an omnipotent figure to defend the self from undifferentiated, archaic, catastrophic anguish. Her ideas are based on José Bleger's model of an "archaic nucleus," which is present in all adult personalities. The more differentiated part of the ego feels "compelled" to project this undifferentiated part of itself onto the external world whenever there are conditions that offer the possibility of security, belonging or identity. This "symbiotic nucleus" differs from projective identification in that what is projected is an undifferentiated nucleus of unorganized, undiscriminated affects, not internal objects.

Amati links this part of the mind, which has a need for absolute security, to a continual reciprocity which makes us both the "depositors" of these archaic fears and fantasies and the "depositories" of others' archaic nuclei. This creates a "continuum of regions of primary undifferentiation" or "common unconscious region" that allows us to be a mass, to be adaptable, manipulated and alienated. This fundamental sense of security and belonging is, therefore, unconsciously and integrally tied to the social group:

In order to be able to maintain the sense of belonging to the social group, each person unconsciously allows him/herself to be manipulated. This social manipulation can consist of the destabilization of the... [archaic] nucleus that is deposited in common depositories, like the state, the economy, work, social customs, etc. In order to avoid catastrophic anguish provoked by the mobilization of the ambiguous nucleus, we "familiarize" ourselves very quickly with institutional changes (Amati, 1990, p. 21).

Cecchi and Sakalik (1986) call this change in attitude a "naturalizing" process. This is when what was previously unimaginable, repressive and violent behavior becomes everyday normal and acceptable and when lies and deception are "transformed" into truth (see also Foucault, 1981).

### The Victims of State Terrorism and their Families

In this section, I examine the literature on the direct victims of political repression and their families. I focus on torture victims, families of the assassinated and families of the disappeared. As in the previous section on

the social psychology of political repression, most of the works reviewed are observational, clinical or testimonial in nature.

Political repression has an impact on the entire society, but the impact is greatest for those most directly affected. Those who have been tortured or imprisoned or who have had family members who have suffered the consequences of state violence all too often have had to confront a double source of anguish. One is the original pain of the experience or of the loss; the other is the social denial of these events and the social segregation and isolation imposed on affected individuals and families (Farina, 1987).

When natural and technological catastrophes occur, societal supports and rituals permit the grieving of the dead. In contrast, the social denial of the political catastrophes of disappearance, torture and execution lead to the privatization of the loss and accompanying feelings of stigmatization, shame and confusion. These problems are of social origin and the experiences and losses are both personal and social. Yet when people are confronted with a reality that does not recognize the existence of the individual and family trauma and instead faults the victim, the process of grieving and coping with the consequences of the experience are particularly difficult. Grieving becomes a state, not a process (Neumann, Monreal & Macchiavello, 1990).

a. Torture and the Destruction of the Personality

The widespread use of physical and psychological torture is one of the most disquieting aspects of state terrorism. Far from being "a lingering practice from a more barbaric period of time," torture in the twentieth century is used as an instrument of state policy in one-third of the nations of the world (Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, 1987; Ritterman, 1987).

In Latin America, torture has been widely used to obtain information, punish, psychologically destroy, instill terror and intimidate dissenters. Torture is a political phenomenon; its prosaic aim is to obtain information, but equally, if not more important, its intentions are to destroy the individual victim and to intimidate, terrorize and paralyze the entire population (Seminario Internacional Sobre la Tortura en América Latina, 1986; Taussig, 1984). For example, a common practice throughout Central America has been to deposit tortured and murdered corpses in public places. After being killed, the bodies are routinely mutilated. Clearly, the torture is meant for both the victim and the public, and the mutilation is largely for show-- a public lesson in terror and dehumanization<sup>4</sup>.

Physical torture methods used in Latin America have

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<sup>4</sup> See Graziano (1992) for an analysis of torture and political repression which integrates the themes of religion, violence and psychosexuality as they relate to the desire for power and to the myths and rituals manifesting that desire.

included: application of electricity to the most sensitive parts of the body, such as natural orifices and sexual organs; blows, burns and wounds; pulling off and mutilation of body parts, such as nails, fingers, eyes, tongue and sexual organs; suspension in the air in various positions; rape by both humans and animals; use of drugs; immersion in water, urine or excrement to cause asphyxia; and sleep, food, water, sensory and space deprivations (Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas, 1984; Graziano, 1992; Lira, 1983).

DuBois (1990) refers to torture as "the realization of ideology on the bodies of its victims," while Ritterman calls it the "counter-therapy of the state":

Sophisticated ideas about the connections between individuals, families, and their communities are used to advance the power of the state... in torture these ideas are used to narrow the range of mental states accessible to the victim, so that fearlessness will be erased by terror, enthusiasm by "readiness for the worst," hopefulness by numbness or resignation, and commitment to a humane cause by contempt for humanity. Ultimately, torture aims to make the external world seem inhospitable [sic] and to place fear and mistrust in the forefront of both waking and dreaming consciousness. In other words, torture is the reverse of everything that psychotherapy stands for (1987, p. 45).

b. Emotional Impact of Having a Family Member Assassinated

Families of government assassination victims face many of the situations described earlier in this section. The loss of a loved one normally results in intense feelings of pain, confusion and disbelief. But human-induced deaths are

more stressful for family survivors; horror and terror are common responses to these events (Lyons, 1987). While trying to deal with the loss, these families experience fear of continued persecution. Instead of receiving recognition and support, they are often subject to ostracism and isolation by friends and acquaintances. Family members may lose their jobs or have to flee for safety. Because of the danger, the family may not be able to hold a funeral for the deceased; it may even be forced to keep the death a secret. Silence and lies are the usual official responses to the circumstances surrounding the deaths. Afterwards, severe economic and social hardships are the norm for these families. These deaths occur in the context of, and/or provoke, multiple other losses and stresses (Kordon & Edelman, 1986; Weinstein et al., 1987).

Becker and colleagues (1987) note that feelings of rage are a normal aspect of the grieving process, but that these feelings tend to decrease with time. They observe that with politically-motivated assassinations, rage is one of the most intense emotions experienced by family survivors due to the sense of impotence and injustice brought on by the circumstances of the loss and the government's lack of accountability for its actions. In these cases, hate can become a permanent, self-destructive state. Krystal (1988) speaks of "hate addiction," referring to similar feelings in concentration camp survivors.

c. Emotional Impact of Having a Family Member "Disappeared"

On December 7, 1941, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the German High Command, issued the first of a series of directives implementing Hitler's "Night and Fog" decree. "The decree introduces a fundamental innovation," Keitel wrote, in that offenses against the German state in the occupied countries would now be prosecuted by local military courts only in those cases where unmitigated guilt could be established and the death sentence pronounced within eight days of a prisoner's arrest. Because imprisonment "even with hard labor for life" might be looked on "as a sign of [Nazi] weakness," the directives clarified that in principle "the punishment for offenses committed against the German state is the death penalty." But in those cases in which guilt could not be readily established-- clearly the majority-- the application of this "death penalty" would be shrouded in night and fog, pursuant to the fuhrer's "innovation": Prisoners were transferred secretly... from their occupied country to Germany. These undisclosed transfers would, the fuhrer believed, achieve "the necessary deterrent effect" because "the prisoners will vanish without a trace" and "no information will be given as to their whereabouts or their fate." "Efficient and enduring intimidation," Keitel concluded following the fuhrer's decree, could only be generated through this combinative strategy of local execution for those readily proven guilty and of transfer measures "by which the relatives of the criminal and the population do not know the fate of the criminal." That these "criminals" of the latter category were not proven guilty and, further, were secretly deported under cover of 'night and fog' *precisely because their guilt could not be proven*, and that this 'transfer' was invariably a euphemism for extrajudicial execution in Germany, were implications barely veiled by the rhetoric of the field marshal's directives. What dominated the "innovation" was the intent to punish the suspicious with the same penalty-- death-- as the guilty and to do so in such a way that the eerie absence of these victims would generate sufficient terror to paralyze resistance within the occupied country (Graziano, 1992, pp. 15-16).

Political disappearance was, and continues to be, a worldwide phenomenon, characteristic of repressive regimes and occupying powers across the political spectrum. Amnesty

International and other human rights organizations' annual reports routinely describe government-sponsored disappearances in countries as varied as India, Korea, Nepal and South Africa and in almost every region of the world (Amnesty International, 1993; Centre for the Victims of Torture/Nepal, 1993). Recent examples of mass disappearances include the thousands of Kuwaitis who vanished in the aftermath of the 1991 Iraqi invasion, the many Haitians who were abducted following the military overthrow of the elected government, and the more than 16,000 Muslims who disappeared after arrest by the Serbs since the Bosnian war began in 1992 (Cohen, 1994). In Latin America from the 1960s through the 1980s, disappearance was a widely used method of social control, particularly in Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, Chile and Honduras. However, most of the studies on the psychological impact of politically-motivated, forced disappearance in Latin America are from, or about, Argentina and Chile. Consequently, I refer mainly to these two cases, but at the end of this subsection, I discuss a Honduran study about families of the disappeared in that country. I also look at MIA family studies and compare the similarities and differences of their circumstances with the families of government-sponsored disappeared.

In Chile after the 1973 coup and in Argentina during 1974-83, disappearance was a common method of dealing with

dissenters. Scarcely any of the thousands of the disappeared reappeared alive and few bodies were found until after the end of the dictatorships. As in other Latin American countries, including Honduras, there have been no official explanations of the deaths. The regimes erected a curtain of silence around the disappeared. Thousands simply "vanished" with no news coverage of their abductions.

The denial of these events by the military regimes and the institutions under their direct and indirect control-- including the police, the courts and the mass media-- went along with the terrorized populations' desire to not know and with the disappeareds' families fears of speaking out about their loved ones. Most of these families maintained silence in the hope, sometimes conveyed through official channels, that such inaction would help keep their disappeared family members alive (Kordon & Edelman, 1986; Riquelme, 1990).

In Chile and Argentina, the obstacles that family members faced in discussing their circumstances led to greater uncertainty about how to search for their loved ones. They functioned in a "zone of psychotic-like ambiguity," not knowing if their disappeared relatives were alive or dead (Kordon & Edelman, 1986). Using Nazi terminology, they were submerged in a permanent state of "night and fog." The desperate wish for the disappeared to be alive was countered by the knowledge that, if alive, they

were almost certainly suffering horrendous tortures and other physical and psychological denigrations. Not knowing about their loved ones' situation made it impossible to fully mourn the loss. Instead, this created a sense of instability and confusion, "an open wound" or "an eternal question with no answer," where the event continued to be experienced five or more years after its occurrence "as if it just happened today" (COFADEH 1991; Kordon & Edelman, 1986; Lira et al., 1984).

Miller (1993), working in Guatemala, tells of a mother who, ten years after her son was disappeared by the army, continues to keep her son's bedroom ready for his return. Each day she dusts and readies his room, unable to accept the likely truth that he will never return.

Allen and Solari (1994) report in photographs and words about the women of the small mining town of Calamá, Chile. Twenty years after dozens of men were summarily executed or disappeared during a regionwide assault by government troupes known as the "Caravan of Death," mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of the disappeared men continue to dig in the desert surrounding the town looking in hope and in dread for the bones of their men. Some want to believe that their relatives are still alive; others just seek confirmation of their deaths.

Spiegel (1988) notes that a common feature of stress response syndromes is a sense of spatial and temporal

fragmentation. The situation of having a loved one forcibly disappeared usually entails not knowing precisely what has happened, and if the person was jailed, tortured and killed, when, where, how and why it happened. This fragmented sense about the disappeared reinforces family members' sense of fragmentation and inability to move forward emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Spiegel observes that

the paralysis imposed by a state of fragmentation is both an affective reenactment of the state of helplessness experienced during the trauma and at the same time an atavistic experience linking the traumatic event to much earlier infantile experiences of helplessness. The loss of physical mastery in the trauma is represented symbolically by the loss of emotional mastery in the traumatic reaction (1988, p. 25).

#### d. MIA Family Studies

Boss (1977; 1984), Hunter (1988) and McCubbin, Hunter and Dahl (1975) found a similar state of ambiguity or limbo in U.S. families of Vietnam War missing in action (MIAs) soldiers. Boss found "high boundary ambiguity" in families with fathers who were physically absent but highly psychologically present. This condition strongly disrupted family attempts to manage stress and arrested the children's normal development.

McCubbin and colleagues interviewed 215 wives of prisoners of war (PW) and MIAs whose husbands had been absent for between one and eight years. They found serious symptoms of depression and anxiety in 3/4 or more of these

women. They also reported very high degrees of increased alcohol and tranquilizer consumption, psychosomatic complaints, guilt feelings and dysfunctional family interactions. Two-fifths reported frequent feelings that life was meaningless. The authors recommend counseling for 80 percent of this nonclinical sample.

According to the mothers' reports, less than 20% of the children suffered from emotional adjustment, academic or behavioral problems-- a finding that differs from other studies cited in the article and from Boss' findings. Of note is that in her review of PTSD in children, Lyons (1987) concludes that parents and other adults often deny or downplay the emotional impact of distressing events on children.

In sharp contrast with the families of the disappeared, MIA families received social, financial and other support from their government, which considered the MIAs patriots. In addition, even during the socially polarized Vietnam War era, these families received validation of and support for their grief from large segments of society. The very high levels of individual and family distress found in the MIA family studies highlight what is most probably substantially greater distress in families of the disappeared.

#### e. Families of the Disappeared in Honduras

Quirk (1992) and Quirk and Casco (1994), working in

Honduras with the International Association Against Torture and the Committee of Families of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), in 1990 and 1991 interviewed 140 members from 25 families of the disappeared, along with two control groups-- one consisting of families who had lost a family member due to accident or illness in the last ten years and the other comprised of families who had not suffered such a loss. They questioned families about their levels of stress and their health status. Stress-related symptoms were almost equal in the two control groups, but were twice as high in the families of the disappeared. Significant differences for the last group were found in many areas, particularly in measures of increased arousal, such as nervousness and tremor (30%), chronic headaches (24%) and insomnia (17%). Children of the disappeared were similarly more affected than the controls, as evidenced by frequent mood swings (21%), a drop in school performance (20%), and prolonged bed-wetting (16%). When asked about the presumed fate of the disappeared person, 71% of the adult respondents believed that there was no possibility that the person was still alive.

Quirk and Casco hypothesize that the increased stress and distress of the families of the disappeared results from the atmosphere of fear and isolation not experienced by families in the two control groups. Sixty-one percent of the disappeareds' families feared that their neighbors were

police or police-informers. He notes that such a fear was well-founded, since the armed forces used the public media to solicit informers to alert them of "suspicious-looking persons in the neighborhood." In addition, 64% of these families reported receiving threats from the authorities after the disappearance.

Neighbors' and acquaintances' lack of the moral and material support that is an expected cultural response in the wake of a personal tragedy, reinforced these families' sense of isolation. Nineteen of 22 families from the control group with a death reported receiving food, loans and other moral and material support from their community. In sharp contrast, 19 of 20 disappeareds' families said relations with neighbors did not change or worsened after the disappearance.

In their periodic publication, Desaparecidos, members of COFADEH recount their travails searching for their relatives and demanding accountability for the disappearances. In their first 1990 issue, they recall the beginnings of the organization: of families repeatedly running into each other in the halls of the Honduran Supreme Court and other government offices as they desperately and unsuccessfully sought out information about their abducted relatives; of sharing ideas and information and of unifying their efforts into the creation of their organization behind the banner of "Since they took them alive, we demand them

back alive!" (*Porque vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos!*). Their experiences sound very similar to those of the better documented cases of the families of the disappeared in Argentina and Chile.

Juan Almandares (1991), a leading Honduran physician and human rights activist, wrote that in his country disappearances were not only of individuals, but of student organizations and their youthful, energetic fervor for human rights and of other popular organizations that represented the most humane spirit in his country. "We must understand that the disappeared embody the program of disappearing, of exterminating, the popular movement and our people as a whole."

### Trauma and Loss

Psychological trauma "occurs when an individual is exposed to an overwhelming event that renders him or her helpless in the face of intolerable danger, anxiety and instinctual arousal" (Eth & Pynoos, 1985). Furman (1986) notes that the trauma refers to an external event (in contrast to an internal stimulus), and Figley (1986) stresses that the fundamental subjective features of these events are their suddenness, their danger and their overwhelming effect on the individual. Along these same lines, Moos and Schaefer describe a crisis as a situation so novel or major that habitual responses are insufficient: it leads to a state of turbulence

typically accompanied by heightened fear, anger or guilt... [one] cannot stay in this state of disequilibrium so it is necessarily self-limiting... some resolution must be found (1986, p. 9).

Traumatic events include threats of death, loss of body integrity, serious harm or threat to a loved one, sudden destruction of home or community, or witnessing an accidental or violent death or the severe injury of another. When the stressor is of human design, the post-traumatic stress response may be especially severe or long-lasting (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Key symptoms involve persistent reexperiencing, avoidance of stimuli, and increased arousal (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Epstein, 1989). When a traumatic event occurs, the victim's assumptive world is shattered, personal control or mastery is dislodged and the integrated social networks or caring links to other persons are disrupted (Figley, 1988; Flannery, 1990; Janof-Bulman, 1985).

Traumatic stress reactions are not rare conditions. Helzer, Robins and McEvoy (1987) report a 1% prevalence of full-blown Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the total population, 3.5% in civilians exposed to physical attack or noncombat veterans, and 20% in Vietnam combat veterans. The DSM-VI notes that in studies of at-risk individuals, such as combat veterans, victims of volcanic eruptions or criminal violence, prevalence rates range from 3% to 58% (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Other traumatic and war-related psychiatric disorders include depression, substance

abuse, adjustment disorders and psychosomatic disorders (Rundell, Ursano, Holloway & Silberman, 1989).

a. History of the Trauma Concept

In his early writings, Freud discussed many psychiatric problems as manifestations of overwhelming childhood experiences. Later, he came to believe that traumas and neuroses were the result of childhood fantasies and misinterpretations of childhood events<sup>5</sup> (Ulman & Brothers, 1988). With the onset of the First World War, Freud refocused his attention on "traumatic neurosis" and "war neurosis," considering them "a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (Freud, 1920). His psychoenergetic model can today be appreciated as a metaphor of the sensory overload that overwhelms the cerebral cortex in the course of its role of processing incoming information during a traumatic episode (Epstein, 1989; Ulman & Brothers, 1988). Freud's notion of "repetition compulsion" as a way of mastering trauma has

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<sup>5</sup> Using a self-psychological perspective, Ulman and Brothers contest classical psychoanalytic notions of trauma resulting from fantasized experiences. They posit that the origins of traumatic fantasies do not depend primarily on "the extent to which actual occurrences stimulate and arouse poorly repressed memories of witnessing the primal scene and being threatened with castration and associated pathogenic fantasies." Instead, they insist that it depends on "the extent to which actual occurrences shatter preexisting archaic narcissistic fantasies central to the organization and maintenance of self-experience" and by the faulty restoration of central organizing fantasies of the self in relation to the selfobject (1988, p. 63).

also been incorporated into conceptualizations of intrapsychic aspects of paradoxical and maladaptive responses to stress (Epstein, 1989). Although Freud maintained his interest in the consequences of psychological trauma, this notion lost its central importance in the psychoanalytic establishment until a recent resurgence of interest (van der Kolk, 1987).

Nonetheless, some psychodynamically-oriented researchers and clinicians continued to explore traumatic experiences. Kardiner, in his study and treatment of World War I soldiers suffering from "shell shock," was the first to describe the full syndrome of what today is called post-traumatic stress disorder. He described the principal features of "physioneurosis" as persistent irritability and startle reactions, fixation on the trauma, explosive and aggressive behavior, contraction of ego functioning and dream disturbances (Herman, 1992b).

Other researchers studying catastrophic traumas (e.g. Krystal's observations on concentration camp Holocaust survivors [1988, 1993]; Lifton's studies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors [1988]; Frankl's applications of existentialist philosophy to the understanding and treatment of Holocaust and other trauma victims [1959, 1967]; and Horowitz' stage response theory of trauma [1993]) have also made significant contributions to an understanding of post-traumatic psychological stress. Ulman and Brothers (1988)

note that these writers abandoned the experience-distant metapsychology in vogue for decades and replaced it with a more experience-near theoretical framework.

Among his many contributions, Krystal described the "survivor syndrome," common among concentration camp survivors. The symptoms include survivor guilt, chronic anxiety and depression with feelings of despair, loss of capacity to use community supports, psychosomatic symptoms, emotional "anesthesia," "alexitymia" or inability to recognize and make use of emotional reactions, and disturbances in cognition (Krystal, 1988, 1993; van der Kolk, 1987).

Lifton's (1988) theories are compatible with Kardiner's and Krystal's ideas. Among his principles of traumatic psychoformation are the notions of post-traumatic stress disorder as a normal adaptive reaction to an abnormal situation, survivor guilt and self-condemnation, psychic numbing (including dissociation and interruption or distortion of the symbolizing process leading to a discontinuity of self-experience), survivors' compelling need to find meaning in their experience, reenactment of traumatic life events, and death immersion. Lifton stresses the importance of exploring previously-ignored (by researchers) death imagery, death encounters and death anxiety in human beings' self formulations.

Frankl's (1959, 1967) existentialist writings focus on

the dual exploration of the memories of traumatic and near-death experiences and the "meaning opportunities" embedded in these terror-filled memories. Frankl describes how the absolute uncertainty of traumatic events obstructs the erection of adequate psychological measures: the most commonly utilized defenses are denial and isolation of affect. These defensive strategies leave a "meaning vacuum," and in the attempt to fend off feelings of existential depression, people resort to abusing alcohol and drugs, and to compulsive, self-endangering and other maladaptive behavior. Through discovering meaning potentials, trauma victims have the opportunity for self-transcendence, often by active involvement in the world around them. The transformation of pain into self-transcendent activity is not merely a defense, although "premature" involvement can be a way of keeping at bay disorganizing feelings of terror and rage (Lantz, 1992). Lyons (1991), in her trauma literature review, concludes that survivors' cognitive appraisal of the traumatic event is a major determinant of subsequent adjustment, and that the search for meaning is a significant part of such an appraisal.

Chodoff, influenced by Frankl, observes that retaining memory can be an act of self-transcendence:

"the stubborn, even prideful refusal to forget displayed by certain survivors seems to involve something beyond masochistic personality mechanisms or a revival of past, incompletely resolved emotional

conflicts. Instead, this refusal suggests a desperate attempt to preserve from the limbo of insignificance to which they have been consigned because of the bureaucratic, almost casual manner of their destruction. By remembering and continuing to remember, they cast a benison of meaningfulness on that destruction (1986, pp. 413-414)<sup>6</sup>.

Horowitz (1993) (also see van der Kolk, 1987) studies normal and pathological phases of post-stress responses. He notes that the response to psychological trauma is expressed in two predominant phases: the intrusive or reliving state and the denial state. The intrusive responses are hyperreactivity, explosive aggressive outbursts, startle responses, intrusive recollections in the form of nightmares and flashbacks, and reenactment of situations reminiscent of the trauma. Traumatized people have a poor tolerance for psychological and physiological arousal. Their usual response to stress is either motoric discharge or social and emotional withdrawal. Intrusive reexperiencing also may take the form of seemingly voluntary reenactment. Horowitz calls it "traumatophilia."

The denial state is characterized by emotional numbing, social isolation, anhedonia, a sense of estrangement and a constriction of ideation. It can be understood as a way of warding off recurrent intrusive recollections of the trauma.

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<sup>6</sup> See Tarnopolsky's (1994) moving account of a similarly assertive response to victimization on the part of the sole survivor of an entire disappeared family in Argentina.

b. Current Conceptions of Trauma

Kardiner, Krystal, Lifton, Frankl and Horowitz are among the pioneers in trauma research. Yet their ideas and concerns have only recently begun to be systematically studied by the larger professional community, and only 14 years have passed since the American Psychiatric Association accepted post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in its official nomenclature (Sonnenberg, 1988). Renewed interest in trauma stems from an increased awareness about the impact of child abuse, the women's movement attention to rape and incest, the unanticipatedly high frequency of delayed stress reactions in Vietnam veterans and the recognition of the psychological consequences of political persecution (van der Kolk, 1987).

Based on his extensive research in psychological and biological aspects of the trauma response and on his review of the trauma literature, van der Kolk (1987) identifies some key elements of this phenomenon. The *biphasic response of hyperarousal and intrusion versus numbing and constriction* (discussed above) is one of the most salient features associated with trauma. In his and Ducey's Rorschach studies of Vietnam veterans with PTSD (1989), they found "all-or-nothing" responses: either they were severely constricted or they revealed an emotional intensity and disorganized quality appropriate only to the original trauma.

Another key response is an *inability to integrate the traumatic experience into the totality of life experiences and a concomitant fixation on the trauma*. The characteristic avoidance of emotional involvement does not succeed in avoiding traumatic memories. Even when pushed out of waking memory, they remain present in the form of reenactments, nightmares or feelings associated with the trauma. Traumatic nightmares often are exact copies of the traumatic event.

The trauma's overwhelming nature makes it *difficult to integrate and conversion and dissociative processes are mobilized against severe stress*. Spiegel (1988) also lists among the defensive phenomena of trauma victims-- some of which could fall under the rubric of dissociation-- repression, isolation, displacement, reaction formation, depersonalization and spatial and temporal fragmentation. Lyons (1991) notes that a growing number of studies indicate that while avoidance, denial and dissociation may be highly adaptive initially to help absorb the impact of sudden trauma, the continuous reliance on these defenses impedes positive adjustment.

As Kardiner and many others have observed, traumatized people have *difficulty modulating their anxious and aggressive feelings*. Warding off anxiety and aggression becomes a central concern and appears to be the reason why so many traumatized people self-medicate with drugs and

alcohol.

Traumatized individuals often develop a *chronic sense of helplessness, victimization and fear of loss of control*. Their inability to control intrusive reexperiencing reinforces the original experience of helplessness by the dissociated reliving of aspects of the traumatic event. Commonplace sensory and situational triggers stimulate traumatic feelings and memories. Many of the personality changes following the trauma can be understood as a rearrangement of ego structures to deal with both chronic hyperarousal and dread of reexperiencing the terrifying loss of control.

### c. Duration and Severity of Trauma Responses

van der Kolk (1987) identifies several factors that affect the duration and severity of the trauma response: the severity of the stressor, genetic predisposition, developmental phase, social support system, prior traumatization, and preexisting personality. The type, duration, degree of personal impact, potential for and control over recurrence are important determinants of the form of the trauma response (Berren et al., 1986). But the severity of the trauma is considered the best predictor of posttrauma functioning (Lyons, 1991). In animal studies, genetic predispositions have been linked to stress resistance and vulnerability (van der Kolk, 1987). There

may also be a genetic predisposition to psychobiologic changes in the central nervous system in response to trauma (Sonnenberg 1988; van der Kolk, 1994). Developmental phase appears to also play a role in the severity and persistence of trauma, with younger children often more vulnerable than older ones, possibly due to age-related cognitive limitations comprehending and assimilating the event (van der Kolk, 1987; Terr, 1991). A history of prior traumatization increases the potential for a traumatic response. Preexisting personality factors, such as premorbid personality problems also predict poor adjustment (Hiley-Young, 1992; Moos and Schaefer, 1986).

#### d. Social Support

Social support is of particular importance in the recovery environment. Clinical findings consistently point to the importance of family, social network and community support in ameliorating the impact of stressful events. The risk of pathological adjustment increases with inadequate social support (Benedek, 1985). *Social support* is the subjectively experienced comfort and assistance one receives through formal or informal contacts with individuals and groups. The size of the social network and the frequency of interaction appear less important than the quality and valence of the social contacts (Lyons, 1990). The need for social support appears to be biologically rooted and present

at birth. These human links are indispensable for physical safety, for survival and for emotional satisfaction (Bowlby, 1969; Flannery, 1990).

Figley (1986) isolated five major functions of social support important to traumatized individuals: emotional support, encouragement, advice, companionship and tangible aid. Figley observes that, in addition, family and others can serve as ameliorators of trauma by helping detect the symptoms, confront the problem, recapitulate the traumatic events and help resolve the trauma-inducing conflicts associated with the events. He notes that family plays a key role in limiting the emotional upset of traumatic events. A problem with this formulation is that it presupposes that only one member of a family or support community is traumatized. It is difficult for others to provide these functions when all are suffering from the same trauma.

While clinical observations strongly equate social support with emotional and physical improvement after trauma, in his methodological review of social support and psychological trauma research, Flannery (1990) found that the conceptualization, measurement and design of trauma studies are still rudimentary. He notes that there are tentative suggestions that support may mitigate the impact of PTSD after combat and that support may hasten recovery after sexual assault. Flannery concludes that, overall,

social support is clearly linked to the emotional well-being of people in general and to the speed and completeness of recovery of victims in particular.

There is considerable controversy regarding the evolution of individual responses to traumatic events. According to Lyons' review of the literature (1990), the profile of individuals likely to evidence resiliency rather than pathology following trauma is extremely vague. The qualities correlated with healthy functioning post-trauma include: "hardy" personality, relatively well-educated, high functioning prior to trauma and with experience in coping with life's stressors. Constitutional differences in physiological reactivity to stress may also play a role, enabling some individuals to function adaptively even under extremely stressful circumstances. Lastly, Lyons observes that individuals may have to rework their traumatic experiences at each developmental stage as new traumatic cues become pronounced. It appears that a high percentage of trauma survivors in later years of life experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress, even formerly asymptomatic individuals.

Hiley-Young (1992) explores the issue of trauma reactivation. "Uncomplicated reactivation" individuals resume pre-morbid, symptom-free functioning, but remain vulnerable to the reactivation of traumatic symptoms when exposed to stimuli directly reminiscent of the original

trauma. "Complicated reactivation" refers to people who develop more generalized sensitivity and vulnerability to stressors and stimuli not directly related to the original trauma. Hiley-Young posits that people with uncomplicated reactivation struggle with conflicts in ego integration that can be treated with a psychoeducational approach. Those with complicated reactivation experience a loss of self-cohesion best treated by an empathic psychodynamic treatment.

#### Trauma and Political Repression in Childhood

Much less is known about the manifestations of post-traumatic stress reactions in children than in adults. This is due to: difficulties in mounting adequate studies immediately after a disaster or other traumatic event; adults' protectiveness of child survivors; and adults' (including parents, teachers and clinicians) apparent unwillingness or inability to acknowledge children's capacity for intense emotional suffering and to appreciate the importance of investigating children's affective, cognitive and behavioral responses (Benedek, 1985; van der Kolk, 1987). Thus, there are very few systematic studies of the effects of major trauma on children and most published reports suffer major methodological weaknesses (Garmezy, 1986; Yule & Williams, 1990).

### a. Trauma in Children

Children are deeply affected by a variety of traumatic experiences, such as natural and human-induced accidents and disasters, victimization (rape, kidnapping, child abuse, incest), observation of violence (homicide, suicide, rape), loss of loved ones, deprivations and separation experiences. Children's initial reactions to traumatic events have been far better-studied and are better understood than the long-term consequences. It appears that, as with adults, there is often no simple resolution to children's traumatic experiences. The defense mechanisms employed to ward off intense affects associated with psychic trauma can eventually become integrated into children's developing personalities, leading to the formation of defensive structures which impair psychic functioning (Terr, 1990; Miller, 1993). For both children and adults, the development of PTSD after severe trauma requires no preexisting phenomenology or psychiatric symptomatology (Benedek, 1985).

The DSM-IV details several differences between child and adult post-trauma responses. Young children's traumatic reactions may include disorganized or agitated behavior, while analogous adult responses involve intense fear, helplessness or horror. Persistent reexperiencing of the traumatic event is a hallmark of PTSD and related trauma disorders, but children and adults may present different

symptomatic pictures: while young children may express disturbing recollections through repetitive play involving traumatic themes or events, adolescents and adults exhibit recurrent and intrusive distressing images, thoughts or perceptions of the event; children may have frightening dreams without recognizable content, while adults may have recurrent distressing dreams of the event; and young children may engage in trauma-specific reenactment, while adolescents and adults may act or feel as if they were reliving the trauma, and may experience illusions, hallucinations and dissociative flashback episodes (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

In addition, Terr (1991) observes that traumatized children do not evidence psychogenic amnesia or the degree of emotional numbing as do adults. She identifies four characteristics related to childhood trauma that often last for long periods of time, irrespective of individual personality. These are visualized or repeatedly perceived memories of the traumatic event, repetitive behaviors, trauma-specific fears and changed attitudes about people, life and the future. Terr divides traumatic childhood events into two basic types. Type I results from short, single events and includes full, detailed memories, "omens" or cognitive reappraisals and misperceptions. Type II are long-standing, multiple traumas which include denial and numbing, self-hypnosis and dissociation, and rage. Often,

however, the single trauma affects the future in such a way to create further traumatic experiences creating crossover Type I and Type II conditions.

#### b. Age-specific Responses

Two conclusions drawn from clinical and research observations are that the effects of traumatic experience vary in form and intensity as children move through different developmental stages (Macksoud et al., 1993; Terr, 1991; van der Kolk, 1987) and that the responses of parents and other caretakers may actually account for more of the variance in children's adjustment than is accounted for by the characteristics of the traumatic event itself (Benedek, 1985).

Although the general response to trauma is similar across age, the symptom presentation seems to vary according to developmental age. Reestablishing trust is difficult for most trauma victims. Children, however, appear to be especially vulnerable to loss of both basic trust and autonomy (Terr, 1990). Cognitive and perceptual distortions, such as skewed recall of the sequencing of traumatic events, are much greater in children than in adults. Eth and Pynoos (1985), Lyons (1987) and Macksoud, Dyregrov and Raundalen (1993) describe post-traumatic stress reactions in infants, preschoolers, elementary school children and adolescents. Lyons, in her review of the

literature, notes that post-traumatic symptoms were reported in infant Holocaust survivors, baby victims of animal attacks, babies in battered women shelters and infant hostages. Irritability, sleep problems, diarrhea and frequent illnesses were the most common responses.

Very young children are highly dependent on adults for safety and nurturance. Their limited ability to imagine ways to intervene to alter or prevent the trauma increases their feelings of defenselessness and their dependence. They may become mute and withdrawn, unable to speak, eat or play after a severe trauma. Reactions often include clingy attachment behavior, with separation and stranger anxiety, fear going to sleep, temper tantrums when left alone and other regressive behavior. Sleep disturbances include nightmares, night terrors, somnambulism and talking in their sleep. Frequently, there is a loss of recently acquired developmental skills. Since young children have a limited tolerance for sadness, they may deal with the pain of loss through the extensive use of denial. They may also reenact traumatic situations in their play.

Pubertal children's increased cognitive, emotional and behavioral capacities lead them to respond somewhat differently to traumatic events than do their younger counterparts. Traumatic memories and overwhelming feelings interfere with these children's ability to concentrate in school, frequently resulting in learning disorders and

related conduct problems. These children can devise inner plans of action to change, in fantasy, the trauma's outcome. Therefore, play and reenactments become more complex. They also begin to show more of the symptoms commonly associated with PTSD, such as nightmares, hyperarousal and hypervigilance, emotional numbing, avoidance behaviors and vacillation between withdrawal, friendliness and aggressive outbursts. They can also be prone to feelings of guilt and self-reproach for not having prevented the traumatic situation. Psychosomatic complaints are common in both preschoolers and elementary school children.

Adolescents have the ability to understand much more fully the ramifications of a traumatic event. In fact, these events and their consequences often force young people into assuming adult roles before they are ready and may stimulate premature identity formation or identity diffusion. Macksoud and her colleagues (1993) note that, in some respects, adolescents are more vulnerable to the effects of trauma than are school-aged children. Often too old to resort to fantasy as a form of denial, they also do not use play or reenactments as coping strategies. They may become very compliant and withdrawn, or aggressive, attempting to distance themselves from the traumatic memories through acting-out and self-destructive behavior. Adolescents, much like adults, can experience strong guilt feelings for not having prevented or altered the traumatic

situation and anticipate with dread a traumatic recurrence. Frequently, basic assumptions about themselves, the world, and the future are undermined and replaced with a pessimistic or fatalistic attitude about living.

### c. Parental and Caretaker Response

The second conclusion drawn from the research and clinical literature is the importance of parent and caretaker response in determining children's adjustment to traumatic experiences. Although early research establishing the importance of the presence of a loved caretaker for the emotional well-being of the child (Freud & Burlingham, 1943) has been repeatedly confirmed (e.g., Melville & Lykes, 1993), the direct and absolute correlation has, at times, been overemphasized:

The belief that if parents remain cool, calm, and collected during psychic trauma, there will be no contagion, no panic, no fear, and no psychological sequelae on the part of children places an impossible burden on traumatized parents, perpetuates a myth of blaming parents for their natural reactions to stress, and holds them responsible for the reactions of their children (Benedek, 1985, p. 5).

The presence of supportive adults cannot completely immunize children against suffering. Trauma can occur independent of parental reactions; certain situations are overwhelming to those experiencing them, irrespective of age. In the following section, adults' role in helping children cope with trauma is elaborated further.

An interesting aspect of children's sensitivity to

parental responses to traumatic conditions is examined in Yule and Williams' (1990) study of the effects of a ferry accident in England. Much higher levels of distress were reported when the children were interviewed separately from their parents than when they were interviewed in their parents' presence. On the ferry, the parents had had to cope with both their own and their children's distress. The authors discovered that the children were acutely aware of their parents' distress and often were unwilling to describe their innermost thoughts in front of their parents for fear of upsetting them further. This also led parents to underestimate their children's level of emotional disturbance.

#### d. Loss of a Parent

The loss of a parent, a caretaker or a close family member to death is an event that, unfortunately, many children experience. What this event means in terms of the affected children's future lives has been the source of much research and speculation. How these deaths affect children's future adjustment and development appears to vary depending on a number of different factors: (1) family characteristics before and subsequent to the loss-- family relationships and adjustments, family organization and structure, socioeconomic status, cultural background and ethnicity, and religious and ethical belief systems; (2)

child variables existing both before and after the loss-- age, sex, temperament, personality, physical, cognitive, affective, academic and social development, and including the child's understanding of the concept of death, as well as prior experiences with loss; (3) the characteristics of the lost person and their relationship with the child; (4) the circumstances of the death or other type of loss-- sudden or prolonged illness, peaceful or violent death, and cause of violent death, such as suicide, homicide, war or accident; (5) the child's preparation for and involvement in the mourning process-- the way the loss has been dealt with in the family, its effect on other members, and the religious beliefs and rituals surrounding it; and (6) the environmental, social and personal changes that occurred subsequent to the loss-- such as the responses and expectations of relatives, friends and acquaintances, the responses of social, work, school, political and other institutions and changes in family structure, income level, residence and way of life (Berlinsky and Biller, 1982; Rosenblatt, 1967).

As regards the child's immediate response, researchers and writers have debated whether children have the developmental capacity to experience true mourning. Using a cognitive-developmental perspective, Lonetto (1980) traces the changes in children's conceptions about death: from a magical-cyclical perspective that emphasizes the

interchangeability of life and death; to a pre-schooler's sense of death as living on under changed circumstances or as a separation from others; to viewing death as personified, as an external agent who can catch you and take you away. Finally, at around age nine, the child begins to conceptualize death similarly to adults, as the end of life. This abstract understanding of death encompasses the concepts of irreversibility, non-functioning of the body and universality (Kooperkamp, 1992).

Although children may not conceptualize and mourn in the same way as adults, empirical studies appear to show that children go through a period of bereavement similar to that found in adults. Based on extensive analysis of the literature, Berlinsky and Biller (1982) conclude that the child's behavior following a parent's death is most significantly influenced by age and cognitive development and that these influence the child's capacity to understand the concept of death. Younger children appear to be more adversely affected than are older children. It is unclear whether this is due to the inability of younger children to understand death, to their greater need for parental involvement, to the lack of accumulated benefits of being part of a two-parent family, or a combination of all these features. The child's sex appears to make little difference, but this finding may reflect weaknesses in the limited amount of research addressing sex and gender issues.

Furman (n.d.) posits that a parent's death is, in certain respects, a clearly defined situation. In contrast to separations, divorce, rejection (and disappearance), death's finality can ultimately be more manageable-- it is an unchangeable fact. She also notes that parental loss is unique because a parent is not only a loved person, but also an essential helper in the development of a child's personality.

For a child to conquer his loss and to mourn, he needs his parents' help as he needs their help with many other tasks in daily life. When the parent dies, who can perform this task? The very person mourned is the person who normally would help the child to mourn, and that presents a special problem (p. 117).

As Furman observes in the above quote, in order to tolerate the emotional intensity of the mourning process, children normally require the physical and emotional presence of a supportive adult who can comfort and explain the events to them in an age-comprehensible manner. Children need this adult to help them tolerate strong feelings of grief, despair, anxiety, confusion and anger (Lyons, 1987; Terr, 1990). The effect of the loss can be mitigated by the strength of the relationship to the remaining parent. But, as already mentioned, one of the paradoxes in trauma recovery is that the traumatic event can disrupt the very support networks most needed to cope with the trauma.

Bowlby (1969) and others posit that early losses often lead to depression and learning difficulties, and that death

sensitizes children to later loss experiences. Given young children's inability to comprehend the finality of death, they are less able to deal with the reality of the occurrence. Pynoos (1994) points out, however, that in certain circumstances this may serve as a buffer against overwhelming feelings. He argues that vulnerabilities, such as limited cognitive abilities due to age or endowment, may prove deleterious, beneficial or a combination of both depending on the particular context of the trauma and its aftermath.

Parental death and other traumatic events often involve loss of body integrity, self-esteem and sense of personal worth, feelings of helplessness, shame and guilt, intense sadness, reunion fantasies and, although rarely full-blown, major depression (Eth & Pynoos, 1985; Sonnenberg, 1988).

Wortman and Silver (1989) question what they call "the myths of coping with loss," arguing that actual research findings, in contrast with theory and clinical lore, do not back up the commonly-held assumptions that depression is inevitable following loss, that distress is necessary and that failure to experience it is indicative of pathology, that it is necessary to "work through" or process a loss, and that recovery and resolution are to be expected following loss. Instead, they maintain that responses to loss vary greatly and that most people's experience does not

correspond to current recovery and resolution models. Many writers stress the importance of psychotherapeutic intervention in helping children mobilize their psychological resources to more effectively cope with their losses and traumas (eg., Pynoos & Eth, 1985; Terr, 1990).

e. Consequences of Political Repression for Children<sup>7</sup>

Researchers in Central America (Arroyo & Eth, 1985; Martín-Baró 1989, 1990; Tortorici, 1988), South America (Becker et al., 1994; Lira, 1983; Lira et al., 1984; MSSM, 1986; Weinstein et al., 1987; Suárez-Orozco, 1987), South Africa (Dawes, 1990; Dawes et al., 1989), Rwanda (Lorch, 1994); the Middle East (Baker, 1990; Bryce et al., 1989; Macksoud et al., 1993; CSHR, 1988; Punamaki & Suleiman, 1990), Southeast Asia (Kinzie et al., 1986; Realmuto et al., 1992; Tsoi et al., 1986) and elsewhere have consistently found that exposure to political repression places children at risk for the development of both acute and chronic mental health, conduct and learning problems. Since children are growing and developing, the effects of repression are particularly harmful to them. Such effects are easier to identify than in adults, because fewer intervening or confounding variables exist.

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<sup>7</sup>This and the following two sections owe a great deal to Miller, who was kind enough to provide me with a draft of his extensive literature review on the psychological effects of political repression on children (1993).

Macksoud, Dyregrov and Raundalen (1993), in their review of the literature on children's experiences during war and civil strife, identify events that trigger traumatic and PTSD reactions. These include: the violent death of a parent, witnessing the arrest, torture or killing of close family members (e.g., Allodi, 1980; Schirmer, 1986; Tortorici, 1988), separation and displacement (e.g., Freud & Burlingham, 1943; Kinzie et al., 1986), witnessing parental fear reactions (e.g., Terr, 1989), forced immigration and refugee status (e.g., Kinzie et al., 1986; Tsoi et al., 1986), terror attacks, kidnappings and life threats (e.g., Terr, 1990, 1991), bombardment and shelling (e.g., Macksoud, in press), participation in violent acts (e.g., Coles, 1986; Dawes et al., 1989; Tortorici, 1988), physical injuries and handicaps, and extreme poverty and deprivation (e.g., Coles, 1986).

The types and magnitude of war trauma and the extent of exposure are all critical determining factors of children's psychological reactions and psychosocial development. Macksoud, Dyregrov and Raundalen (1993) and Arroyo and Eth (1985) point out that war and civil strife traumas tend to not be experienced in isolation. Children living in these circumstances are often subject to several, diverse traumas occurring repeatedly over extended periods of time. For example, Macksoud (in Macksoud et al., 1993) found that Lebanese children, on average, had experienced five to six

traumatic events during their lifetime. Children in war and politically-violent environments are subject to cumulative trauma exposure effects.

Certain war and politically-repressive experiences are associated with specific reactions. Nausea, shock, horror and feelings of complete helplessness are common responses to witnessing and experiencing violence and destruction. Death of loved ones engenders feelings of loss and grief. Displacement and exile is often accompanied by feelings of homesickness, anger and alienation. Forced disappearance of family members leads to states of "psychological ambiguity" or confusion and incomplete mourning. However, as detailed in previous sections, many features of children's reactions and psychological symptoms to human-induced trauma appear to be universal.

Regarding psychiatric symptomatology, salient findings include: symptoms of or the full Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, intense fears, irritability and aggressiveness, somatic complaints, enuresis, sleep and appetite disturbances, social withdrawal, loss of acquired abilities-- such as, language, reading and writing skills--, lowered academic performance, and separation anxiety.

For many, PTSD symptoms persist undiminished for many years subsequent to the original traumatic events (Allodi, 1980; Weinstein et al., 1987). Arroyo and Eth's (1985) study of Salvadoran refugee children in the United States

referred for psychiatric evaluation showed that 30% of their sample met DSM-III criteria for PTSD. Kinzie and colleagues' (1986) study of Cambodian refugee adolescents interned as children in Khmer Rouge work camps found that 50% of their sample suffered from PTSD four years after leaving Cambodia. Studies in other parts of the world (eg., Dawes et al., 1989) have also found a high incidence of PTSD in children and adolescents exposed to political violence, although lower than Kinzie and colleagues' findings.

Melville and Lykes (1993), however, found little evidence of PTSD among the indigenous Guatemalan children they studied within Guatemala and in refugee settings in Mexico. Although these children had witnessed violence and/or suffered many family and material losses, they had parents or loving caretakers who, it appears, helped mitigate the traumatic effects. Kinzie and colleagues' Cambodian children, by contrast, experienced prolonged separation from their families or other caretaking adults.

The studies discussed above deal, for the most part, with children who have escaped from their politically-repressive environments. For people currently living under repressive regimes, *post-traumatic* stress disorder may, in fact, be a misnomer because in the context of ongoing political repression, stress is not historical, but continuous (Miller, 1993). Children's ability to return to normal is dependent upon a loss of fear that the traumas will be

repeated; such guarantees do not exist in war and repressive climates (Schirmer, 1986). Children of jailed, murdered and disappeared people may equate critical thinking with physical danger, since their parents suffered for speaking out against the authorities (Kordon and Edelman, 1986; Weinstein et.al., 1987).

Symptoms of depression are among the most common findings in the literature on children and political repression. It is generally acknowledged that children are at an increased risk for depression following experiences of prolonged separation from, or loss of, important attachment figures. Hunter (1988), in her review of the United States and Israeli literature on prolonged parental wartime captivity and longterm effects on children, found that, invariably, mothers played a key role in determining whether or not children coped well when faced with the prolonged absence of their fathers. Mothers' coping was positively correlated with children's coping. Freud and Burlingham, in their studies in war-torn England (1943), concluded that children coped better when they remained with their parents both during and subsequent to disasters, and that the children's sense of well-being directly correlated with their parents' sense of well-being.

Forced disappearances, assassinations and other forms of political repression frequently lead to temporary or permanent separation of children from their parents and

other close family members. It is, therefore, not surprising that research on children and political repression reveals a high incidence of depressive symptomatology (eg., Allodi, 1980; Dawes et al., 1986; Kinzie et al., 1986; Schirmer, 1986).

Headaches, stomachaches, enuresis, nightmares and other sleep disturbances are some of the common somatic complaints found in these children, as the literature from Latin American, Cambodian, South African and other samples reports. Developmental regression has been noted in younger children following traumatic political events (Allodi, 1980). Increased irritability and/or aggressive behavior has been found in many studies, although it seems to be mediated by gender, developmental level and cultural norms (Allodi, 1980; Kinzie et al., 1986; Macksoud, in press; Movimiento Solidario de Salud Mental, 1987; Schirmer, 1986).

Martín-Baró observes that the socially traumatizing results of institutionalized violence and psychological warfare in El Salvador (but applicable elsewhere) particularly affect children, since they "must construct their identities and develop their lives within the network of these dehumanizing [social] relations" (1990, p. 5):

To be socialized in the context of war-- the strictly military and the psychological-- puts the child in a dilemma, both parts of which are untenable. One choice is to construct an identity that internalizes violence, the institutionalized lie and dehumanizing social relations. The other is to construct a socially stigmatized identity, frequently no less violent, with a need to resort to the social lie, the game of public

falsehood and clandestine authenticity, in order to survive... The children's dilemma is not simply a Manichean choice between desirable authenticity and undesirable alienation, since identifying against the social system implies obvious objective and subjective costs and therefore cannot be considered an ideal option. Rather, the dilemma also demonstrates how, in a war situation, children must make existential choices whose normal dynamic tends to produce harm, psychic disorders, in other words, what we have called psychosocial traumas (Martín-Baró, 1990, pp. 15-16).

People living in many politically repressive societies are also subject to the structural violence of poverty, malnourishment, poor health care and schooling and chronic under- and unemployment. These everyday stressors are part and parcel of political repression, yet they represent a challenge to studying the effects of political violence per se. Not only do chronic malnourishment, poverty, educational, material and social deprivation and other forms of structural violence pose significant threats to children's mental health (Arroyo & Eth, 1985; Dommissé, 1986), they also undermine children's capacities to cope effectively with the potentially traumatic experiences of political violence and repression (Miller, 1993). Punamaki and Suleiman's (1990) work with Palestinian children, Bryce and colleagues' (1989) research on the mental health of Lebanese children and their mothers and Becker and colleagues' (1989) work in Chile attempt to disentangle the effects of structural violence from those of specific acts of state terrorism or other forms of political violence.

f. Distrust, Insecurity and Loss of Faith in the Future

Political repression also impacts on children's psychosocial and cognitive development (Center for the Study of Human Rights, 1988; Martín-Baró, 1990; Weinstein et al., 1987). How do children construct their identity and attempt to realize their intellectual and creative potentials, while living in a context of chronic violence, loss and deprivation? Healthy psychosocial development involves the establishment of basic trust and security, competence, empowerment, identity, meaning and a sense of purpose. When these processes are disrupted by politically-related violence, fundamental distrust and insecurity, helplessness, incompetence, and a lack of a clear identity, purpose and meaning in life may develop instead (Center for the Study of Human Rights, 1988).

Interviews with children from Cambodia, Uganda, Rwanda, Lebanon and Israel reveal their distrust, insecurity and pessimism about the future (Bryce et al., 1989; Kinzie et al., 1986; Lorch, 1994; Macksoud et al., 1993). In unpredictable war and politically-repressive conditions, parents may be unable to protect their children from harm. The realization that nobody can safeguard their life may reinforce these children's intense feelings of fear and anxiety. In addition, the daily exposure to violent repression or war and the accompanying fear and insecurity leaves many children with a sense of uncertainty and a

pessimistic or fatalistic view of the future (Macksoud et al., 1993).

From a developmental perspective, an important question is whether over time and in the absence of clinical intervention and/or an end to violence and repression, symptoms such as distrust, insecurity, helplessness and rage pass from state to trait, becoming enduring features of these children's personalities (Arroyo and Eth, 1985; Miller, 1993).

#### g. Violence and Moral Development

Children's moral development is influenced by their social and political environment. During wars and civil unrest, children witness looting, violence, and arbitrary use of power. With sufficient exposure, they may come to view these behaviors as permissible, or even normal. Children may also come to feel a deep sense of betrayal at authority figures, such as political leaders, the armed forces, neighbors, and even relatives and friends, who had been trusted and respected role models but who through their politically- or ideologically-condoned actions have repeatedly breached the expected moral standards of behavior (Macksoud et al., 1993).

Children are not exempt from participating in the political violence around them. Even young adolescents are frequently recruited as soldiers or fighters and are

indoctrinated to glorify violence. Both children and adolescents exhibit increased antisocial behavior and hostile and aggressive feelings among during wartimes (Punamaki & Suleiman, 1990).

Several researchers have found that cultural values regarding the use of violence to resolve political matters appear to shape children's attitudes, either limiting or encouraging their endorsement of violence against repressor groups. Some cultural groups, such as Cambodian refugee children (Kinzie et al., 1986), appear to channel aggressive revenge fantasies into a desire to achieve a successful life despite the trauma to which they have been subjected. In other cases, exposure to political violence seems to polarize children's attitudes towards political conflicts (Martín-Baró 1989; 1990), leading at times to advocacy of violence against those seen as "the enemy" (Dawes, 1990; Punamaki and Suleiman, 1990). Whether or not these children continue to live in a repressive environment is also likely to affect their attitude regarding violence (Miller, 1993).

Miller (1993) questions the assertions of Macksoud and colleagues, Punamaki and Suleiman and others that children exposed to political repression and violence are likely to regard violence as an appropriate way of resolving interpersonal conflicts. In his review of the literature on children and political violence, he concludes that the research is inconclusive and that most studies fail to

address the relationship between attitudes towards the use of violence and actual behavior.

## CHAPTER IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURE

### Background

In August 1991, I made my first research trip to Honduras. I had been invited to travel there as part of a delegation organized by the International Association Against Torture (AICT-- a United Nations non-governmental affiliate) to assess health and mental health conditions in Honduras. While there, I gave some therapeutic workshops for children affiliated with COFADEH. This organization was interested in evaluating and addressing the mental health needs of the population it serves (earlier that year, AICT and COFADEH had conducted a survey of stress symptoms among families of the disappeared). Once I returned to the United States, I contacted COFADEH and proposed a study of the psychological effects of disappearance on child family members. I returned to Honduras in July 1992. The COFADEH staff was particularly concerned about the children of families with disappeared or assassinated parents. They proposed that I study both groups and offered help in terms of introductions, office space, and staff to accompany me as needed. I, in turn, offered my services doing brief psychological assessments of people who arrived at the COFADEH headquarters in states of crisis and requested help from the organization. I also gave several workshops for

staff and for adult and child members of the organization and participated in human rights education workshops in different parts of Honduras with teachers, peasants, labor organizers, and victims of civil rights abuses. These experiences were extremely useful in learning first-hand about historical and present socioeconomic, political, and psychosocial conditions for different sectors of society and in different parts of the country.

Initially upon deciding to study children of both the disappeared and assassinated, I planned to include a control group of children who had experienced another kind of parental loss. Due to numerous issues, including the time involved in recruitment, the difficulty of access, economic and travelling constraints, and most importantly, uncertainty about what would constitute an appropriate and available control group, I opted not to include such a group. The research was therefore limited to an exploratory and comparative field study of the two psycho-politically affected groups of children.

### Recruitment

Although there are about 180 forcibly disappeared persons in Honduras, only a small percentage of these people had children living in the country. This is due to several factors: most of the disappeared were quite young at the time of their abduction and only a minority of them had

children; a high percentage were foreigners from other Central American countries, such as El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, and their families live in their native countries; many of the families went into exile abroad after their relatives' disappearance; and contact has been lost with some of the families and their addresses were unknown.

Some of the factors limiting the number of children of the disappeared available to be interviewed also apply to children of the assassinated. COFADEH has a relationship with most of the families of the disappeared living in Honduras. On the other hand, it has a relationship with only a few of the families of the assassinated. Therefore, access to the families of the disappeared was much easier than access to families of the assassinated. Nonetheless, I interviewed children from an equal number of families of the assassinated as from families of the disappeared. Since the mid 1980s, disappearance as a form of social and political control has greatly decreased, while assassination has increased and continues to the present. Because the assassinations are generally more recent, more of these families are available to be interviewed. Far fewer are foreigners and fewer appear to go into exile. Those assassinated also appear to be older on the average, and therefore more likely to have children.

My intention was to interview one child age nine or over per family from as many families of the disappeared and

assassinated as I could locate within the time available. But as I interviewed mothers, they frequently noted that their children had responded differently to the disappearance or assassination and to the consequences of this event depending on their children's age, gender, personality, relationship with their father, and other factors. It appeared that interviewing more than one child from the same family might yield interesting information. I also discovered-- for reasons already detailed-- that I would have access to fewer families than I had originally planned to interview. I therefore decided, whenever possible, to interview more than one child per family. On many occasions, however, this was not possible because the other child (or children) was not home during my visit, lived in another part of the country, was at work, or-- in a few cases-- refused to be interviewed.

In the first recruitment contacts and interviews in 1992, I was usually accompanied by a COFADEH staff member who had previously met the families. As I became more comfortable in and knowledgeable about the country, I no longer needed this accompaniment and made telephone, telegram or in-person contacts directly, introducing myself to the mother, another family member, or the adolescent child as a mental health professional who worked with COFADEH on a study of family members of the disappeared and assassinated. Whenever possible, the children and mother

were asked to come to the COFADEH office in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. Many people did not have telephones and lived away from the capital; in these cases, visits or telegrams were the initial means of contact. In some instances, I did not even have an address, just a town or neighborhood. In these situations, I was forced to canvass the town or neighborhood, asking neighbors for the whereabouts of the family. Several families were never located.

Participation in the interviews was voluntary and with the verbal consent of mother and child. In the case of adult children (18 or older), parental consent was not necessarily requested. Both the child and the mother or guardian were told that I was interested in finding out if and how children had been affected by the disappearance/assassination of their parent and by the changes in their life brought on by this event. At the end of the interview, a small gift was given to most participants as a token of appreciation: decorative ceramics or similar objects to adults and art materials to children. Those interviewed were told that the results of the study would be made public, but that their names would remain confidential. Interestingly, several of the subjects insisted that they did not want anonymity; they wanted their father's situations and their individual and family's trials and tribulations known, recorded and remembered.

### Description of the Subjects

Although I had met a few children and families during my August 1991 trip, the diagnostic interviews with children and mothers were conducted in three trips to Honduras over a ten-month period, from July 1992 to May 1993. A total of 27 children were interviewed: 16 children from 9 families of the disappeared and 11 children from 9 families of the assassinated. Of the 18 mothers or guardians, 16 (parents of 22 of the children) were interviewed. The remaining 2 were unavailable due to that one was living outside the country and the other one was uncooperative. Fifteen male and 12 female children were interviewed. The disappeared group consisted of 10 males and 6 females; the assassinated group consisted of 5 males and 6 females. Twenty-six of the 27 subjects had lost their father; only one subject, a girl, had lost her mother-- to assassination. This reflects the fact that very few women were disappeared or assassinated and most were childless. Table 4.1 lists information on children's ages at the time of the loss, length of time since the loss, and ages at the time of interview.

Table 4.1  
Ages of the Research Samples and Time Since Event/Loss

Age in Months	Disappeared	Assassinated
At time of event		
Minimum	0*	84
Maximum	135	190
<u>M</u>	65	137
<u>SD</u>	41	37
At interview		
Minimum	123	127
Maximum	238	249
<u>M</u>	175	186
<u>SD</u>	32	34
Time since event/loss		
Minimum	42	10
Maximum	143	129
<u>M</u>	112	49
<u>SD</u>	22	40

\*Mother was six months pregnant with the child at the time of her husband's disappearance.

### Procedure

Three of the children and two of the caretakers (one mother and one grandmother) were interviewed in a private room at the COFADEH headquarters. Two were interviewed at a relative's home. The remaining 22 children and 14 available caretakers were interviewed in their own homes. At their homes, the request for privacy was always made, and usually honored. The importance of privacy was not always comprehended, however, particularly by younger siblings,

cousins or friends, who would occasionally pop in. Mothers were also almost always interviewed in privacy.

Child interviews lasted between 1 1/2 and 3 hours and, with few exceptions, were tape recorded and later transcribed. A few times, the tape recorder malfunctioned and parts of interviews had to be recalled, rather than transcribed verbatim. Twenty of the interviews were conducted in one session and 7 took two sessions to complete. Interviews with mothers took between 1/2 and 1 1/2 hours. I conducted all interviews- in Spanish- with children and 12 of the interviews with mothers/caretakers. The other 4 interviews with mothers were conducted by COFADEH staff members who accompanied me to the homes of these families. On several occasions, there was limited time to conduct interviews of one family. In those cases, I always opted to fully interview the child and to limit my time with the mother/guardian.

### Interview Instruments

The child interview consisted of the following measures, usually administered in the order noted: the House-Tree-Person-Person projective drawings test; cards I, II, III and VIII of the Rorschach inkblot test; cards 13B, 2, 8BM, and 8GF of the Thematic Apperception Test; an adaptation of the Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction Checklist (PTSRC)- child version in Spanish; an adaptation of the

Child Behavior Inventory (CBI)- child version in Spanish; and a variety of semi-structured and open-ended questions about children's experiences of the event and its aftermath, their memories and fantasies regarding the lost parent, and general questions about the child's current life and relationships.

The interview with the parent/guardian consisted of three parts: a structured and semi-structured series of questions about present and past demographic, socioeconomic, social and psychological issues concerning the family, the lost parent and the child subject(s); and parent versions in Spanish of the adapted PTSRC and the adapted CBI.

### Instruments and Measures Utilized in the Statistical Analysis

#### Interview with Parent/Guardian

I devised a structured and semi-structured questionnaire that I administered to parents/guardians or, in the 4 cases when no parent was available, to young adult children. It contains demographic and socioeconomic questions about the family and individual members, including the lost parent. It also inquires about the event and its effects on the child and family, as well as about the child's current life. The Spanish original and an English translation are found in Appendix B.

Urist Mutuality of Autonomy Scale (MOA)

The Urist Mutuality of Autonomy Scale (MOA scale) (Urist, 1977; Urist & Shill, 1982) assesses the quality of object relations and levels of psychopathology by measuring stated or implied interactions depicted on the Rorschach test between people, animals, and/or inanimate objects. The MOA scale is particularly useful for evaluating children's responses, since children's protocols contain fewer human and greater nonhuman interactions than do adults' protocols (Levitt & Truuma, 1972). By contrast, most Rorschach object relations and movement scales limit themselves to human responses.

The MOA is a 7-point scale: the lowest scores (1 and 2) are assigned to the most adaptive, reciprocal, empathic relationships; the middle scores (3 and 4) indicate an increasing loss of autonomy and a utilitarian conception of the "other," to be leaned upon (score of 3) or to mirror oneself (score of 4); and the highest scores (5, 6 and 7) are assigned to the least adaptive, most destructive, malevolent and unequal interactions (Tuber, 1989). Table 4.2 describes the scale ratings of interactions along the 7-point continuum and gives an example of each scale point.

Table 4.2  
MOA Scale

Score	Description	Example*
1	reciprocal acknowledgement	"Two people who are eating at a very elegant table, and I imagine that they are conversing about something very important" (Card III)**
2	benign parallel interaction	"Two polar bears that are climbing over a mountain" (Card VIII)
3	leaning or dependent relationship	"Two little bears glued together... that have the little beak glued so" (Card II)
4	mirroring oneself	"A feral pig, standing in the water, looking at its reflection" (Card II)
5	coercive, hurtful influence or threat	"Two slaves with their arms bound behind with their head leaning forward, tired from so much suffering" (Card III)
6	violent attack or destruction of one party by another	"This looks like a bat... and these are the wings, but like it was injured, that they ripped off these two parts [of the wings]" (Card I)
7	catastrophic event, often by larger-than-life forces	"Under the table there is a nuclear explosion" (Card III)**

\*All the examples were taken from protocols obtained in this study.  
\*\*Of note, the verbalizations used as examples for scores of 1 and 7 were one subject's responses to Card III.

The MOA scale has been used by researchers with both children and adults. Among its various applications, it has been used: to study object representations and psychiatric symptomatology in children (eg., Ryan et al., 1985; Tuber, 1989; Tuber & Coates, 1989); to assess the quality of interpersonal relationships of adolescent (Urist & Shill, 1982) and adult inpatients (Spear & Sugarman, 1984; Urist,

1977); and to discriminate between different types of psychiatric symptomatology in adolescents and adults (Blatt et al., 1990; Spear & Sugarman, 1984).

In this study, the Rorschachs of the 27 subjects were independently scored using the MOA scale by two raters: a trained Spanish-speaking psychology doctoral student who had been told that the subjects had been evaluated in Honduras, but was otherwise blind to the study, and myself. The interrater reliability score for exact agreement was 93 percent. Differences in scoring were decided by an expert judge. Mean MOA scores were then statistically analyzed.

#### Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction Checklist (PTSRC)

The PTSRC (Macksoud et al., 1990a), developed at the Project on Children and War (Center for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University), is a structured interview administered separately to children and parents that measures Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms in children in relation to one war-related event that the child being questioned selects as "most disturbing." I adapted the Spanish-language version of this questionnaire to the population I was investigating by a priori defining the event as the disappearance/assassination of a parent. The Spanish checklist-child version and English translation are found in Appendix B.

The checklist consists of 13 items rated as either

present or absent.<sup>1</sup> It inquires about the three main domains of PTSD: reexperiencing of the event, decreased responsiveness to the environment, and increased states of alertness. I pilot-tested the checklist upon my arrival to Honduras in 1992 and made slight changes in the wording of the questions to make it more comprehensible to speakers of Honduran Spanish.

#### Child Behavior Inventory (CBI)

The CBI (Macksoud et al., 1990b) is another scale developed at the Project on Children and War (Center for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University). This structured interview, administered to children and/or parents, inquires about five domains of children's symptoms and behavior: aggressive, depressive and anxiety symptoms, and playful and prosocial behavior. Each domain or subscale is represented by a set of questions scored on a four-alternative format (0=never, 1=rarely, 2=sometimes<sup>2</sup>, 3=always). The CBI was adapted from various children's

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<sup>1</sup>In some of the questionnaires, question number 5 was incorrectly stated, invalidating the question and answer. Therefore, the scale was reduced from the original 14 to 13 items.

<sup>2</sup>The Spanish version of the CBI translated "rarely" (choice 2) as "pocas veces" (literally, "few times") and "sometimes" (choice 3) as "algunas veces" (literally, "some times"). When I pilot-tested the scale, I found that children did not distinguish the difference between choices 2 and 3. I had to change choice 3 to "con frecuencia" which actually means "frequently," therefore changing slightly the meaning of the responses.

behavioral measures by an international team of mental health professionals who selected items that would be culturally applicable to countries experiencing armed conflict, including Mozambique, El Salvador, the Philippines, and Lebanon. Since Honduras- despite its repressive history- is not experiencing armed conflict, I changed the wording in item 43 from "war" to "problems of the country" to make it applicable to my population. I also pilot-tested this inventory in my 1992 trip and changed some of the wording to make it clearer for speakers of Honduran Spanish. A copy of the adapted child version of the CBI scale in Spanish, an English translation of the scale and the list of items according to the five domain subscales can be found in Appendix C.

Macksoud (in press) and Macksoud and Aber (n.d.) have used the PTSRC and CBI together to assess how differences in children's war experiences result in different developmental outcomes. Macksoud and colleagues (Macksoud et al., 1993) have used these measures to analyze children's war experiences in several different countries.

#### Treatment of the Quantitative Data

The data was analyzed in the following ways: frequencies were determined for individual items in the CBI, the PTSRC, and some of the parent interview items;

correlations were calculated for the disappeared's group, the assassinated's group and all the children grouped together between CBI subscale scores, PTSRC scores, and MOA mean scores; reliability analyses were done of the CBI subscales and the PTSRC scale; differences in responses according to lost parent status and gender were evaluated by t tests for independent samples and the Mann-Whitney U test. Chapter 5 describes the quantitative analysis results.

#### Instruments Utilized in the Qualitative Analysis

##### House-Tree-Person Projective Drawing Technique (HTP)

The HTP (Buck, 1992) elicits drawings of a house, a tree, a person, and a second person of opposite gender and verbal associations to these drawings. It can be a good way to engage children in the evaluation process: many of my Honduran subjects said they enjoyed drawing and were disappointed at the time limit I set. The HTP was administered in the following manner: subjects were informed that this and other tasks that they were being asked to do would help me to better understand who they were, how they experienced the world, and their interests and concerns. The drawings were not a test of skill, rather a way of finding out what was on their mind. They were given a black lead pencil with eraser, a set of colored pencils, and four sheets of unlined paper. Five minutes were allowed per drawing. After all four drawings were completed, they were

asked to describe their drawings as fully as possible, their associations to the drawings, and questions specific to each drawing (e.g., with the persons: their names, who they were, and what they were doing, thinking and feeling). When unable to describe or provide associations, the children were sometimes asked to make up a story about their drawing.

### Rorschach Test

The Rorschach was analyzed quantitatively (as explained above) and qualitatively. The test was administered according to Ames' guidelines (Ames et al., 1974). Because of time considerations, four of the ten Rorschach cards were utilized. These were monochromatic card I and colored cards II, III and VIII.

### Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

The TAT (Murray, 1943) requires subjects to create stories in response to pictures presented to them. The four cards utilized were selected for their sociocultural appropriateness and their various themes of childhood, family, deprivation, aloneness, violence, loss, and the future. Card 13BM depicts a young, rather forlorn-looking boy sitting in the entrance of a dilapidated farm building. Card 2 is a farm scene with a horse, a man, and two women, the younger with books, the older pregnant. Card 8BM shows an injured man in the background with men over him, either

operating or attacking him, a gun, and a youth in the foreground. Card 8GF shows a pensive-looking woman with her face in her hands. Subjects were encouraged to create detailed stories about these pictures.

#### Questions about Event and Self

An important part of the interview was a series of semi-structured and open-ended questions about the child's experiences of the event and its impact on him/her and the rest of the family, his/her understanding of what actually occurred and the reasons for it, his/her memories, dreams and fantasies regarding the lost parent, and general questions about the child's current life and relationships.

#### Treatment of the Qualitative Data

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the children their patterns of responses. The themes that I explore are the most frequently mentioned issues brought up by these children, the emotions related to their loss experience, the defenses or coping strategies employed, disruptions in the development of a coherent sense of self, age and gender issues, differences between children of disappeared and assassinated parents, and attitudes toward social action and political organizations.

### Hypotheses

This study has been conceived mainly as an exploratory investigation and only secondarily as a hypothesis-testing project. Although the disappeared and assassinated groups differ on an important dimension, they share the powerful experiences of the violent, human-induced loss of their parent, the frightening, isolating, politically-repressive environment prior to and after their loss, and related long-term familial, social, and economic disruptions. Therefore, both groups would be expected to exhibit a variety of post-traumatic symptoms (H1).

However, the two groups appear to be comparable only to a limited extent due to the large difference in time since the loss of their parent: for the disappeared an average of 9 years; for the assassinated an average of 4 years and 1 month. Due to the greater length of time since the loss and the greater opportunity to reconstruct a "normal" life, the children of the disappeared would be expected to report less loss-related disturbances and symptoms than the children of the assassinated (H2 and H3).

Nonetheless, the children of the assassinated have the firm knowledge of the death of their parent; they can mourn and hopefully achieve some sense of resolution about their loss. Since the children of the disappeared do not have this opportunity, they would be expected to show greater unconscious disturbance than the children of the

assassinated (H4).

Statement of the Quantitative Hypotheses

Following are the quantitative hypotheses tested in this study:

- H1: Both children of the disappeared and children of the assassinated will score highly in the PTSRC scale and the CBI depression, anxiety and aggression subscales.
- H2: Children of the disappeared will score significantly lower on the PTSRC than children of the assassinated.
- H3: Children of the disappeared will score significantly lower on the anxiety and depression subscales of the CBI than children of the assassinated.
- H4: Children of the disappeared will score significantly higher on the Rorschach MOA scale-- i.e., they will present less adaptive, more malevolent images-- than children of the assassinated.

## CHAPTER V. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter presents a statistical analysis of the quantitative measures used in this study. First, I summarize the statistical procedures employed in the data analysis. Then, I provide relevant findings by instrument: the Parent Questionnaire-- administered to parents and/or older children; the Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction Checklist (PTSRC)-- administered to children and parents; the Child Behavior Inventory (CBI)-- administered to children and parents; and the Urist Mutuality of Autonomy Scale (MOA)-- utilized with the Rorschach, and administered only to children. Finally, I present reliability analyses for the PTSRC scale and the CBI subscales.

### Analysis Model

The samples analyzed and compared in this study consist of children of disappeared and of assassinated parents and the surviving parents/guardians of these two groups of children. Samples were small: 16 for the disappeared group children; 11 for the assassinated group children; 7 for the disappeared group parents/caretakers; and 9 for the assassinated group parents/caretakers). Furthermore, not all children or parents completed all the questionnaires-- the number of scorable responses varied per questionnaire

item, ranging from 17 to 27 for the children and 8 to 16 for the parents. For the quantitative data, the Rorschach was the only instrument completed by all 27 child subjects.

### Parent Questionnaire

Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 summarize most of the responses, with corresponding frequencies, to the questionnaire administered to parents and older children. For clarity, the items are listed under three subject areas: Demographic (Table 5.1); Child (Table 5.2); and Parental Loss (Table 5.3).

T tests for independent samples were done for all the questionnaire items, but few showed significant differences. Two items were important exceptions. Although the two groups of children were fairly close in age in months at the time of the interviews (disappeared:  $\bar{M}=175$ ,  $\underline{SD}=32$ ; assassinated:  $\bar{M}=186$ ,  $\underline{SD}=34$ ), the age in months at the time of their parents' loss was significantly less for the children of the disappeared ( $\bar{M}=65$ ,  $\underline{SD}=41$ ) than for the children of the assassinated ( $\bar{M}=137$ ,  $\underline{SD}=37$ ),  $p<.001$ . Consistent with this pattern, the length of time in months since the loss is significantly longer for the disappeared group ( $\bar{M}=112$ ,  $\underline{SD}=22$ ) than for the assassinated group ( $\bar{M}=49$ ,  $\underline{SD}=40$ ),  $p<.001$ .

**Table 5.1**  
**Parent Questionnaire Demographic/Socioeconomic Items**

#	Demographic/Socioeconomic Items:	Disappeared Assassinated			
		n	%*	n	%*
2	community where child lives:				
	Tegucigalpa	11	69	8	73
	San Pedro Sula	2	13	2	18
	Progreso	2	13	0	0
	La Ceiba	1	6	0	0
	other	0	0	1	9
8	child lives with:				
	own family/house	10	63	9	82
	other family/house	6	38	2	18
9	responsible for child:				
	mother	8	50	9	82
	mother and stepfather	6	38	1	9
	grandmother	0	0	1	9
	siblings	2	13	0	0
10.1	caretaker's occupation:				
	menial, office work**	11	69	5	46
	mid-white collar, professional	5	31	2	18
	technical, other	0	0	4	36
12.1	caretaker's education:				
	less than h.s. graduate	8	50	7	64
	h.s. graduate & higher	8	50	4	36
11	lost parent's occupation:				
	professional, white collar	4	25	1	10
	technical, other	2	13	1	10
	organizer	10	63	8	80
13	lost parent's education:				
	less than h.s. graduate	6	43	3	27
	h.s. graduate & higher	8	57	8	73
15	before event economic situation:				
15a	house-very poor & poor	7	50	4	36
	house-middle class & very good	7	50	7	64
15b	income-very poor & poor	2	13	3	27
	income-middle class & well off	14	88	8	73
16	economic situation after event:				
	improved	0	0	1	9
	worsened somewhat	5	31	1	9
	worsened greatly	11	69	9	82
14	current economic situation:				
14a	house-very poor & poor	7	44	7	64
	house-middle class & very good	9	56	4	36
14b	income-very poor & poor	12	75	8	73
	income-middle class & well off	4	25	3	27

\*In all the tables, percentages of .5 or above rounded to 1.0.

\*\*For the Parent Questionnaire, many of the categories were devised from respondents' answers; some categories were then grouped together.

As noted in Table 5.1, more than two-thirds of the children interviewed live in the capital, although there are several from other cities. Only one ("other") currently lives in a rural community. The children of the disappeared have more varied living arrangements than the children of the assassinated. Whereas 38% of the disappeared group children do not live with their immediate families, only 18% of the assassinated group live away from their mothers. Many more of the disappeareds' wives have new mates (38%) than do the wives of assassinated men (9%). This appears to be related to the length of time since the loss.

Both groups are quite heterogeneous in regard to education, occupation, housing and income. For the disappeared group, their current housing situation has slightly improved since the loss (from 50% to 56% middle class and very good). The assassinated group, by contrast, reported a substantial deterioration in their housing (from 64% to 36%). Both groups reported a large decrease in their income since the loss. For the disappeared, their income dropped from 88% to 25% middle-class and well-off. For the assassinated, the change was also large (from 73% to 27%).

Table 5.2  
Parent Questionnaire Child Items

#	Child Items:	Disappeared		Assassinated	
		n	%	n	%
7	school attendance	12	75	9	82
7b.2	learning problems:				
	poor concentration	3	20	1	9
	does not apply self	3	20	4	36
7b.1	school behavior problems	1	7	0	0
7c	health problems:				
	heart problems	1	7	1	9
	epilepsy	0	0	2	18
	other or unspecified	1	7	1	9
25	play/behavior:				
	normal/age appropriate	12	75	10	91
	impoverished	2	13	1	9
	violent	2	13	0	0
26	child's peer relationships:				
	isolated or no friends	0	0	1	9
	superficial friends	2	13	3	27
	a few good friends	7	44	1	9
	many friends	4	25	3	27
	friends, unspecified	3	19	3	27
27	child's family relationships:				
	poor/conflicted	3	19	0	0
	fair	4	25	2	18
	good & very good	9	56	9	82

Table 5.2 summarizes the main responses to the questions regarding the children's health, school, behavior, play, and peer and family relationships. No statistically-significant differences were found between the two groups'

responses. Children of both groups have a moderate degree of school attendance-- but fairly high for Honduras, a fairly high percentage of learning problems involving poor concentration and difficulties applying themselves to school tasks (40% for the disappeared group, 45% for the assassinated group), very few school behavior problems and a few to a moderate number of health problems (14% for the disappeared group, 36% for the assassinated group).

Most of the children were reported as engaging in normal or age-appropriate play and behavior (75% for the disappeared group, 91% for the assassinated group). While 44% of the disappeared group was described as having poor/conflicted and fair family relationships, only 18% of the assassinated group was similarly described. Fifty-six percent of the first group's family relationships are good or very good, in contrast with 82% of the second group.

Children's peer relationships were characterized in various ways (see Table 5.2, number 26 for all the responses and frequencies). However, the accuracy of the responses to this question is questionable. Respondents had difficulty with this item and appeared quite unsure of how to describe the quality and quantity of their children's friendships.

In summary, these children were reported to have normal (for Honduras) school attendance, some learning problems, almost no school behavior problems, few to moderate health problems, and fairly normal play, behavior and peer

relationships. Family relationships were reported as poorer for the disappeared group than the assassinated group.

Table 5.3  
Parent Questionnaire Parental Loss Items

#	Parental Loss Items:	Disappeared		Assassinated	
		n	%	n	%
18a	caretaker believes disappeared parent:				
	dead	13	93	NA	NA
	unsure	1	7	NA	NA
18b	child believes disappeared parent:				
	alive	8	50	NA	NA
	dead	3	19	NA	NA
	uncertain	4	25	NA	NA
	not asked	1	6	NA	NA
20	frequency lost parent mentioned at home:				
	rarely & on holidays	9	56	1	11
	frequently, daily & always	7	44	8	89
21	frequency child asks/talks about parent:				
	rarely & on holidays	7	54	2	22
	frequently, daily & always	6	46	7	78
24	religion/church in coping with loss:				
	not religious	0	0	4	40
	helped a little	2	15	5	50
	very helpful	2	15	1	10
	not helpful	9	70	0	0

Table 5.3 summarizes the responses to some of the parental loss items. The vast majority of the parents/caretakers of the disappeared group (13 of 14 respondents) believe that the disappeared fathers/spouses

are now dead. Only 19% of the children from this group shared this belief; the rest said they were uncertain (25%) or insisted that their fathers are alive (50%).

It is interesting, however, that both adult and child respondents contradicted themselves throughout the interview process: the ones who said that their husbands/sons/fathers are dead spoke of them sometimes as if they were alive, and when asked about this, would acknowledge the uncertainty of their belief; likewise, those who thought their husband/father is alive would sometimes give hints that they thought they were dead; some of the children who acknowledged their state of uncertainty spoke about their father as dead, alive, or in ambivalent terms.

The disappeared fathers are mentioned at home less frequently (frequently, daily and always: 44%) than are the assassinated parents (89%). The difference was statistically significant (disappeared:  $\bar{M}$  2.31,  $SD$  1.01; assassinated:  $\bar{M}$  3.73,  $SD$  .91,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, the children of disappeared fathers speak less frequently about their parent (frequently, daily and always: 56%) than do the children of assassinated parents (78%). The children and caretakers of the disappeared group noted that, in the past, they used to speak more frequently about the disappeared father. With time, the father is mentioned with less frequency.

In this very religious country, only 15% of the

disappeared group and 10% of the assassinated group found religion to be an important aid in coping with their loss. The two groups described the role of religion somewhat differently: 70% of the disappeared group said religion had not been helpful; 40% of the assassinated group said they were not religious. Many commented on a lack of support from organized religion, part of a general lack of social support that they had experienced.

Responses to other items related to parental loss are not easily characterized in table form. Asked, "how else (besides economically) did the loss affect the family?," all respondents from both groups gave several answers, including "psychologically," "morally," "miss him," and "feel lonely."

Respondents reported various types of losses subsequent to the loss of the parent: about 1/3 of the children in each group had had multiple losses of family members, another 1/5 had lost a grandparent, many of the families had had direct death or harm threats (at least 5 of the disappeared and 2 of the assassinated). Three from the disappeared group and 4 from the assassinated group reported no threats or losses. Nine of 11 from the disappeared group and 7 of 11 from the assassinated group reported that the children were very affected or traumatized by these losses and/or threats.

When questioned further, parents/caretakers and child respondents said that losing their father made the children easily affected by or more vulnerable to later losses.

Similarly, the children were reported to be very wary of parental absences. All but 3 of the children from both groups were said to respond with excessive worry, missing, sadness and/or fear to the remaining parent's normal absences.

Table 5.4  
Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction Checklist

#	Items	Disap		Assass		Par*	
		n	%**	n	%**	n	%**
1	Often thinks/speaks about what occurred	8	62	10	91	12	80
2	Scared when thinks about what occurred	12	92	10	91	12	80
3	Often remembers what occurred	7	54	6	55	9	60
4	Dreams about what occurred	6	46	7	70	10	71
6	Thoughts ab event make child forgetful	6	50	8	73	9	64
7	Since event more alone/not understood	10	83	7	64	13	87
8	Since worry that will also die young	7	54	5	46	10	83
9	Since enjoy less playing with friends	2	18	10	91	7	47
10	Since difficulty falling/staying asleep	9	69	5	46	8	53
11	Since frightened of loud sounds	9	82	8	73	14	93
12	Since difficulty concentrating	5	45	5	46	9	60
13	Stays away from reminders of event	6	50	3	27	10	67
14	Tries to forget what occurred	4	31	3	27	4	27

\*Parents of both types of children grouped together.

\*\*Percentage answered "yes" to item.

Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction Checklist

Table 5.4 shows the number and percentage of respondents per child group and of all parents grouped together answering positively to the presence of post-traumatic stress symptoms as described in the PTSRC. For the disappeared group, 11 of the 13 items received a positive response by nearly 50% or more of the children.

Four of the items were answered positively by at least 2/3 of these child respondents. Feeling scared when thinking about what occurred (92%), since the event feeling more alone or as if nobody understands (83%), and since the event feeling frightened of loud sounds (82%) were the items with the highest percentage agreement among children of the disappeared.

Among the assassinated group, 11 of the 13 items also received a positive response by nearly 50% or more of the children. Six of the items were answered positively by at least 2/3 of these child respondents. Often thinking or speaking about what occurred (91%), feeling scared when thinking about what occurred (91%), and since the event enjoying less playing with friends (91%) were the items with the highest percentage agreement among children of the assassinated.

Among the parents group, 12 of the 13 items received a positive response by nearly 50% or more of the respondents and 7 of the items were answered positively by at least 2/3 of the caretakers. Item 14 (tries to forget what occurred) received a low agreement rate among all groups of respondents. Some children said that they did not want to forget what happened to their parent because it would mean having to forget their parent. This item may not be an appropriate measure of traumatic response for those whose traumatic experience involves losing a loved one.

The findings described above suggest, as was posited in Hypothesis 1, that both groups of children, as a result of their traumatic experiences, exhibit a variety of post-traumatic symptoms.

### Child Behavior Inventory

Few statistically significant differences were found in the responses of the two child groups to Child Behavior Inventory items. The CBI subscale Tables 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9 summarize the number and percentage of respondents answering "frequently" or "always" to different items according to the two child groups and to the all-parents group.

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Table 5.5  
Child Behavior Inventory Depression Subscale

#	Depression Items	Disap		Assass		Parents*	
		n	%**	n	%**	n	%**
1	Cries easily	4	31	6	55	9	64
6	Feels sad/unhappy	9	54	5	46	11	79
11	Worries about many things	10	77	9	82	12	80
16	Feels no one loves him/her	5	42	3	27	5	53
21	Afraid of losing family	10	92	10	91	14	93
26	Feels tired	2	17	5	46	7	50
31	Prefers being alone	1	9	2	18	3	25
35	Feels lonely	4	37	2	18	6	50
39	Feels worthless	3	27	3	27	2	17
42	Feels lacks capacity	3	30	5	45	4	46

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\*Parents of both types of children grouped together.  
\*\*Percentage of "frequently" and "always" responses compressed.

Table 5.5 lists the responses to the depression subscale items. Some of the more notable frequently or always responses include: approximately 1/2 of the children from each group reports feeling sad or unhappy (54% for the disappeared, 46% for the assassinated); 77% of the disappeared group and 82% of the assassinated group worry about many things; 42% of the first group and 27% of the second group feel that nobody loves them; and 92% of the first group and 91% of the second group report feeling afraid of losing their family. Only a small percentage of these children prefer being alone to being with family or friends (9% for the disappeared, 18% for the assassinated). This appears to be related to their fear of losing their families and the related fear of being separated from them. Interestingly, on 8 of the 10 items of the subscale, the parents reported higher agreement with the statements than either child group.

In summary, although the two children groups' scores varied between different subscale items, a number of items received high agreement rates. Almost all children admitted to frequent or constant worries about losing their families and to worrying about many things. Around half of the children of each group agreed that they frequently or always felt sad or unhappy. About half of the children in the assassinated group responded frequently or always to crying easily, feeling tired, and lacking the capacity to do many

things. Particularly for the disappeared group children, fear and sadness items tended to receive higher scores than low self-esteem items. The high scores on several of the depression subscale items are consistent with the hypothesis that both groups of children have been traumatized as a result of their loss experience and its aftermath (Hypothesis 1).

Table 5.6  
Child Behavior Inventory Anxiety Subscale

#	Anxiety Items	Disap		Assas		Parents*	
		n	%**	n	%**	n	%**
3	Easily scared	4	31	4	36	6	43
8	Fear bad things may happen to them	8	62	8	63	8	71
13	Scared of things not scare others	2	17	5	46	5	47
18	Scared of new situations	3	25	4	36	3	21
23	Hard to concentrate on schoolwork	3	25	7	64	3	21
28	Needs to be with elder to feel safe	8	67	8	73	10	77

\*Parents of both types of children grouped together.

\*\*Percentage of "frequently" and "always" responses compressed.

Table 5.6 reports the responses to the anxiety subscale items. All 6 items received a higher percentage frequently or always response by the assassinated group than the disappeared group (from 1% to 39% higher). The higher agreement response for the children of the assassinated-- particularly noticeable in their fear of things that do not scare others and in new situations, as well as in their difficulty concentrating on homework-- may be due to the recency of their loss. Other items, however, receive high

frequently or always responses by both child groups, as well as the parents group: 62% of the disappeared group, 63% of the assassinated group, and 71% of the all-parents group fear something bad may happen to them; and 67% of the first group, 73% of the second group, and 77% of the all-parents group report needing to be with an older person to feel safe. The high agreement ratings on several of the fear and safety items are consistent with Hypothesis 1.

Table 5.7  
Child Behavior Inventory Aggression Subscale

#	Aggression Items	Disap		Assas		Par*	
		n	%**	n	%**	n	%**
2	Angers easily	12	92	8	73	12	86
7	Easily irritable	6	46	6	55	11	79
12	Yells, swears, verbally threatens	2	15	0	0	6	7
17	Hits, threatens other children	1	8	2	18	4	31
22	Destroys own or others' things	4	33	1	10	12	14
27	Disobeys parents/teachers	2	18	0	0	3	21
32	Hot tempered or easily angered	6	55	9	82	9	69
36	Doesn't respect home/community rules	3	30	1	9	14	7
40	Blames others for own faults	1	9	1	9	3	21

\*Parents of both types of children grouped together.

\*\*Percentage of "frequently" and "always" responses compressed.

Table 5.7 lists the responses to the aggression subscale items. Most of the 9 items received low levels of agreement from all three groups. The items with high frequently or always responses include: 92% of the disappeared group, 73% of the assassinated group, and 86% of the all-parents group agreed that they become easily

angered; when this question is rephrased as being hot-tempered or easily angered, the responses are 55% for the first group, 82% for the second group, and 69% for all-parents group; and 46% of the first group, 55% of the second group and 79% of the all-parents group report feeling easily irritated.

However, these high agreement responses relate to broad feeling states. Positive response ratings for verbal and physical aggressions are low for both groups. While the children admit to strong feelings of anger, they score fairly low when it comes to acting on these feelings. Therefore, the hypothesis that these children are traumatized and would therefore respond positively to the aggression subscale (Hypothesis 1) is only partially confirmed.

Table 5.8  
Child Behavior Inventory Prosocial Subscale

#	Prosocial Items	Disap		Assas		Parents*	
		n	%**	n	%**	n	%**
4	Helpful toward other children	6	46	6	55	10	71
9	Enjoys helping adults	5	54	8	63	11	79
14	Shows concern for others	10	77	9	82	11	73
19	Feels sad when sees others suffering	7	58	10	91	9	64
24	Comforts others when they suffer	9	75	7	64	11	78
29	Upset when injustice done to others	11	92	8	73	12	92
33	Shares with others	7	64	6	55	11	85
36	Respects home & community rules	7	70	10	91	14	93
37	Helps people who have helped him/her	9	82	11	100	14	100
41	Protective toward other children	8	73	8	73	9	64

\*Parents of both types of children grouped together.

\*\*Percentage of "frequently" and "always" responses compressed.

Table 5.8 presents the responses to the prosocial subscale items. The percentage of frequently or always responses was quite high for all three groups. Only 1 item received less than 50% frequently or always agreement by any of the groups (46% of the disappeared group agreed to being helpful toward other children). Among the all-parents group, 2 items received 64% agreement and the other 8 items received even higher agreement. These responses are consistent with the information provided by the parents/caretakers in the Parent Questionnaire. These appear to be, for the most part, well-socialized children with few serious school and home behavior problems or overt relationship difficulties (adolescent males are an exception to this, as discussed in Chapter VI).

Table 5.9  
Child Behavior Inventory Planful Subscale

#	Planful Items	Disap		Assas		Parents*	
		n	%**	n	%**	n	%**
5	Takes lead in games/school activities	7	69	6	55	11	86
10	Plans/thinks ahead	9	69	10	91	12	93
15	Good at resolving problems	4	31	3	27	5	47
20	Sure of self in most situations	10	83	3	27	9	75
25	Keeps trying when facing obstacles	9	82	6	55	12	85
30	Recovers soon after stressful event	4	36	2	20	41	54
34	Optimistic about future	9	90	9	82	12	86
38	Stays calm at stressful moments	4	44	2	20	5	38
43	Interested in country's problems	8	80	7	64	7	50

\*Parents of both types of children grouped together.

\*\*Percentage of "frequently" and "always" responses compressed.

Table 5.9 lists the number and percentage responses to the planful subscale items. For 8 of the 9 items, the disappeared group children answered with a higher percentage agreement than did the assassinated group children. The responses for two of these items showed significant differences: 83% of the disappeared group children feel sure of themselves in most situations ( $\underline{M}$  2.50,  $\underline{SD}$  .80), compared to 27% of the assassinated group children ( $\underline{M}$  1.36,  $\underline{SD}$  .92,  $p < .01$ ); 36% of the first group recuperate soon after a stressful event ( $\underline{M}$  1.55,  $\underline{SD}$  1.04), compared to 20% of the second group ( $\underline{M}$  .70,  $\underline{SD}$  .82,  $p = .03$ ).

Being good at resolving problems and recovering soon after a stressful event received a relatively low agreement rating from both groups. Although both groups varied widely in their response to individual subscale items, one pattern that emerges is a vulnerability in all the children to becoming easily disorganized or immobilized when faced with stressful situations.

**Table 5.10**  
**CBI Subscales Prorated and PTSRC Prorated Means**  
**and Standard Deviations and Mean Ranks**

Scales	T test for Independent Samples									
	Dis	SD	Assas	SD	1tP	D&A	SD	Par	SD	1tP
CBI depression pro	14.1	4.8	15.2	5.7	.31	15.0	5.1	17.9	5.7	.08
CBI anxiety pro	7.9	3.9	9.6	3.1	.13	9.0	3.6	9.5	4.1	.38
CBI aggression pro	9.8	4.6	9.5	4.4	.44	8.9	4.7	10.1	5.0	.26
CBI prosocial pro	21.0	5.5	22.2	3.5	.28	22.2	4.7	24.4	5.2	.12
CBI planful pro	18.0	4.4	14.8	3.9	.04	16.2	4.4	19.9	3.7	.01
PTSRC prorated	7.5	3.0	8.1	2.1	.32	7.9	2.4	8.6	2.4	.22

Scales	Mann-Whitney U Mean Ranks						
	Dis	Assas	1-tP	D & A	Par	1-tP	
CBI depression prorated	11.7	12.3	.42	13.8	18.7	.07	
CBI anxiety prorated	10.7	13.4	.18	14.9	16.2	.35	
CBI aggression prorated	12.2	11.8	.44	15.1	17.1	.27	
CBI prosocial prorated	11.5	12.5	.37	13.9	18.6	.08	
CBI planful prorated	13.8	9.2	.05	12.8	19.9	.02	
PTSRC prorated	12.1	13.0	.39	15.3	17.8	.23	

"D & A": children of the disappeared and the assassinated grouped together.

"Par": parents of both types of children grouped together.

Table 5.10 compares the means and standard deviations and the mean ranks of the CBI subscales and the PTSRC scale prorated for the two child group and for all the children grouped together and all the parents grouped together. The disappeared group scored higher on two of the five CBI subscales and the assassinated group scored higher on the other three CBI subscales and on the PTSRC scale. However, several of these differences are small and only one, the CBI planful subscale, is statistically significant (for the t

test,  $p=.04$ , for the mean rank test,  $p=.05$ ). The parents, as a group, gave the children higher scores than the children, as a group, gave themselves. Only the CBI planful subscale, however, showed a statistically significant difference between the child and parent groups.

Since the length of time since the loss of the parent was significantly different for the two children's groups-- around 9 years for the disappeared and around 4 years for the assassinated-- it was thought that the longer period of time since the loss would provide the children of the disappeared more opportunities to rebuild a "normal" life. It was therefore hypothesized that the children of the disappeared would report less loss-related disturbances and symptoms than the children of the assassinated. Although the prorated mean scores of the disappeared group were lower than those of the assassinated group for the PTSRC and the CBI depression and anxiety subscales, the differences were not significant, disconfirming Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Table 5.11  
MOA Scale Statistically Significant Findings by Child Group

Group	n	T-test			Mann-Whitney U	
		MOA M	SD	ItP	MOA M Rank	ItP
Disappeared	16	3.46	1.09		16.16	
Assassinated	11	2.73	.80		10.86	
				.04		.05

#### MOA Scale

Table 5.11 compares Rorschach MOA scale mean scores and standard deviations, as well as mean rank scores, for the two groups of children in this study. The children of the disappeared, on the whole, presented less adaptive, more malevolent images of relationships than the children of the assassinated on the Rorschach MOA scale. The disappeared group scored significantly higher than the assassinated group according to both statistical measures, a t test for independent samples and the Mann-Whitney U Mean Rank test. It had been hypothesized that the children of the disappeared, due to their lack of knowledge about what had happened to their father, would show greater malevolence in their object representations than the children of the assassinated, as indicated by higher scores on the MOA scale (Hypothesis 4). This hypothesis was confirmed.

Table 5.12  
Gender Differences in MOA Scale Means

Sex	n	Mean	SD	M Diff	1tP
all males	15	3.38	1.14		
all females	12	2.89	.84	.49	.12
dis group males	10	3.57	1.22		
dis group females	6	3.27	.88	.30	.31
assas group males	5	2.99	.95		
assas group females	6	2.51	.67	.48	.17

#### Gender Differences

T tests and rank mean tests were used to analyze differences by gender within the disappeared group, within the assassinated group and among all children grouped together. No significant differences were found. Table 5.12 lists differences by sex in the MOA scale. Females in each of the child groups and in the all-children group scored lower than males, but these scores did not reach significance level.

#### Reliability Analyses

Reliability analyses were done for the CBI subscales and the PTSRC scale for the children grouped together and for the parents grouped together. Table 5.13 lists the results. Alphas, for the most part, were fairly low, bringing into question the reliability of some of the

quantitative findings.

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Table 5.13  
Reliability Analyses for the CBI subscales and the PTSRC

Scale	Children's Alpha	Parents' Alpha
CBI depression	.70	.80
CBI aggression	.73	.81
CBI anxiety	.56	.75
CBI prosocial	.64	.73
CBI planful	.69	.52
PTSRC	.61	.57

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## CHAPTER VI. QUALITATIVE RESULTS: PATTERNS OF RESPONSES

### Introduction

This chapter provides a qualitative overview of the patterns of psychological responses of Honduran children of forcibly disappeared and assassinated parents. These children share many responses to the loss of their parent, but manifest differences related to the nature of the loss and several other factors. These factors include: (1) family characteristics both before and after the loss; (2) child variables such as age, sex, temperament, personality, and physical, social and cognitive development; (3) the relationship that had existed between the father and the child; (4) the way the family has dealt with the loss; (5) the environmental, social and personal changes that occurred after the loss; and (6) the changes in residence and way of life after the loss. The subjects of this study were quite heterogeneous in regard to the first four of the above-mentioned factors. But the common experience of politically-motivated disappearance or assassination also led to many similar environmental, social, personal, residential and way-of-life changes, particularly within each group (Chapter V detailed many of these individual differences and similarities, as well as the patterns of responses within and between groups).

All these factors are extremely important. Nonetheless, the focus of this qualitative analysis is on the children's phenomenological sense of themselves and the world around them. In addition, I focus on patterns of responses, rather than individual differences. Wherever possible, I let the children describe, through their own words and pictures, their concerns and desires. The themes that I explore are the most frequently mentioned issues brought up by these children, the emotions related to their loss experience, the defenses or coping strategies employed, disruptions in the development of a coherent sense of self, age and gender issues, differences between children of disappeared and assassinated parents, and attitudes toward social action and political organizations.

### Recurring Topics

The most frequently mentioned subjects by the children interviewed were the loss of their parent (a topic my presence imposed on them), concerns about the intactness of their family, their economic situation, and their future education and work/career. Parental loss is discussed throughout this chapter, so I will not elaborate on it here. Concerns about their families are discussed in the section on concerns about loss of family.

a. Economic/Poverty Issues

"This girl is very sad because she has no job or anything, nothing, so she does not know how she will eat (Future?<sup>1</sup>) I don't know (Make up something) I think that she will work, will look for work sweeping or anything she can get, to earn her food, or she will also beg for it" (Felipe<sup>2</sup>, father disappeared, response to TAT Card 8GF).

"... And in winter they are very cold because they sleep on the floor on a straw mat and just a blanket and the mother makes a few tortillas for the four children and buys one egg and cuts it in slices and gets five, one for each of them and one for her and they begin to eat. (Think and feel?) That they don't eat very well. Their feet ache from walking barefoot and they need another home to live better, with more calm" (Leda, father disappeared, response to TAT Card 8GF).

"I would worry all the time, I would hear my mother saying, where am I going to find something to eat?... No one helped, and it felt so shameful to have to ask for food or money" (Julio, father assassinated).

The theme of economic insecurity or deprivation-- poverty, destitution, loss of economic security, the hardships of economic survival-- is omnipresent for many of these children. It is evident in their drawings, TAT stories, and in the telling of their lives, their wishes and concerns. Honduras is a very poor country, and almost all of the families interviewed lost their main economic provider. The families of the disappeared and many of the assassinated had the major expense of searching for their loved one. The families of the assassinated had funeral and

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<sup>1</sup>Words in parentheses found within quotes are interviewer's questions or comments.

<sup>2</sup>For reasons of confidentiality, all the children are identified by pseudonym.

burial expenses, yet hardly any of the families received any money or benefits as a result of the loss. The economic disruptions have been extremely serious, especially for the families where the mother was fired from her job as a result of the political nature of the husband's assassination or disappearance. In a few cases, families went through periods of having to go without or beg for food. Some families who had been middle-class moved to poorer quarters and the mothers took menial jobs. Frequently, mothers who had been at home or worked part-time became the sole economic support and started working double shifts. One mother had to go abroad to seek work and has been separated from her children ever since. At least 4 of the 6 children not currently in school have stopped attending due to lack of funds. Many others who had planned to finish high school or go to university have reduced their expectations and instead are training or plan to train in a manual skill or technical trade. Several of the families whose loss was many years back have now regained their former economic status, but have not been able to attain the economic security they would have achieved without the loss. Only a few families, where the mother remarried, are better-off economically.

b. Future Work or Career

"My wish is to move forward"... "To finish my studies"... "To have more opportunities to prepare

myself for a better future"... "To learn a trade and help my mother who is working so hard for us"... "To go abroad and have an opportunity to study"... "To go to the States so I can learn a skill and work"... "To become an electrical engineer"... "To get a job"... "To finish my studies and become an electrical mechanic" (responses by various children to request for their three wishes).

Almost all the children interviewed were very concerned about the need to study, grow up and assume the responsibility of work or a career. The above quotations, as well as the repeated mention of these themes throughout the rest of the interviews, attest to these concerns. This was true for children of all ages, from pubescent to young adult. As a result of losing their parent and main economic provider, these children suddenly faced worries and responsibilities far beyond their age or developmental capacity. Many-- particularly the older ones-- assumed a parentified role in the family. Their awareness of adult responsibility and pressure to grow up and become economically productive appears part of a view of life as a constant struggle for economic, physical and emotional survival. Although this is probably true for most Hondurans and Central Americans, the emotional, physical and economic loss experienced by the children and families of the assassinated and disappeared undoubtedly exacerbate these worries.

### Emotional Issues

Among the most notable emotions that many of these

young people struggle with as a result of their experiences are a powerful sense of loss, ongoing and pervasive fear and distrust, a sense of impotence, disillusionment and demoralization about others and the world, feelings of abandonment and self-condemnation, strong and subjectively disturbing feelings of anger-- sometimes disavowed and expressed in passive-aggressive ways, and bitterness or wishes for revenge. Alongside these negative emotions are love and concern for their families, a deep longing for their lost parent and the desire to be cared for and protected.

a. Sense of Loss

"In the first place, I wish for my father, secondly, I wish I were happy and lived well. (Are you happy now?) No. (How come?) My father's absence, his absence, my need for him is a very, very big thing... Sometimes I think, if my father were here this wouldn't happen, that wouldn't happen, maybe we would live better because we would be with him. If I do poorly on an exam I tell myself that my father would do something about it, he would explain it to me, yes, I think about him a lot. (It makes you sad?) It pours out from my heart and that sadness is that I miss him so much" (Diana, father disappeared).

"Some nights I dream that he comes home, in the dream it is always a full moon, he arrives home all happy with his suitcases, he gets out of a taxi and comes inside. And in the dream I know he's dead, but when I see him I feel very moved, I feel very moved to see that he is alive, but suddenly, he leaves, he disappears from the dream... And then I'm left going around, in circles, trying to find him, but he has already left and I remain the same" (Fernando, father assassinated).

A deep and painful sense of loss is common to almost

all the children interviewed. The only exception was one child whose father was estranged from the family and had had almost no contact with him, as well as a few children whose defensive strategy was to deny all thoughts and feelings of vulnerability (see section on defenses or coping styles). During the interviews, the children often cried or became very sad when asked about their father and the impact this loss had had on their life. Several expressed an underlying, pervasive sadness or "empty space," sometimes more, sometimes less present, but never totally absent.

#### a1. Concerns about Loss of Family

"...To be a family like we were before, united"... "Our family all together again"... "To have my family live forever"... "To have my mother and father home all day, taking care of us"... "To be well with my family and never be separated"... "To always have my mother, my father, my family nearby" (wishes voiced by different children).

"That my family be in this house always, that they never die, that they always be present" (Francisco, father assassinated).

"That my grandmother live forever or almost, that all my family stay together and be happy" (Carmela, mother assassinated).

"A girl... Feels sad because her family is separated, her father is not there," (Ana, father disappeared, response to TAT Card 8GF).

The sudden, violent loss of their father (or mother) undermined the intactness of these families: one of the two central figures of the family was gone, the mother had to spend more time away from home working to make ends meet,

and the family was emotionally torn asunder by the traumatic loss, related changes and the accompanying feelings of grief, anger and fear. Consequently, these children present a strong desire to be reunited with their families, great insecurity about being separated from them and the fear that other family members will suffer the same fate as their lost parent. In addition, each new potential or real loss may be interpreted through the first experience and perceived as an accumulating "mountain of loss" and grief. One girl told in obsessive detail about the loss of members of her family: her father, an uncle, a baby cousin. In her description, all events became interconnected and everyday occurrences became omens of death and loss: a window flying open and a butterfly coming inside, a friendship gone sour, her grandmother's cough, the patterns of clouds, moving to another grade.

#### a2. Sense of Loss and Hardship

For most of these children, the feelings of loss concerning their parent cannot be totally separated from other losses, fears and hardships. Roberto's father was disappeared when he was an infant; he has no memory of his father. Nonetheless, he grew up in an environment totally shaped by this event. His family searched for years for his father and, in the process, his mother and grandmother became human rights activists; they have received repeated

death threats; his uncle, influenced by his disappeared brother, also became an activist and was recently murdered. As Roberto told his story, he cried for his father and his uncle, he worried that his grandmother, uncles and aunts would also be murdered, he was anxious about money and his future career; and he admitted to missing and yearning for his unknown father and to being consumed by a feeling of sadness.

Knowing that he was in danger and wanting to help at least some of his children, Lilitiana's father arranged for her and her older sister to study abroad. Lilitiana was 10 at the time. Shortly thereafter, her father was disappeared. The family was left in terrible economic straits and continues to the present in this condition. The girls stayed abroad alone for eight years, until their recent return. The family-- the mother, Lilitiana, and her three siblings-- is spread out in different parts of the country and still longs to be permanently reunited, something not economically possible. In contrast to Roberto's pain-filled tale, Lilitiana tells her story impassively, with a disconcerting sense of deadness.

Laura, then 12, was present when men in police uniforms took her father away. She was home alone taking care of her younger sisters when, six days later, he was brought back all swollen and beaten and bearing multiple signs of torture. The men accompanying him paraded him around the

house and then quickly dragged him away. She again was alone when a reporter came by the following day with the news-- and a photograph to prove it-- that, after coming by the house, her father had been further tortured and then taken to a hospital, but the following morning he had been removed by force and his murdered body found shortly after. Some months later, Laura started suffering from life-threatening, difficult to control, epileptic seizures and has been hospitalized several times. One of two younger sisters is failing school, repeating first grade for the third time. Her parents' tailoring business dissolved and her mother was forced to work as a janitor. In her first job, she was raped by her boss. The mother's meager income is insufficient to maintain the family and the children often miss classes because they lack money for transportation, shoes and other school essentials. Laura, 15 years old when interviewed, told her story quite eloquently. This was in sharp contrast to her infantile, shallow description of her current life and interests (see Figures 6.6 and 6.9, her human figure drawings: her picture of a male, her father, shows him in his beaten state; the female, her 35-year-old mother, looks like a little doll). These three accounts reveal a general sense of loss and hardship characteristic of most of the children's stories and lives, as well as the psychological toll of these experiences.

b. Fear, Distrust, and Anger

"... Being a family member of the disappeared is the most difficult thing there is because there is always a certain degree of fear of everyone, you cannot confide fully, while if you are a youth without this problem of a family member disappeared you can walk calmly down the street. Being the child of a disappeared person you think that at any moment a car with polarized windows might stop and out will come one, two, three men and they'll put you in the car and take you away, this is the fear of being the child of a disappeared person (Carlos, father disappeared).

"Like a beetle... Here are the things with which it grabs, only that they have hit him [laughs], it was a bit beaten up because they ruined its wings (Who?) no, like the rain or the ants, they have already attacked him here..." (Fernando, father assassinated, response to Rorschach Card I).

"Also like the skin of... A mouse when it's dead, when a bus has run over it. (Inquiry?)... This would be the blood of the eviscerated head" (Juan, father disappeared, response to Rorschach Card II).

"I see a man... there in the middle, two angels of badness... Taking him to the sky, the truth is that he's fighting to not go... I think it could also be a struggle between two birds and like they bleed from their fight, I think that I don't know... All of a sudden you can see so many... Like a storm about to downpour. (Inquiry?)... The shape of the clouds, it becomes almost dark (Fabio, father disappeared, responding to Rorschach Card I).

Many, or most, of the children reveal everpresent fears of harm to themselves and their families and a concomitant view of the world as a threatening place. These images, thoughts and feelings, particularly evident in the Rorschach, are intertwined with feelings of distrust and rage:

"I get angry too easily, quickly for no reason, and before I was not this way"... "I blow up right away, anything bothers me sometimes"... "I get too angry, my face becomes all twisted" (responses of several

children).

"There are some people that ask me about my father and start to laugh, how did your father disappear, so it is better not to continue talking about this. (People have actually laughed when they found out your father was disappeared?) No, not a single person, but I imagine they might... I worry they will" (Leda, father disappeared).

Most of the children admit to difficulties controlling aggressive feelings and blame themselves for becoming too easily angered, too hot tempered, too ready to misinterpret people's feelings and intentions, particularly in relation to their loss. At the same time, many also deny their rage and express it in passive-aggressive ways:

"Her name is Belkys, she's 18, she just came out of the bath [laughs]... She's a friend, she's pretty, nothing, no, no... she's just a friend, I know her from school... she's fun and easy-going" (Bernardo, father disappeared, describing Figure 6.1, his aggressive-looking, physically incomplete, unattractive female figure).

### c. Bitterness, Disillusionment and Revenge

Many of these children also struggle with feelings of bitterness, disillusionment, impotence and unhappiness:

"I'm very closed within myself, I don't like, it bothers me when they ask me about my father, I take it as an imposition, insincere, hypocritical... Life is ungrateful, happiness for me is just a word, the day I graduate I will celebrate, but the next day will be the same... I have few friends, I'm resentful, alone, nervous (Sebastián, father disappeared).

"...And when the father finally returned home, everything remained the same as always, never able to obtain any work and their life remained the same, nothing changed at all (response to TAT Card 13B).  
...In the future the rich will always dominate the poor, the poor are tired, they suffer, they feel sad

and worry about their children's future (response to TAT Card 2).

...These could be really evil guys... They assassinate other people, without thinking, without their conscience being touched about what will happen to their families... Here, I think that someone is having a knife stuck into them and with a sarcastic laugh, has sent others to do the work... The well-dressed one only thinks about what he's going to do, that only he will benefit" (Francisco, father assassinated, responding to TAT Card 8BM).

"... I detest soldiers, I hate them, I cannot get near them, I detest them" (Andrea, father disappeared).

"I see his pained expression, maybe he is remembering that, what he saw... This youth will become a soldier, something like that, and he will always live with that hatred/resentment" (Julio, father assassinated, responding to TAT Card 8BM).

The assassinations and disappearances have never been fully recognized by the Honduran government; no one has been brought to justice for committing these criminal acts. The lack of official accountability leads to strong feelings of revenge and wishes for punishment:

"In the future this person should pay in the same way that he sent someone to harm other persons, maybe he will end up the same" (Francisco, father assassinated, response to TAT Card 8BM).

"It's unjust, my father died this way and the crime remained unpunished, that is what most hurts, no one knows who did it, and it's not that it would hurt less, but knowing that whoever did it pays for it, that who did it pays, that he pays for what he did, and maybe he will be regret it, otherwise they remain unpunished, happy, free, nobody knows who they are in the street, while the children suffer" (Andrea, father disappeared).

"...The families want to know who are the guilty ones, that they pay for what they did. (Do you think about this a lot?) Yes, of course, because I only lived with my father for four years, only four years [crying] (Carlos, father disappeared).

d. Sense of Loneliness, Abandonment and Rejection

"This figure... Looks consumed by... A loneliness that entraps her, from which she wants to free herself, that fear. I sense her alone without anyone, she wants to go forward and not stay in her sadness and pain.

(Earlier?) In her countenance one senses disillusionment, a tragedy... The worst thing that can happen to a person is to be ignored, to be betrayed by friends, because sometimes that happens" (Andrea, father disappeared).

"...This person is standing... Perhaps looking to the sides, I believe that he is thinking... That he has no money and thinking about how he will manage to eat" (Gabriela, father disappeared, describing Figure 6.2, her impoverished, desolate-looking male figure with extended arms and no hands.)

"My father had many friends when he was alive, but when he died no one came to visit, nobody worried about what had happened to his children... We needed many things and my mother had no work... Sometimes we didn't even have food and no one cared... Maybe they were afraid, who knows, but I think if someone has helped me, I have to reciprocate... No one helped, everybody abandons one..." (Fernando, father assassinated).

The sense of abandonment and rejection common to many of these children appears to have, broadly speaking, two kinds of sources. External sources include the Honduran government's hostile response; the hostility, fear and denial on the part of many social and cultural institutions and employers; and, all too frequently, the lack of emotional and material support from friends, family, acquaintances and neighbors. The other kind of source is internal: feelings of loneliness, abandonment and rejection that result from losing a much needed and loved parent.

e. Longing

Most of the children express a deep yearning for (and an idealization of) their lost parent:

"Yes, I always, always think about him, I always pray for him, I never think he is dead, I always think that he is alive... All my schoolmates speak about their fathers, I always miss my father's presence. Although my mother is with us, I always long for his presence" (Ana, father disappeared).

"I frequently imagine that he comes and that I start running to put my arms around him... I think, if he were here, and I remain that way for a while, thinking that he's coming and that I run to him... I wish my father were alive, I wish my father were alive" (José, father assassinated).

"At first it ached tremendously, that is, losing a father is not like losing a cat or a dog, it's your father you lose, a piece of your life, inside your being, who leaves you just like that because someone did not want him, wanted to kill him...I miss him, I need him so much... If I could have my father back, it would be like returning my life to me" (Andrea, father disappeared).

"Sometimes I see [my friends] walking along with their fathers, the two of them going along talking, and I would have wanted that so much" (Francisco, father assassinated).

Defenses or Coping Styles

In terms of defensive or coping styles, there appear to be three major types of strategies utilized by these children and youth. For many, there seems to be a constriction, or closing off of personality, with a tremendous amount of energy directed toward not feeling. In others, I have noted what could be called a porous personality, with an insufficient ability to filter out

excessive stimuli. These two patterns are often utilized interchangeably to some degree in these children. These responses are consistent with the "feeling and not feeling" (Lifton, 1988), denial and intrusion (Horowitz, 1993), or biphasic cognitive processing of traumatic experience consisting of rigidly defended, affective numbing vs. overwhelmed, intrusive reliving (van der Kolk, Ducey and Herman, 1992) described in the trauma and PTSD literature (see Chapter III). Lastly, some of the children have a more flexible defensive style; yet all of them exhibit some tendency toward denial, inability to distance, or both. This is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to the overwhelming nature of their loss and to the traumatizing circumstances surrounding and following the loss.

#### a. Constriction of Personality

Almost all the children showed some evidence of personality constriction. Most were fairly cautious, distant and distrustful, with varying capacity to be selectively more open and trusting. This constriction can be seen throughout the protocols; it is interesting, however, to observe it in the drawings, particularly those of houses. Figures 6.10 through 6.22 show some of the houses drawn by the children. Invariably, they have closed windows and doors, some have no windows at all, and most share a sense of emptiness. Most have no path leading to

the door; the majority of the paths have a menacing or repelling quality to them. A few of the houses (particularly Figure 6.10) look like faces with watchful eyes. The houses vary: some are totally plain; some have dark or textured roofs; some have oversized walls strangely out of proportion with the rest of the house; some look very impoverished (eg., 6.11 through 6.15); and some have pointy, aggressive protrusions (eg., 6.15 through 6.19). Figure 6.11 has a thick, barbed wire fence with a reinforced metal door; this fence, however, is too distant from the house to serve as protection. Most share an isolated, barren, sealed off quality. When the houses are drawn within a larger scene, the surrounding environment is usually more lively than the house itself. Figures 6.3 through 6.5 are examples of human drawings where the people appear closed-off and highly constricted.

The children use various strategies to distance themselves from their internal and external worlds. While many of the Rorschach protocols have violent or conflict-ridden images or a combination of many types of percepts, several show a complete absence of such images, refusing or unable to become involved in the task and responding with facile, banal, or very concrete percepts. By contrast, many other children maintain a sense of distance and safety through obsessively detailed stories and explanations or segmented percepts. Some relate as detached observers,

rather than participants, of their world:

"Let's give her the name Maria, she's around 20 years old, she's like taking a photo, she's standing on the side, to look best... Or she's looking at a painting, stands there looking at it, yes, she's walking by and stops there to look at it. (End?) She just stands and looks for a while and then goes to her home. (Thinks and feels?) How her life would have been had she been those people (response to TAT Card 2).

...He might be a lawyer investigating some death (Carmen, father assassinated, response to TAT Card 8BM).

A few, not too many, totally deny being affected by the loss of their father:

I consider myself a totally normal child, the only thing is that I don't have a father, other friends in school don't have fathers, who are divorced, the only difference is that my father doesn't have a tombstone to go a leave him flowers, but... I'm never unhappy... when I like them [girls], I like everything, and when I no longer like them, I cut it off, I leave them" (Bernardo, father disappeared; child, age 8 at the time, was riding on a bus and viewed through the window military men searching his father's car; this was the last known whereabouts of his father).

#### b. Intrusive Reliving and Inability to Detach

"How, what are they thinking?... what happened before... well, it was that they killed my father. (Make up a story) Here, I see a child like that he's at the door, I see him sad... Something happened to him... (Make it up) That they killed his father or that he died... Or that he's seeing that he's been left alone, he doesn't know how to continue living... (response to TAT Card 13B).

... They're sad, the two women... they go walking, and I see this man in the middle, like that he's thinking that something's going to happen to him... I see him sad like that they're going to kill him... (Future?) Well, that they're going to be left feeling upset, but then later they're going to help them (response to TAT Card 2).

...I see this child, a youth, I see him sad, that two men come to kill his father (response to TAT Card 8BM).  
... This woman is thinking like that something happened

to her father, well to her man or could it be her son... One day that he hurt himself or that they killed him like that... She's going to be left alone, if it was her man that she's going to be left this way working with her children" (Nora, father assassinated, response to TAT Card 8GF).

"Let's say she had a family, a family with her husband, her children, so she, well, the husband was like, let's say, like a person that was like in politics so she would tell her husband not to continue in that, right, so there was a day, well, it was a bit like, a strike, well, let's say that her husband was one of the leaders, right, so when he finished with that was like a strike, he was like that walking toward his house and well, like that all of a sudden they killed him, right? So I say that she, looking, looking alone, I say that she is sitting because seeing herself alone and sad that she was left with the children this way, maybe she doesn't know what to do and maybe she's thinking what will become of her later, right, seeing that she has no husband or what is she going to do to be able to feed her children, that's it" (Gabriela, father assassinated, response to TAT Card 8GF; story parallels father's murder).

Many of the children struggle with intrusive images and an inability to distance themselves from their traumatic memories and feelings. This is particularly true for the children who have lost their parent recently, i.e., children with assassinated parents. Children whose fathers were disappeared or assassinated many years ago recount having experienced these overwhelming traumatic images and feelings in the past, but less frequently in the present. Nonetheless, most of the children interviewed evidenced shifting senses of "sometimes feeling too much and then feeling nothing" (Diana, father disappeared).

### c. Lack of Spontaneity

Along with a rigid defensive style, many of these children lack spontaneity; they are apprehensive and hypervigilant. Many do not feel carefree and, indeed, they are not carefree. They worry about things large and small. Living requires stepping carefully, always looking for the unexpected cracks and crevices. Most, however, do seem able to temporarily escape this sense of worry and burden through sports-- especially soccer--, listening to music and games with friends.

### Disrupted Sense of Self

Horowitz (1993) writes about the working through and completion phases of stress-response syndromes. But at least in the case of children or youth who experience these traumatic losses so early in their lives there can be no complete working through-- there are permanent distortions in the development of their personalities.

As detailed in an earlier section, many of these youths have an impaired capacity for affect modulation and a rigid defense structure. They lack a well-integrated self-concept and sense of others. They have a permanent sense of difference, of damage and psychic pain. This disrupted and damaged sense of self has various and varying aspects.

#### a. Private or Secret Self

Many describe a private or secret self where the most

difficult thoughts and feelings related to their experience reside. This is a self that is not shared with anyone, a repository of negative, devalued, painful, shameful affects, as well as of longing for what is no longer and can never be.

"I don't talk to anyone about my sadness, my feelings... If they speak to me I speak back, but otherwise... In school I don't have many friends... There are days, say today, that I go to bed feeling okay, and then the next morning I wake up feeling like angry, so I don't want anyone speaking to me, sometimes I just want to be alone, just be alone... I even go hide in the bathroom to be alone" (Gabriela, father assassinated).

"I keep my feelings, my life to myself... At school I'm very distrustful, many people ask me my name and I don't tell them my real name, I say my name is Enrique, Javier, never my real name nor my last name" (Carlos, father disappeared).

"I only speak to one friend about my father and the problems of my family. (Why?) I don't like to talk" (Roberto, father disappeared and uncle assassinated).

"(Do you speak to anyone?) No. (Not even your mother or sisters?) No. (Why?) [silence] (You think your mother will feel worse if you tell her how you feel?) Yes. (You feel sad?) [nods yes]" (Carmen, father assassinated).

"I've always been reserved, but now even more, sometimes I shut myself in my room, look at his photos and start remembering. I start crying sometimes, sometimes I ask myself, why cry?, but I can't help it. (Do you speak to anyone about your father?) No. (Your family?) No, I don't feel like sharing it with anyone" (Francisco, father assassinated).

This private, secret self has many sources, including the need to contain the feelings regarding the lost parent from the surviving parent so as to protect and preserve this parent. Many seem to fear that their painful and aggressive

thoughts and feelings are more than the living parent could bear. Therefore, the surviving parent is denied part of her caretaking role, increasing the child's sense of aloneness, insecurity and danger. The child's thoughts and feelings of vulnerability become hidden in a cut-off part of the self, unacceptable and feared, yet also containing that sweet yearning for the lost parent, that lost experience of the whole, uninjured self and the self-with-parent.

b. Damaged Sense of Self

These children feel and have been damaged as a result of their traumatic loss. This sense of damage is revealed in many ways, including in their drawings of trees, often good indicators of children's self-perceptions. Figures 6.23 to 6.35 are examples of the trees drawn by these children. These drawings are notable for their many holes (6.23 through 6.26), marks and scars in the trunks (6.27 and 6.28), cut-off limbs (6.29, 6.30 and 6.35), top-heaviness (6.19 and 6.32), lack of solid boundaries (6.30 and 6.31) or oddness (6.33 and 6.34). Figures 6.1, 6.2, and 6.6 through 6.8 are examples of humans that appear disfigured or incomplete.

c. "Struggle to Be in the World, to not be Reigned by Fear and Darkness"

Life for many of these children entails a continual and

very active struggle between depression, demoralization, fear and rage and a desire to live and enjoy life:

"... Two men... Holding like a gift with a bow and all... it could be the stem of a flower, its petals and its flower, maybe it could be that it is an abyss and that they are keeping back this way. (?) They are looking down and it looks as if it could be an abyss, a precipice, something long and as if they are afraid (?) Of falling, so they are standing back, and these look like two little animals that fall from the sky, with their little tail, they fall freely, without holding on, wishing to fall (response to Rorschach Card III). "Two bears that are escaping from a fire... Also it could be an abyss, they try to climb, that is, it looks like the desire to live, to not die, they are trying to save themselves, maybe it could be that they are climbing to find something better, ... To better themselves, like climbing to another new world, like they are climbing to find something better" (Andrea, father disappeared, response to Rorschach Card VIII).

"This looks like a castle in the middle of the night and a garden, the red spots look like flowers... Like the flowers from the garden. (Inquiry?) The castle is the white space... With a cupola and like a flag... All around it is black so it seems like night... here is like a walkway to reach the castle and on both sides is the garden" (Carmela, mother assassinated, response to Rorschach Card II).

#### d. Dual Reality

Other related experiences are the sense of a dual reality, of a normal self and traumatized self coexisting. The chronic trauma of having lost a parent to assassination or disappearance needs to be both negated and also kept in awareness, both because it is an everpresent situation that must be contended with and because of the need to develop appropriate coping strategies. This dual sense of self creates a sense of reality and unreality; there is a

constant tension between these contradictory realities. These alternate, coexisting senses of a normal and traumatized self may be more the result of disavowal than of denial. That is, they involve the active refusal to acknowledge an experience that has reached consciousness, rather than the refusal to recognize the reality of traumatic perceptions that are unconscious (Turkel, 1993). It involves a type of Orwellian "doublethink" where experiences are acknowledged and disavowed simultaneously. Figures 6.12 and 6.31 of houses with distinctly separate front and back sections and Figure 6.32 of a house with a double roof illustrate this disjunctive sense of self.

#### e. Incoherence and Non-Integration of Self-Experience

One of the major consequences of creating and maintaining these secret, private, cut-off, normal/traumatized, acknowledged/disavowed ways of organizing the self is the reinforcement of incoherence and non-integration of self-experience. Yet the sense of a coherent self is fundamental to the notion of mental health.

#### Age

"I'm stronger than my brother, because you cannot say anything to my brother about my father because he starts to cry, since he [being older] did know him better, knew how he was, therefore I'm a little stronger than he is" (Leda, father disappeared).

Irrespective of both their current age and their age at

the time of their losses, all the children from both groups have been negatively impacted by their experiences. Nonetheless, some of the children who were very young at the time their fathers were disappeared or assassinated appear to be less affected by their loss than the ones that have clearer memories of life with their father. Since many of the children's mothers have remarried, many of the children have stepfathers. These younger children's sense of loss is tempered by the presence of this other male, who may actually be the only father whom they remember well.

After the loss, many of the older children became the primary caretakers of their younger siblings while their mothers tried to make ends meet by working long hours and double shifts. The combined impact of greater responsibility and loss of childhood freedom, absence of the mother and loss of the father has been particularly burdensome for the older children. This is not always the pattern, however; some of the children who appear most impacted were infants or toddlers at the time of their loss (eg., Roberto and Carlos, both children of disappeared fathers).

### Gender

Although both boys and girls seem affected, gender, combined with age, appears to make a difference in symptomatology. Once they reach adolescence, boys-- in

contrast to girls-- have a particularly hard time and show a tremendous increase in anger-- directed toward both themselves and others, a sense of estrangement, of being cut off from others, and a general feeling of "being lost." Significant depressive symptoms and, sometimes, passive suicidal ideation, emerge at this time. The absence of their father, and their internal conflicts about this loss, is tremendously painful for these adolescent boys. They express a very concrete need for their fathers-- for direction, for control of their aggressive behavior, as a source of identification, and for safety, since it is mainly males that have been kidnapped or killed.

"I need my father to help me with homework, to discipline me because I fool around too much, to go places together, to parties or to the stadium, that's why I need him, but also because I miss him, his company, his love..." (Juan, father disappeared).

"How will I learn what it is to be a father without my father around to learn from?" (Julio, father assassinated).

"If he were around, I would have graduated, when he was present I couldn't just go anywhere I wanted, he was more strict than my mother, he would punish me. He also played soccer... Now I would be playing with him on his team, everything would be better" (Bernardo, father disappeared).

"I feel envious of my friends because they have their fathers and can talk to them... I got along well with him, he would take me to the movies, to the stadium, he would buy things for me. I loved him so much!" (Francisco, father assassinated).

#### Differences between the Children of the Disappeared and the Assassinated

The sense of dual, contradictory realities is an even greater problem for the children of disappeared fathers due to the very ambiguity of the state of disappearance and the impossibility of resolution and of mourning the disappeared.

a. Indefiniteness and Finiteness

The families of the assassinated buried their loved ones; they bid them farewell, at least physically. The families of the disappeared could not do this. The children of the disappeared uniformly lament the not-knowing where-- in what tangible, physical location-- their fathers are. They continuously stressed the necessity of discovering the physical setting and their lack of peace of mind without this information. It seems as if this need for an external spatial marker corresponds to some internal spatial and emotional orientation and that the lack of both creates and helps maintain a sense of anxiety and insecurity. Even though most of the children of the disappeared insisted that their father was alive "someplace," many seemed to envy the children of assassinated for their condition of knowing where their fathers were and their opportunity to visit and put flowers on their graves:

"If a person is dead, they are in some [specific] place, but when they are disappeared I can't tell if they are dead, if he is alive, if they are torturing him or what they did to him... If they are disappeared, one always is wondering what have they done to them, where is one's family member. When someone dies from natural causes, you don't have to keep wondering because you know, and you know that he was not

tortured, you can be more at peace knowing that he is dead... This way you keep thinking that he was tortured... Also, having a kidnapped father means an emptiness that you always feel, always there, creating a negative mindset" (Carlos, father disappeared).

"The fact of seeing him dead, there being a grave, leaving him flowers, going and praying for him at his grave, all that... Instead, I don't know yet if they killed him, when they killed him, if he's still alive, some people say they killed him, but no one knows, one has that worry" (Bernardo, father disappeared).

"...In wait, she is waiting, or she is thinking about someone... She must be waiting for someone or thinking about someone. (Who?) Like a husband, son or brother. (Future?) That she will keep waiting for or thinking about him" (Juan, father disappeared, response to TAT Card 8GF; the responses to the three other TAT cards were also about disappearance).

#### b. Ability to Fantasize

The children of the disappeared, in contrast with the children of the assassinated, are better able to fantasize that their fathers are still alive someplace. At times, this appears to be a source of comfort and allows the children, at least in fantasy, to appeal to the lost parent and to distance themselves from their live parent. The children of the assassinated do not have the same access to this fantasized situation.

"I think about him, and sometimes I tell him my problems, in my mind of course, but I can picture him thinking about me" (Ana, father disappeared).

"His parents died and he was left alone, with an uncle... (?) They died in a car accident... He feels alone and thinks that his parents are alive, but it's not true... although he really needs them" (Hernan, father assassinated, response to TAT Card 13B).

c. Disappeared Fathers: Alive or Dead?

"I think he's alive, that they have not killed him yet, that he's being held in some cell or that he's in the army, I don't know, but in my conscience I know that he is alive, although some people have told me that he has been disappeared for too long and must be dead, but I continue believing that he is alive" (Juan, father disappeared).

"He has to be alive, they just grabbed him and took him, it wasn't right, so he has to be alive" (Carlos, father disappeared).

"Yes, I think he's alive, some people say they have seen him in the States, or maybe they have him in a cave" (Cecilia, father disappeared).

"...And my father said, 'Goodbye, I'll be back'... And he did not return... I still wait for him, he said goodbye to me like he knew he wouldn't return... I lie on the hammock, look at his photos and ask him, 'Papá, where are you?' but he doesn't respond... It's been eleven years already, so I think no, he couldn't be alive, although one cannot lose hope" (Diana, father disappeared).

"No, I don't think he's alive because if he were, we would have heard something about him... Although I think, where is his body, why did they kill him?" (Dario, father disappeared).

The children who believed that their fathers were dead explained that too much time had transpired since their father's abduction and that the military would not continue to clandestinely incarcerate their fathers for so long. The majority of the children, however, insist that their father is still alive. Others are unsure:

"When [Gustavo Alvarez] Martínez [chief of the armed forces] was in power, he ordered tons of men who worked to give us food to be disappeared, so then he sent people to take [my father] to be killed and they put him like in an immense tunnel, no, like a deep hole, and there they threw in various animals, snakes, rats, cockroaches, chickens, dogs, frogs, a lot of things, but nobody knows where they are, whether they are alive

or are dead, nothing more than that several men trapped him when he was leaving work" (Leda, father disappeared).

Most children seemed quite reluctant to acknowledge the suspicion that their father might be dead. The strong wish to have him alive, the inherent uncertainty of the disappeared state, the desire to stop worrying about the inhumane conditions under which their fathers, if alive, are being held, and the wish to mourn and move on with their lives are conflicting thoughts and feelings which are difficult to acknowledge or understand. In particular, acknowledging the thought that a father might be dead creates conflict because of unconscious wishes for his death: to stop his suffering and to reestablish a focus on their own lives. Yet this identification with the aggressor creates guilt and is often summarily rejected (this subject is also discussed in Chapter V).

#### Organization of Families of the Disappeared

One of the most outstanding differences in the experiences of these two groups relates to the issue of organizing. While the families with assassinated men experienced tremendous isolation after the death, the families of the disappeared were forced, as a result of their very desperation to find their loved ones, to form an organization. The mutual support that this provided appears to have had significant psychological ramifications for the

children of these families.

Many of the children of the assassinated reveal a sense of bitterness and abandonment not voiced to the same extent by the children of the disappeared. In addition, while both groups tend to idealize their fathers, many of the assassinated parents' children express regret at the political choices their fathers made and note that they would not follow in their footsteps. They often share a sense of feeling deceived by society and of the futility of social action.

"And people say that one should get involved in the same things as your father... But after seeing everything, one feels disappointed, better not... Because one fights for nothing and in the end the ones who suffer are one's children" (Julio, father assassinated).

By contrast, in spite of the hardships they have also encountered, this degree of betrayal and pessimism is rarely expressed by the offspring of the disappeared. Many of these children said that COFADEH, the organization of families of the disappeared, has been an important source of all types of support for them. Nonetheless, several children admitted that, recently, they have distanced themselves from the organization; they do not want to be constantly reminded of their family experience and want to focus on other aspects of their lives. Their attitude toward social action is, overall, more positive and optimistic than that of the children of the assassinated.

## CHAPTER VII. DISCUSSION

This last chapter is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the quantitative hypotheses and briefly discusses the quantitative findings. The second section discusses all findings and integrates these with past literature on the themes of the psychological consequences of political repression and the psychic trauma of children. The third section reviews the problems and limitations of this study. Last, I consider the clinical and human rights implications of the findings and suggest future directions for research and analysis.

### a. Review and Discussion of the Hypotheses

I hypothesized that Honduran children with forcibly disappeared and assassinated parents have been seriously affected by their ordeals and would evidence symptoms of traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and aggression, but that children whose loss was more recent-- the offspring of the assassinated-- would be more symptomatic. I also postulated that, due to the lack of physical, emotional or legal resolution in cases of forced disappearance, the children of the disappeared would present more unconscious emotional disturbance than would the children of the assassinated, since the latter have the certain knowledge of

their parent's death and are therefore better able to mourn their loss.

Hypothesis 1: Both children of the disappeared and children of the assassinated will score highly in the PTSRC scale and the CBI depression, anxiety and aggression subscales.

The children of the disappeared and the assassinated scored highly in the PTSRC and CBI depression subscale. They also received high response ratings some fear items in the CBI anxiety subscale and in the anger and irritability items in the CBI aggression subscale. The children acknowledge many symptoms, but the most prominent ones are multiple fears, pervasive worries, and an everpresent concern about having the remaining parent close by. While all traumatized people feel fearful, helpless and concerned with loss, these issues are particularly pronounced in children, who lack the physical, emotional and cognitive resources to care for themselves. The violent, government-sponsored loss of their parent, the disruptions in the family, and the continuing threats to their safety increased their sense of defenselessness, danger and dependence on adults.

Parents and caretakers, as a group, gave the children higher scores for both the PTSRC and all the CBI subscales than the children, as a group, gave themselves. These

differences rarely reached statistical significance, but they nonetheless would appear to contradict Lyons' (1987) observation, based on her analysis of the PTSD literature, that parents and other adults often deny or downplay the emotional impact of distressing events on children.

The findings described above confirm the hypothesis that both groups of politically-traumatized children exhibit a variety of post-traumatic symptoms. This finding is consistent with past literature on the social psychology of political repression, the effects of political repression on families and children, and the psychological consequences of violent, human-induced traumas.

Hypothesis 2: Children of the disappeared will score significantly lower in the PTSRC than children of the assassinated.

Hypothesis 3: Children of the disappeared will score significantly lower in the anxiety and depression subscales of the CBI than children of the assassinated.

The two groups of children differ on two important dimensions: the type of parental loss-- disappearance or assassination-- and the length of time since the loss-- around 9 years for the disappeared and around 4 years for the assassinated. It was hypothesized that the longer period of time since the loss would provide the disappeared

group more opportunities to rebuild their life and that these children would report less loss-related disturbances and symptoms than would the children of the assassinated. Although the prorated mean scores of the disappeared group were lower than those of the assassinated group for the PTSRC and the CBI depression and anxiety subscales, the differences were not significant.

These findings are surprising. Although post-traumatic symptoms are known to persist for long periods of time, I had nonetheless expected a decrease in their intensity since children's developmental maturation provides them with more opportunities for change than adults. The absence of significant differences between the two groups may be due to some or all of the following reasons: consistent with the psychological literature on the effects of disappearance, family members become paralyzed in a limbo state and are unable to move forward with their lives; continuing repressive conditions and related hardships impede the return to more normal, age-appropriate concerns; the small number of subjects made it impossible to establish significance-level differences; the relatively low level of reliability for the CBI depression and anxiety subscales and the PTSRC may indicate that these measures are not appropriate for the population tested. In addition, these measures were originally developed for children living under war conditions and may therefore fail to pick up the

subtleties and subtle group differences of less extreme conditions.

Hypothesis 4: Children of the disappeared will score significantly higher on the Rorschach MOA scale-- i.e., they will present less adaptive, more malevolent images-- than children of the assassinated.

The children of the assassinated have the firm knowledge of their parent's death; they can mourn and hopefully achieve some resolution of their loss. The children of the disappeared are unable to do this; they are forced to function in a "zone of psychotic-like ambiguity" and face an "eternal question with no answer" (Kordon & Edelman, 1986). It had therefore been hypothesized that the children of the disappeared would show greater unconscious disturbance than the children of the assassinated, as indicated by less adaptive, more malevolent images of relationships on the Rorschach MOA scale. This hypothesis was confirmed.

The MOA scale appears far better able than do the symptom and attitude scales to tap into underlying experience. The disappeared group, in particular, reports experiencing fewer trauma-related symptoms than in the past when their loss was more recent. However, both the MOA scale results and the qualitative analysis of the data

reveal quite impaired internal worlds, with high levels of emotional conflict and distress.

Although not specifically hypothesized, also so of interest were gender differences in regard to symptomatology. Several studies indicate that boys living in war and repressive environments exhibit higher levels of irritability and aggressive behavior than girls. In the present study, no significant differences by gender were found on any of the quantitative measures. However, females within and across groups scored lower than males on the MOA scale.

#### Discussion of Quantitative and Qualitative and Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings of this study are generally consistent with each other and with the existing psychological literature on political repression and trauma. Quantitatively and qualitatively, these children and their families have been deeply, irrevocably impacted by the loss of their family member, the circumstances surrounding that loss, the hostility, persecution, economic hardship and social isolation they experienced subsequent to the event, and the lack of social, political or legal response to and reparations for the injustices they have suffered.

The quantitative findings include high levels of fear of separation from and loss of their remaining family and

fear of bad things happening to them, pervasive feelings of sadness and unhappiness in a high percentage of the children, excessive and pervasive worrying, strong feelings of anger, and a vulnerability-- particularly seen in the CBI planful subscale-- to becoming disorganized or immobilized when faced with stressful situations. This sense of disorganization marks a reactivation of the original traumatic response, reinforced with each reexperiencing of fear, loss and confusion. According to both parents and children, the latter have become highly sensitive to other loss experiences.

The qualitative analysis confirms and expands upon these quantitative results, fleshing them out with the children's impressions and stories, dreams and fantasies. What we see in the qualitative analysis, not as easily discerned in most of the more quantitative measures, are the intricacies and contradictions, the conflicts and ambivalences of these types of experiences and their lasting impact on children's evolving sense of self and the world. One aspect explored is how these losses are privatized and made secret both from others and from the self. Another is how these experiences lead to a disrupted or poorly-integrated self-concept, including the sense of a dual reality/unreality, normal/traumatized self, related/cut-off way of being, acknowledged/denied experience, and a general sense of damage or psychic woundedness.

These children's active struggles with rage, their strong and disturbing images of violence, support Becker and colleagues' (1987) argument that anger tends to persist in these situations. As discussed in Chapter III, they assert that, with politically-motivated assassinations (and presumably disappearances also), rage is one of the most intense and lasting emotions due to the sense of impotence and injustice brought on by the circumstances of the loss and the lack of government accountability for its actions. The findings from the present study also support Miller's (1993) contention that children exposed to political repression and violence do not necessarily-- as other people have argued-- regard violence as an appropriate way of resolving interpersonal conflicts. While the Honduran children of the disappeared and assassinated may have these feelings and thoughts, they do not frequently act on them. They are more likely to internalize them, attempting to isolate, project, or deny them. Many of them show some ability to verbalize these emotions and images.

The children with assassinated parents appear to be, consistent with the recency of their loss, less able to concentrate and make plans. Nonetheless, there was an unexpectedly high degree of similarity found between the children of the disappeared and assassinated, particularly considering significantly different lengths of time since the loss of their parent and the difference in age at the

time of the loss. Although past literature on the psychological effects of disappearance on family members stresses the severity and persistence of psychological disturbance, I had had some reservations as to the accuracy and generalizability of some of the assertions made regarding this population. However, both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the present study tend to confirm these assertions. Moreover, the children of the disappeared present as more traumatized in some ways: they evidence less adaptive, more malevolent unconscious images of relationships than do the children of the assassinated group.

Spiegel's (1988) observation that a common feature of stress response syndromes is a sense of spatial and temporal fragmentation is compatible with my subjects' repeated lament that they need to know precisely the when, where, how and why of what has happened to their disappeared father. If he was indeed killed, they want to know his burial site so they can visit his grave. This fragmented sense about their disappeared parent reinforces these children's own sense of fragmentation and inability to move forward emotionally.

My findings are also consistent with Quirk and Casco's (1994) assertion that the increased stress and distress of the families of the disappeared results from the atmosphere of fear and isolation that they face. Quantitative and

qualitative data for both groups confirm that fear and a sense of isolation-- imposed from within and without-- are among the most distressing emotions experienced by these children and their families.

The quantitative data, particularly the Parent Questionnaire, indicates few learning, behavioral or gross social problems among these children. The qualitative interviews reinforce this view. In fact, many of these children excel in school and behave well at home and with peers. Psychologically, however, they suffer, all too often in silence and isolation. In the qualitative chapter, I describe these feelings and psychic processes in some depth. Although few of the children from either group fulfill the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, most exhibit some degree of the biphasic response of hyperarousal versus numbing and constriction. All show some inability to integrate their traumatic experience into the totality of their life experience.

#### Problems and Limitations of the Study

This study has a number of problems and limitations. Originally envisioned as a controlled study, my intent was to isolate the effects of political repression from the experience of parental loss in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of state terror. But time and infrastructural constraints made it impossible to find

an adequate control group. However, this limitation became an opportunity to compare two different types of politically-related parental loss.

Group differences in the length of time since the loss and the age of the children at the time of the loss also limit the generalizability of some of the findings. The small number of subjects made it difficult to obtain significant differences between the groups and between males and females. Again, due to the small number of subjects, all the parents were grouped together, making impossible comparisons between parent groups.

The data obtained in this study could have been analyzed in various ways. I chose to focus on a broad overview of psychological issues faced by these children, rather than focusing more in depth on just a few issues. Many of the issues discussed-- such as the defenses utilized, the age at the time of the loss and at the time of the interview, gender, the psychological significance of the absence of a body in the case of the disappeared, the role of political advocacy groups-- deserve to be analyzed in greater depth. Other important issues-- such as the impact of these experiences on ego and superego development-- I barely address. One interesting area that I hope to analyze in the future are the differences and similarities in child subjects from the same families-- age, birth order and gender all appear to play significant roles in these

siblings' varying experiences.

Questions may be raised concerning the applicability of the PTRSC and CBI to the population I studied. My adaptation of the PTRSC, in particular, changed it significantly from its original version. The measures were tested for validity and reliability for use with children living in war conditions, rather than in a repressive environment. As discussed earlier, the PTRSC and CBI subscales reliability quotients in this study were relatively low. The reliability of some of the quantitative results is therefore open to question.

Last, the focus of this analysis has been on psychosocial and other problems faced by the children and families of the disappeared and assassinated. Far less attention has been paid to their strengths and resiliencies. This emphasis on the negative undoubtedly gives a limited picture of these children and their lives.

#### Clinical and Human Rights Implications and Directions for Future Research

While there are many individual and group differences, it is clear that all the children of the disappeared and assassinated in Honduras have been profoundly and irrevocably affected by the loss of their father, the need to keep the circumstances surrounding the loss a secret, the subsequent changes in their family life, the palpable sense

of danger resulting from continued persecution of their families, and the fear of the loss of other family members and the psychological and economic devastation that this implies.

Fear and isolation reinforce each other. Children and adults experiencing the trauma of political violence and repression would greatly benefit from psychotherapeutic interventions to help them more adaptively cope with these experiences. An unanticipated consequence of conducting the diagnostic research interviews was many interviewees' comments that they found the process therapeutic and validating. This was usually their first opportunity to discuss their painful, conflictive feelings, thoughts and experiences with an interested professional.

As a result of my experience with families of the disappeared and assassinated and other sufferers of human rights abuses in Honduras, I believe that very short-term therapeutic interventions could have a substantial, positive effect on these people's emotional life. In Honduras and most other Third World countries, there are extremely few mental health professionals. To increase the number of mental health workers, paraprofessionals could be trained in crisis intervention techniques. Through focused, short-term interventions and the training of paraprofessionals, needed psychological services could be provided to a much larger segment of the populations.

One of the reasons for undertaking this research was to document the effects of human rights abuses. Both political repression and psychological repression silence people. It is important not to collude with this repression, but to instead break the silence and denial by bringing to light human rights abuses and the multifaceted consequences of these abuses. These problems are of social origin and have social and individual consequences. There is an urgent need for social reparations to: bring to light what occurred; bring to justice those who committed these human rights violations; and create a social, political, and even physical space-- such as a memorial-- in which a collective mourning process can occur. I hope that this study contributes to the struggle of Honduran human rights victims receive the social, political, and psychosocial attention that they deserve.

Last, suggestions for future research on the psychological consequences of political repression include an increase in: longitudinal studies assessing developmental, symptomatic and intrapsychic changes in children affected by political violence; controlled, comparative and interdisciplinary studies regarding all aspects of political repression; and research or action-research on effective psychotherapeutic modalities in non-traditional settings.

APPENDIX A1.CUESTIONARIO SOBRE EL TRAUMA DE LA PERDIDA EN LA NIÑEZ

1. SEXO DEL NIÑO: F M
2. COMUNIDAD:
3. DONDE NACIO:
4. EDAD: FECHA DE NACIMIENTO:
5. EDAD CUANDO DESAPARECIO/FUE ASESINADO EL PADRE:
6. EDAD DEL PADRE EN AQUEL ENTONCES:
7. AÑO ESCOLAR:
  - A. Lee y escribe?
  - B. Problemas escolares?  
conducta  
bajo rendimiento
8. PROBLEMAS DE SALUD:
9. NIÑO VIVE CON:
  1. propia familia/casa
  2. otra familia/casa
10. ACTUALMENTE, QUIEN ESTA A CARGO DEL CUIDADO DEL NIÑO:
  1. madre
  2. hermanos
  3. otro padre (adoptivo, etc.)
  4. otros familiares- especifique
11. EMPLEO DE LOS RESPONSABLES DEL NIÑO:

persona	empleo
1.	
2.	
12. EMPLEO DEL PADRE DESAPARECIDO/ASESINADO:
13. NIVEL DE ESCOLARIDAD DE LOS RESPONSABLES DEL NIÑO:

persona	grado
1.	
2.	
14. ESCOLARIDAD DE PADRE DESAPARECIDO/ASESINADO:
  - A. otros estudios/entrenamiento:

15. ACTUALMENTE, CUAL ES LA SITUACION ECONOMICA DE LA FAMILIA?

- muy pobre            pobre            clase media            rica
- A. casa  
B. ingresos  
C. no. de personas viviendo en casa

16. ANTES DE LA DESAPARICION/ASESINATO DEL PADRE, COMO ERA LA SITUACION ECONOMICA DE LA FAMILIA?

- muy pobre            pobre            clase media            rica
- A. casa  
B. ingresos

17. LA DESAPARICION/ASESINATO AFECTO LA SITUACION ECONOMICA FAMILIAR? COMO?

17a. DE QUE OTRAS MANERAS AFECTO A LA FAMILIA?

18. INFORMACION SOBRE LA DESAPARICION/ASESINATO:  
QUE SUCEDIO?  
CUANDO Y COMO SUPIERON?  
QUE LE CONTARON AL NIÑO? CUANDO? COMO?

19. PADRE DESAPARECIDO: PIENSA QUE ESTA VIVO O MUERTO?  
QUE PIENSA EL NIÑO?

20. PADRE ASESINADO: COMO SE DESPIDIERON (funeral, novina)?  
DESAPARECIDO: ALGUN ACTO EN SU HONOR U OTRA COSA?

21. CON QUE FRECUENCIA SE HABLA DEL PADRE EN LA CASA?

22. HABLA EL NIÑO DEL PADRE? QUE DICE?

23. HAN SUFRIDO OTRAS PERDIDAS O EXPERIENCIAS TRAUMATICAS DESPUES DE LA DEL PADRE? COMO RESPONDIO EL NIÑO?

24. REACCION DEL NIÑO A SU AUSENCIA:

25. RELIGION:

- A. cuán religiosos  
B. si la religion y/o la iglesia han sido una ayuda, y como?

26. A QUE JUEGA Y QUE LE GUSTA HACER AL NIÑO? ALGO FUERA DE LO COMUN DE SU CONDUCTA (repetitiva, violenta, extraña)?

27. COMO SE LLEVA EL NIÑO CON OTROS JOVENES? TIENE AMIGOS/AS?

28. COMO SE LLEVA CON EL RESTO DE LA FAMILIA/CON SUS HERMANOS?

APPENDIX A2.QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE TRAUMA OF CHILDHOOD LOSSES (English translation)

1. CHILD'S SEX: F      M
2. COMMUNITY:
3. WHERE BORN:
4. AGE:      DOB:
5. AGE AT TIME OF PARENT'S DISAPPEARANCE/ASSASSINATION:
6. AGE OF DISAPPEARED/ASSASSINATED PARENT AT THE TIME:
7. SCHOOL GRADE:
  - A. Can read and write?
  - B. School problems?  
conduct  
poor performance
8. HEALTH PROBLEMS:
9. CHILD LIVES WITH:
  1. own family/house
  2. other family/house  
specify:
10. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD'S CARE NOW:
  1. natural mother
  2. brothers
  3. another parent (stepparent, adoptive parent)
  4. other relatives- specify
11. WORK OF CARETAKERS:
 

person	job
1.	
2.	
12. WHAT KIND OF WORK DID \_\_\_\_\_ (DIS/ASSAS PARENT) DO?
13. SCHOOLING OF PRESENT CARETAKERS:
 

person	grade
1.	
2.	
14. EDUCATION OF DEAD/MISSING PARENT:
  - A. other studies/training

15. AT THIS TIME, WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF YOUR FAMILY?

rich                                  very poor                  poor                  middle class

A. house  
B. income  
C. number of people in household

16. BEFORE \_\_\_\_\_ DISAPPEARANCE/ASSASSINATION, WHAT WAS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF YOUR FAMILY?

rich                                  very poor                  poor                  middle class

A. house  
B. income

17. DID \_\_\_\_\_ DIS/ASSAS AFFECT YOUR ECONOMIC SITUATION? HOW?

17a. HOW ELSE AFFECTED YOUR FAMILY?

18. INFORMATION REGARDING DISAPPEARANCE/ASSASSINATION:  
WHAT HAPPENED?  
WHEN AND HOW FOUND OUT?  
WHAT WAS CHILD TOLD? WHEN? HOW?

19. DISAPPEARED, DO YOU THINK HE IS ALIVE OR DEAD?  
WHAT DOES CHILD THINK?

20. DIED, RITUALS TO SAY GOODBYE (FUNERAL, NOVINA)?  
DISAPPEARED, ACTS IN HIS HONOR, ETC.?

21. HOW FREQUENTLY FATHER IS MENTIONED/SPOKEN OF AT HOME?

22. DOES CHILD ASK ABOUT FATHER? WHAT DOES HE/SHE SAY?

23. SUFFERED ANY OTHER LOSSES OR TRAUMATIC EVENTS AFTER THAT OF FATHER? HOW DID CHILD RESPOND?

24. CHILD'S REACTION TO YOUR ABSENCES:

25. RELIGION:  
A. how actively religious?  
B. has church or religion been any help in this? how?

26. WHAT DOES CHILD LIKE TO PLAY AND DO. ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT BEHAVIOR (REPETITIVE, VIOLENT, STRANGE):

27. HOW GETS ALONG WITH OTHER CHILDREN? DOES HE/SHE HAVE FRIENDS?

28. HOW GETS ALONG WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS/SIBLINGS?

APPENDIX B1.

LISTA SOBRE LA REACCION DE ESTRES POS-TRAUMATICO PARA NIÑOS  
VERSION PARA NIÑOS<sup>1</sup> (adaptación de Lista sobre la Reacción  
 de Estrés Pos-traumático para Niños, Proyecto Sobre los  
 Niños y la Guerra, Centro por el Estudio de los Derechos  
 Humanos, Universidad de Columbia)

AHORA VOY A PREGUNTARTE SOBRE LAS EXPERIENCIAS QUE MAS  
 RECUERDAS DURANTE EL PERIODO DESDE LA DESAPARION/ASESINATO  
 DE TU PAPA.

A) DESCRIBI LO QUE SUCEDIO:

B) ¿HACE CUANTO TIEMPO PASO ESO, Y CUANTOS AÑOS TENIAS?

FECHA DEL EVENTO:

EDAD (DEL NIÑO) :

C) POR FAVOR RESPONDE A LAS PREGUNTAS QUE VOY A HACERTE,  
 SEGUN COMO TE COMPORTAS, SENTIS O PENSAS.

- |  | NO SE | SI | NO |
|--|-------|----|----|
| 1) ¿Piensas (hablas) seguido sobre lo que sucedió?   |       |    |    |
| 2) ¿Te asustas o te aflijis cuando piensas o hablas sobre lo que sucedió?  |       |    |    |
| 3) ¿Recordas seguido lo pasó, y te imaginas que pasa nuevamente lo sucedido?   |       |    |    |
| 4) ¿Soñás con lo que sucedió?  |       |    |    |
| 5) ¿Algunas veces sentís como si lo que sucedió estuviese ocurriendo de nuevo?   |       |    |    |
| 6) ¿El estar pensando o sintiendo sobre lo que sucedio, hace que se te olviden facilmente las cosas?<br>(por ejem. lo que se ha aprendido en el salon de clase)? |       |    |    |

---

<sup>1</sup> Parent version is similar, except for change of wording from "you" to "the child."

NO SABE    SI    NO

- 7) ¿Desde lo sucedido, te sentís más solo, como si nadie comprendiera lo que sentís?
- 8) ¿Desde lo sucedido, te preocupas que te moriras jovencito?
- 9) ¿Desde lo sucedido, crees no disfrutar tanto jugar con tus amigos, hacer deportes, u otras actividades como antes?
- 10) ¿Desde lo sucedido, te cuesta dormir o quedarte dormido/a durante la noche?
- 11) ¿Desde lo sucedido, te asustas mucho más que antes cuando escuchas algun ruido fuerte, o cuando pasa cualquier cosa?
- 12) ¿Desde lo sucedido, te cuesta mas que antes prestar atención a las cosas?
- 13) ¿Te alejas de ciertas cosas que te hacen recordar lo que sucedió?
- 14) ¿Tratas de olvidar lo que sucedió?



DK YES NO

- 8) Since what happened, do you worry that you also will die young?
- 9) Since what occurred, do you enjoy-- less than before-- playing with friends, doing sports, or participating in other activities?
- 10) Since the event, do you have difficulties falling or staying asleep during the night?
- 11) Since what happened, do you become more frightened than before when you hear a loud sound, or when anything unusual occurs?
- 12) Since the event, is it more difficult for you to pay attention or concentrate on things than before?
- 13) Do you stay away from situations or activities that remind you of what happened?
- 14) Do you try to forget about what happened?

APPENDIX C1.

INVENTARIO DEL COMPORTAMIENTO DEL NIÑO- VERSION PARA NIÑOS<sup>2</sup>  
 (adaptación de Inventario del Comportamiento del Niño,  
 Proyecto sobre los Niños y la Guerra, Centro por el Estudio  
 de los Derechos Humanos, Universidad de Columbia)

AHORA VOY A PREGUNTARTE SOBRE ALGUNAS COSAS QUE HACEN TODOS  
 LOS NIÑOS POR FAVOR CONTESTAME SI LO QUE TE MENCIONO TE HA  
 OCURRIDO AHORA O DENTRO DE LOS ULTIMOS SEIS MESES.

No	Nunca	Pocas	Con	Siempre
Sabe		Veces	Frecuencia	

1. ¿Lloras fácilmente?
2. ¿Te enojas fácilmente?
3. ¿Te asustas fácilmente?
4. ¿Ayudas a otros niños?
5. ¿Te ofreces a dirigir  
juegos o tareas de la escuela?
6. ¿Te sentís triste o infeliz?
7. ¿Te pones molesto fácilmente?
8. ¿Tenés miedo de que  
algo malo te vaya a pasar?
9. ¿Te gusta ayudar a los adultos  
(ej. padres, maestros)?
10. ¿Piensas antes de hacer  
las cosas?
11. ¿Te preocupan muchas cosas?
12. ¿Insultás o amenazás a otros?
13. ¿Te dan miedo cosas que por  
lo general no asustan a  
otros niños?
14. ¿Te preocupás por los demás?

---

<sup>2</sup>Parent version is similar same, except for change of  
 wording from "you" to "the child."

- |  | No<br>Sabe | Nunca | Pocas<br>Veces | Con<br>Frecuencia | Siempre |
|--|------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|---------|
|--|------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|---------|
15. ¿Resolvés los problemas fácilmente?
  16. ¿Sentís que nadie te quiere?
  17. ¿Golpeas, empujas, o le das golpes a otros niños?
  18. ¿Te dan miedo las situaciones nuevas (por ejem. conocer personas nuevas)?
  19. ¿Te pones triste o te dan ganas de llorar cuando ves a otra gente sufriendo?
  20. ¿Te sentís seguro de ti mismo?
  21. ¿Tienes miedo de perder a tu familia?
  22. ¿Arruinás tus cosas o las de otras personas?
  23. ¿Te cuesta prestar atención a las tareas de la escuela?
  24. ¿Tratas de darle consuelo y apoyo a otros cuando sufren?
  25. ¿Aún cuando te encuentras con obstáculos, tratas de seguir adelante?
  26. ¿Te sentís cansado?
  27. ¿Desobedeces a tus padres o profesores?
  28. ¿Te es necesario estar con una persona mayor para sentirte seguro y amparado?
  29. ¿Te enojas cuando alguna injusticia es cometida hacia otros?

- |  | No<br>Sabe | Nunca | Pocas<br>Veces | Con<br>Frecuencia | Siempre |
|--|------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|---------|
|--|------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|---------|
30. ¿Después de que te haya sucedido algo que produzca tensión, te recuperas rápido?
  31. ¿Prefieres estar solo, en vez de con la familia o amigos?
  32. ¿Tienes malgenio o te enojas fácilmente?
  33. ¿Compartes tus cosas (por ejem. comida, ropa, juguetes) con otros?
  34. ¿Tienes esperanza acerca del futuro?
  35. ¿Te sentís sólo?
  36. ¿Respetas las normas importantes de tu casa y la comunidad?
  37. ¿Prestas ayuda o eres amistoso con personas que te han sido amistosos/as contigo?
  38. ¿Te mantienes calmado en momentos tensos?
  39. ¿Sentís que no vales nada?
  40. ¿Le echas la culpa a los demás por cosas que son culpa tuya?
  41. ¿Protejes a otros niños?
  42. ¿Te sentís como si no tienes la capacidad de hacer ciertas cosas?
  43. ¿Estás interesado en mantenerte informado y de entender las causas de los problemas del país?

APPENDIX C2.

CHILD BEHAVIOR INVENTORY- CHILD VERSION (English translation) (adapted from PCW Child Behavior Inventory-Spanish version)

NOW I'M GOING TO ASK YOU ABOUT SOME THINGS THAT CHILDREN DO. PLEASE TELL ME IF THE THINGS I MENTION HAVE OCCURRED TO YOU NOW OR WITHIN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

DK   Never   Rarely   Frequently   Always

1. Do you cry easily?
2. Do you get angry easily?
3. Are you easily scared?
4. Are you helpful toward other children?
5. Do you take the lead in games or school activities?
6. Do you feel sad or unhappy?
7. Do you get easily irritable
8. Are you frightened that something bad will happen to you?
9. Do you enjoy helping adults (eg., parents, teachers)?
10. Do you plan and think ahead?
11. Do you worry about many things?

DK Never Rarely Frequently Always

12. Do you yell, swear or verbally threaten others?
13. Are you scared of things or situations that don't usually scare others?
14. Do you show care and concern for others?
15. Are you good at finding solutions to problems?
16. Do you feel that noone loves you?
17. Do you hit, push or threaten other children?
18. Are you scared of new situations (eg., meeting new people)?
19. Do you feel sad or feel like crying when you see other people suffering?
20. Are you sure of yourself in most situations?
21. Are you afraid of losing losing your family?
22. Do you destroy your own or other people's things?
23. Is it hard for you to concentrate on your schoolwork?

DK Never Rarely Frequently Always

24. Do you try to comfort and support others when they suffer?
25. Do you keep on trying when you face problems/obstacles?
26. Do you feel tired?
27. Do you disobey your parents or teachers?
28. Is it necessary for you to be with an older person to feel safe and secure?
29. Do you get upset when an injustice is committed against others?
30. Do you feel ok soon after a stressful event?
31. Do you prefer being alone rather around friends or family?
32. Are you hot tempered or easily angered?
33. Do you share your things with others (eg., toys or clothes)?
34. Are you optimistic about the future?
35. Do you feel lonely?
36. Do you respect the important rules of your home and community?

DK Never Rarely Frequently Always

37. Do you help or are you friendly to people who have helped you or have been friendly to you?
38. Do you stay calm during stressful moments?
39. Do you feel worthless?
40. Do you blame others for things that are your own fault?
41. Are you protective toward other children?
42. Do you feel like you lack the capacity to do certain things?
43. Are you interested in informing yourself and understanding the causes of the country's problems?

APPENDIX C3. CHILD BEHAVIOR INVENTORY SUBSCALES# Depression Subscale:

- 1 Cries easily
- 6 Feels sad/unhappy
- 11 Worries about many things
- 16 Feels no one loves him/her
- 21 Afraid of losing family
- 26 Feels tired
- 31 Prefers being alone to with fam/friends
- 35 Feels lonely
- 39 Feels worthless
- 42 Feels lacks capacity to do things

# Aggression Subscale:

- 2 Angers easily
- 7 Easily irritable
- 12 Yells, swears, verbally threatens
- 17 Hits, threatens other children
- 22 Destroys own or others' things
- 27 Disobeys parents/teachers
- 32 Easily angered
- 36 Does not respect home & community rules
- 40 Blames others for own faults

# Anxiety Subscale:

- 3 Easily scared
- 8 Fear something bad may happen to them
- 13 Scared of things not scare others
- 18 Scared of new situations
- 23 Hard to concentrate on schoolwork
- 28 Needs to be with elder to feel safe

# Prosocial Subscale:

- 4 Helpful toward other children
- 9 Enjoys helping adults
- 14 Shows concern for others
- 19 Feels sad when sees others suffering
- 24 Comforts others when they suffer
- 29 Upset when injustice done to others
- 33 Shares with others
- 36 Respects home & community rules
- 37 Helps people who have helped him/her
- 41 Protective toward other children

# Planful Subscale:

- 5 Takes lead in games/school activities
- 10 Plans/thinks ahead
- 15 Good at finding solutions to problems
- 20 Sure of self in most situations
- 25 Keeps trying when faced with obstacles
- 30 Recuperates soon after stressful event
- 34 Optimistic about future
- 38 Stays calm during stressful moments
- 43 Interest in knowing country's problems

APPENDIX D. Figures

Figure 6.1. Drawing of Person, Female (Bernardo, age 16, 8, father disappeared)

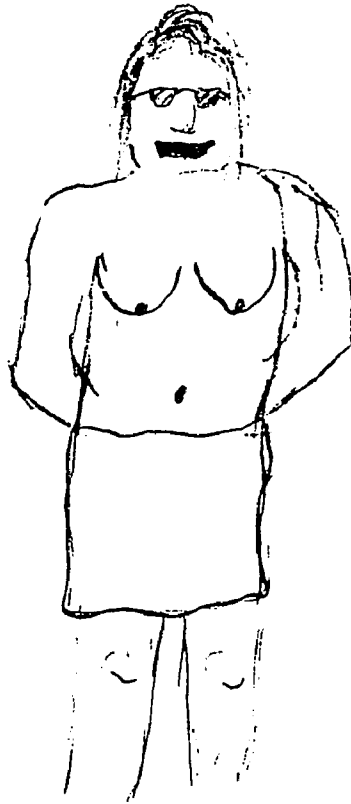


Figure 6.2. Drawing of Person, Male (Gabriela, age 17, 7, father assassinated)

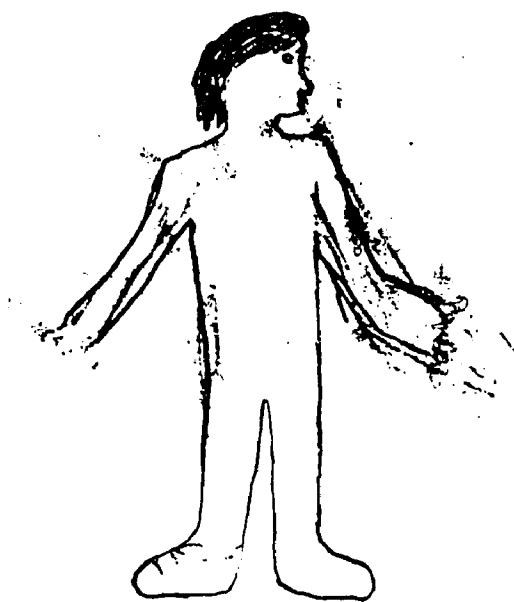


Figure 6.3. Drawing of Person, Male (Andrea, age 15, 1, father disappeared)

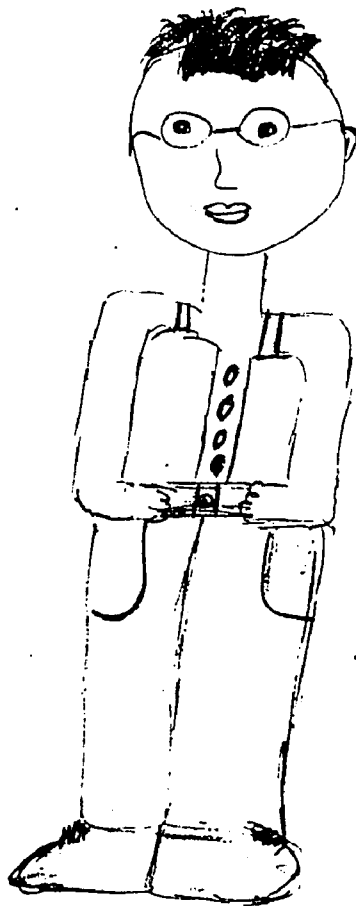


Figure 6.4. Drawing of Person, Male (Juan, age 13, 11, father disappeared)

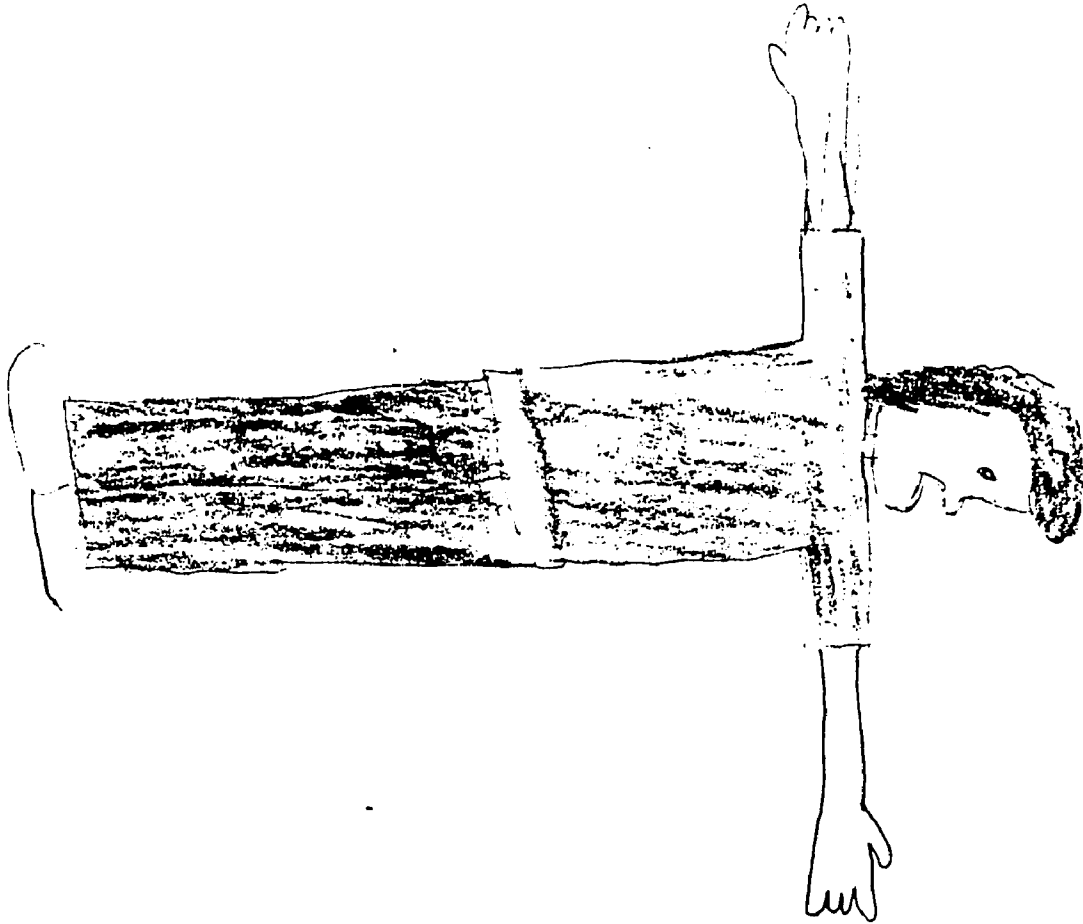


Figure 6.5. Drawing of Person, Female (Hernan, age 11, 8, father assassinated).

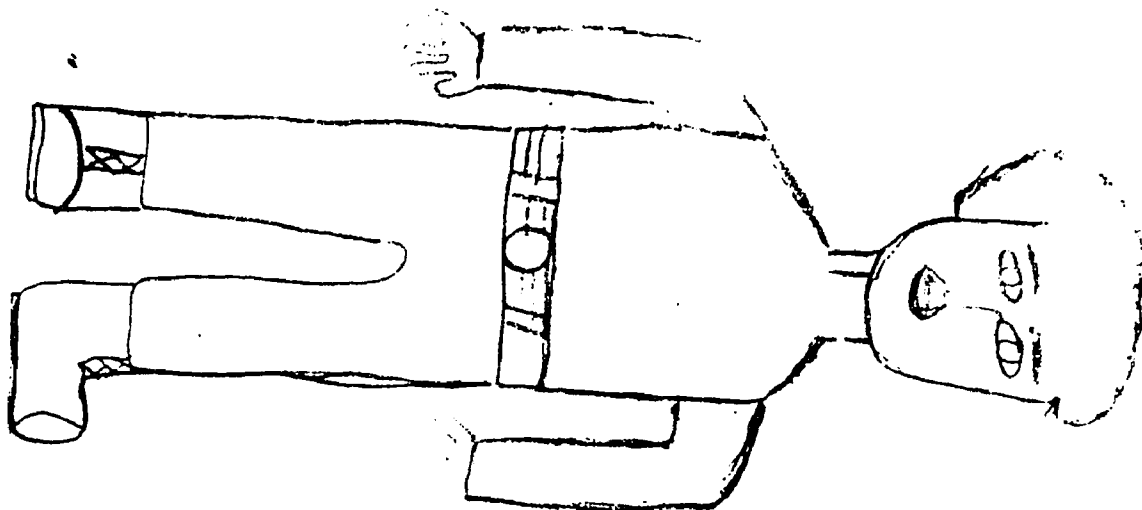


Figure 6.6. Drawing of Person, Male (Laura, age 15, 6, father assassinated)

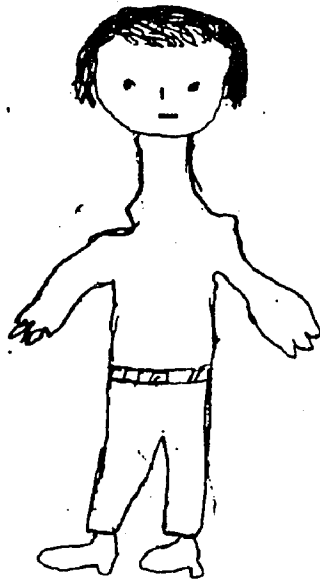


Figure 6.7. Drawing of Person, Male (Carlos, age 14, 3, father disappeared)

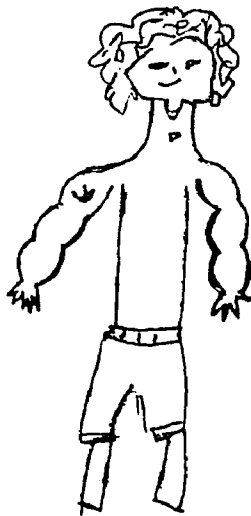


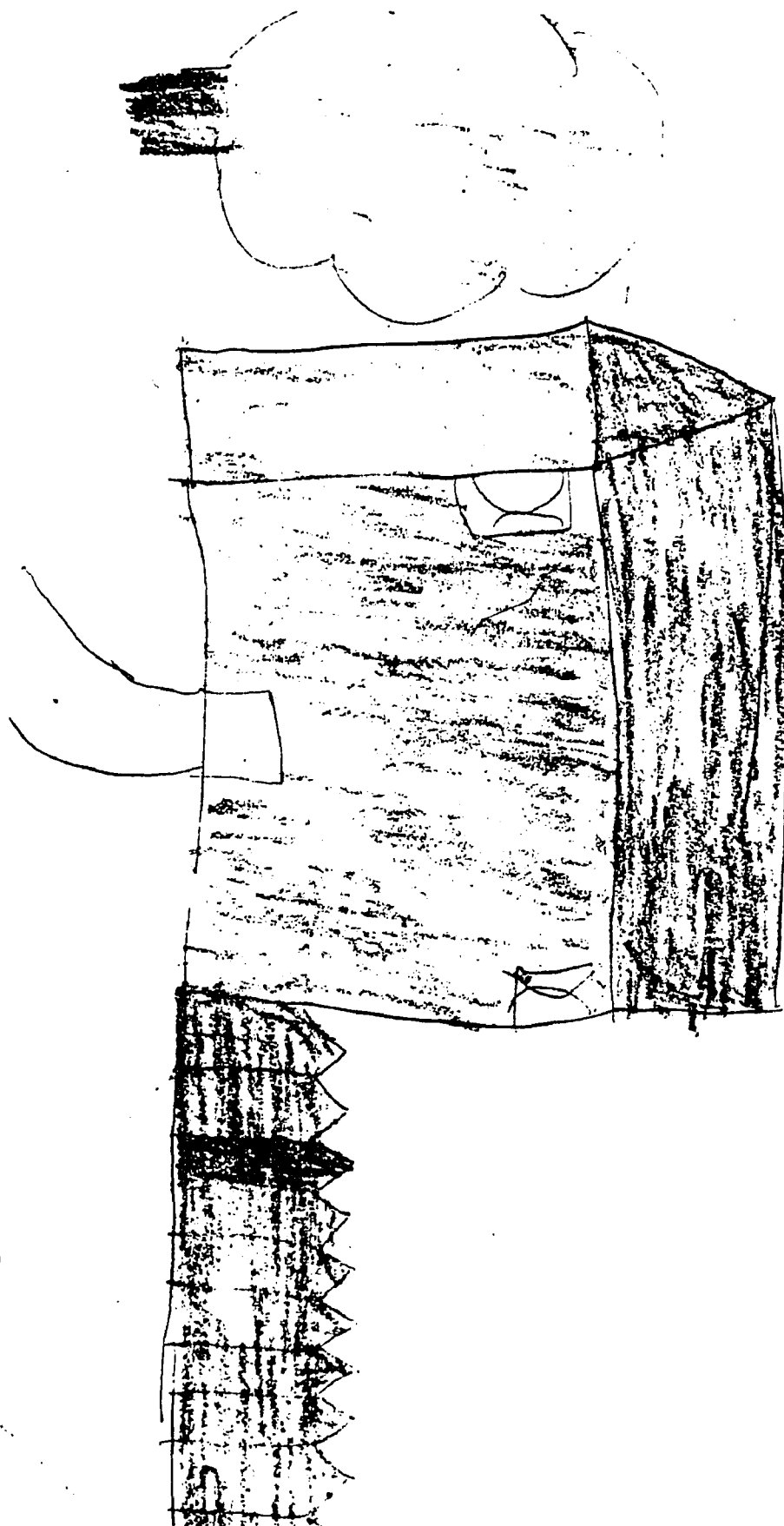
Figure 6.8. Drawing of Person, Male (Nora, age 18, 3, father assassinated)



Figure 6.9. Drawing of Person, Female (Laura, age 15, 6, father assassinated)

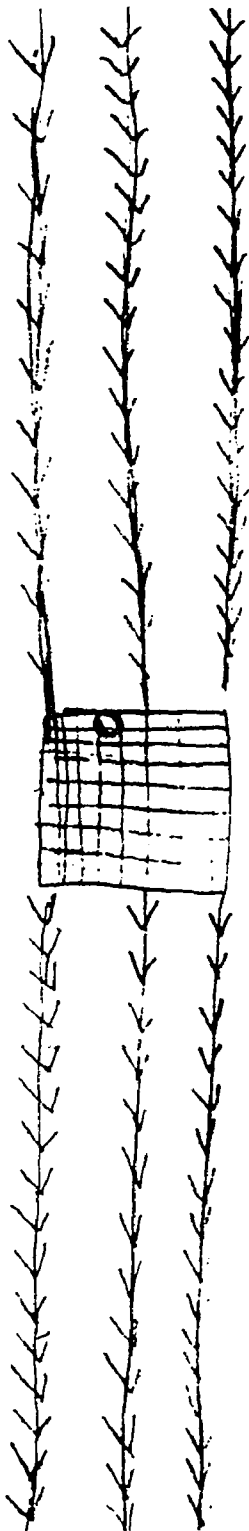


Figure 6.10. Drawing of House (Juan, age 13, 11, father disappeared)



079.

Figure 6.11. Drawing of House (Hernan, age 11, 8, father assassinated)



8 de Diciembre de 1980  
18 DE agosto de 1992

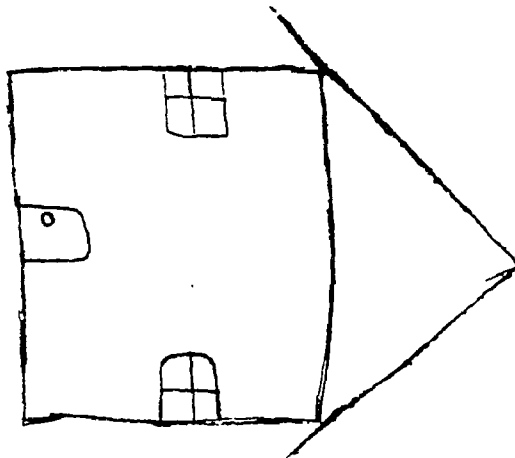
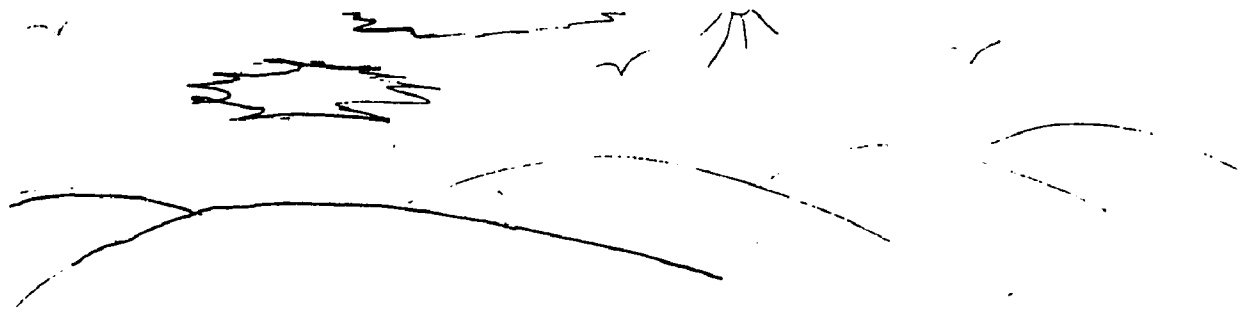


Figure 6.12. Drawing of House (Leda, age 11, 4, father disappeared)



Fecha de nacimiento:  
29 de marzo  
de 1981

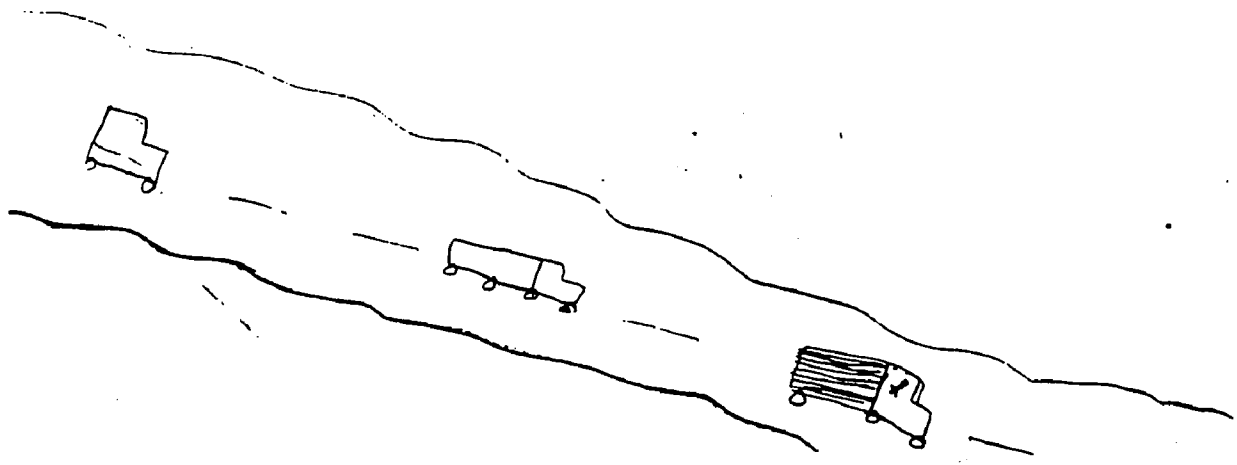
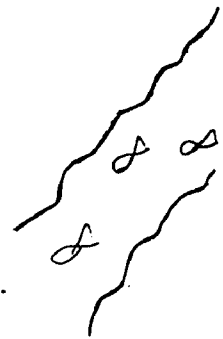
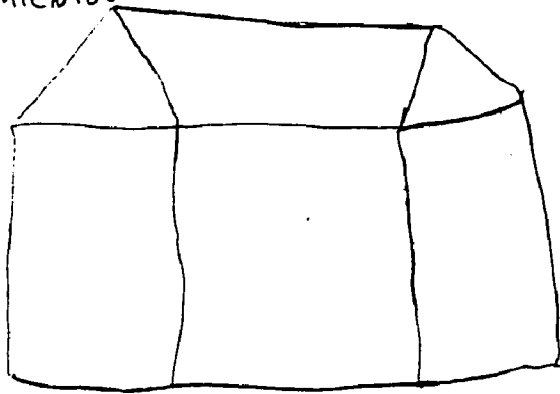
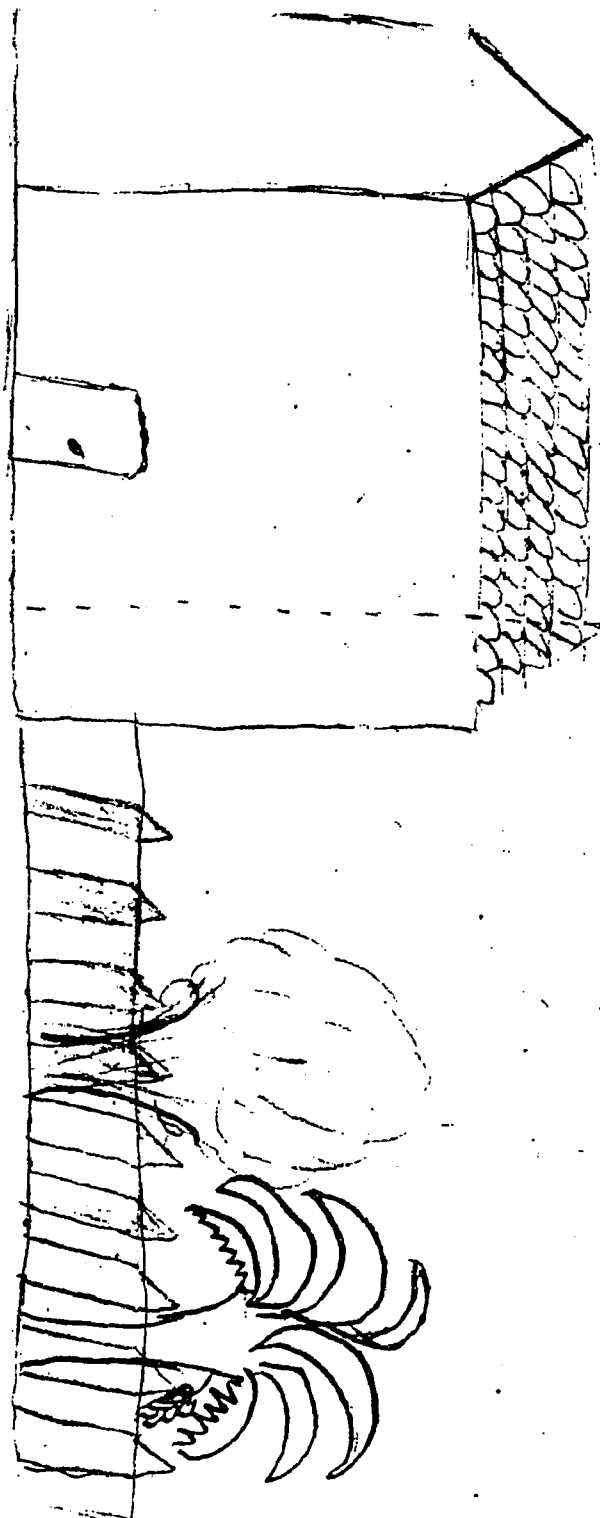


Figure 6.13. Drawing of House (Carlos, age 14, 3, father disappeared)

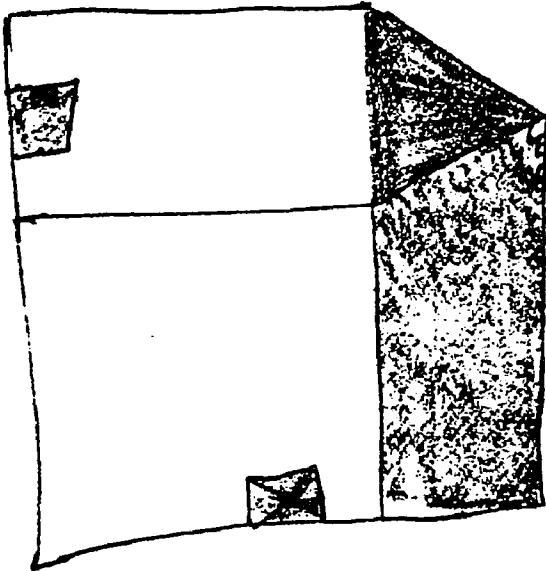


27 de Septiembre  
21 de Agosto

Figure 6.14. Drawing of House (Felipe, age 14, 8, father disappeared)



Figure 6.15. Drawing of House (Lourdes, age 14, 1. father assassinated)



~~fecha de nacimiento:~~ 15 de junio de 1978.

hay un día maravilloso 5 de agosto de 1992

Figure 6.16. Drawing of House (Diana, age 15, 6, father disappeared)

de Tabasco 1/1/77 19/8/92.

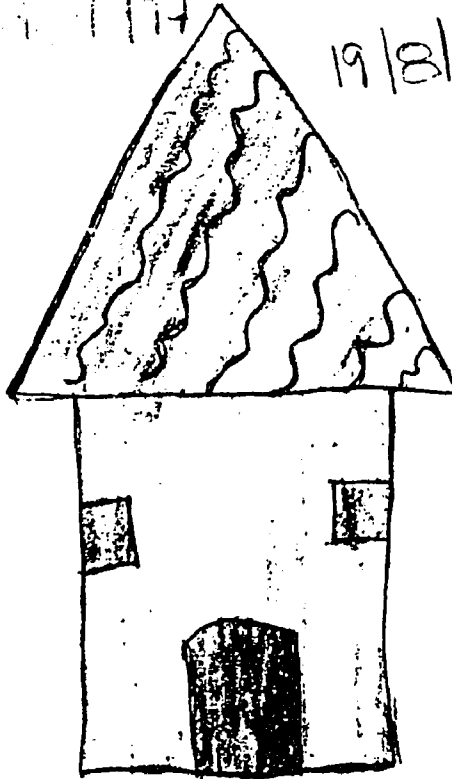


Figure 6.17. Drawing of House (Carmen, age 14, 1, father assassinated).

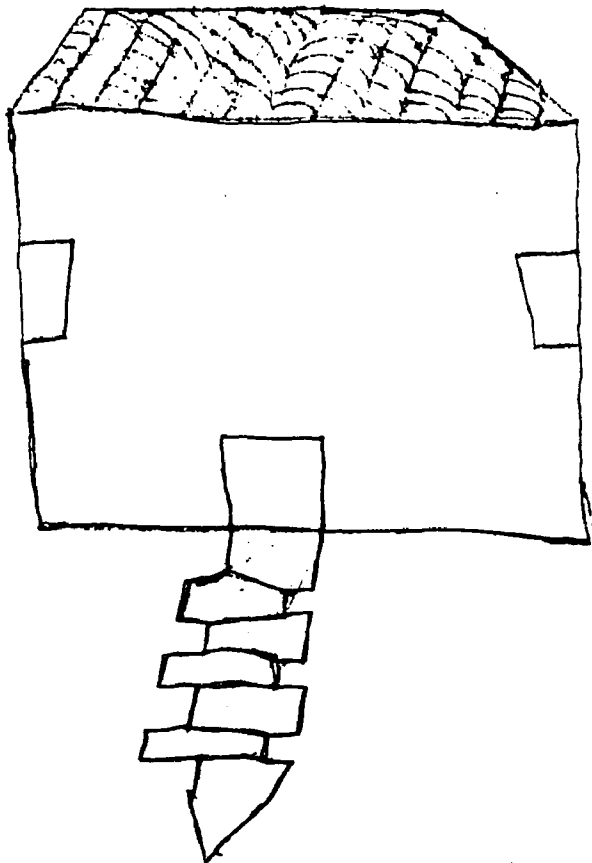
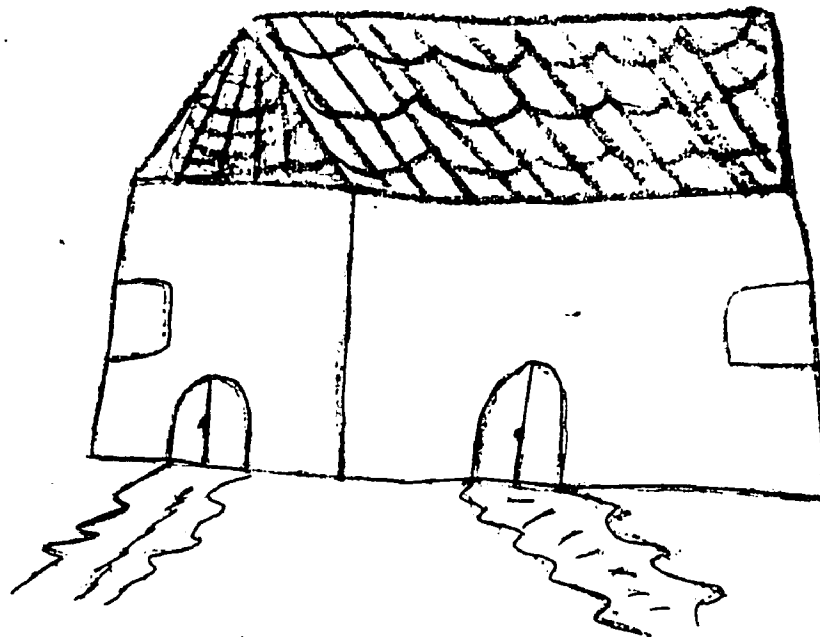


Figure 6.18. Drawing of House (Laura, age 15, 6, father assassinated)



My nombre es .

Nacy es primero de Febrero de 1997

Fecha de 1997  
16 de Julio  
de 1992

Figure 6.19. Drawing of House (Felipe, age 14, 8, father disappeared)

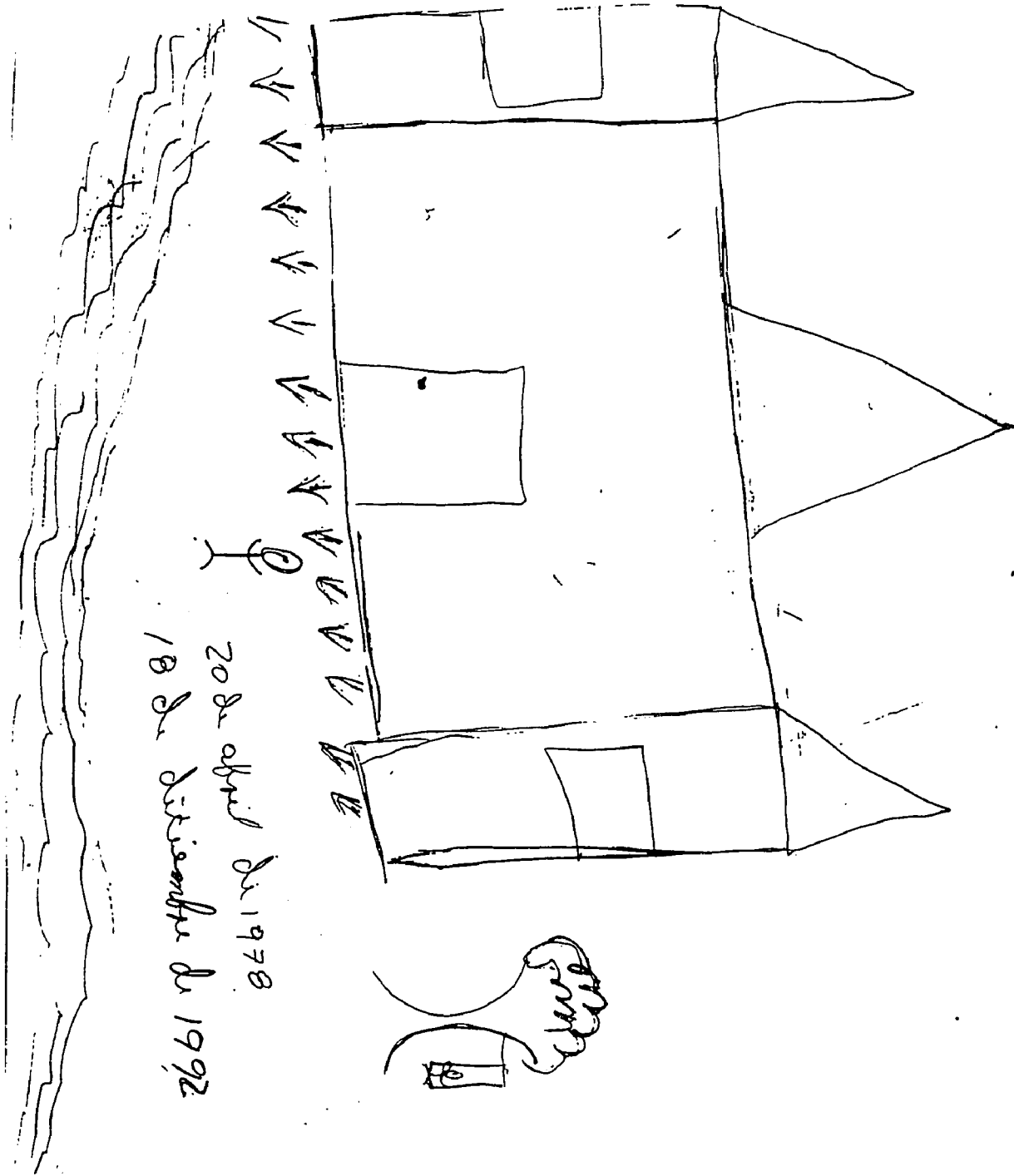


Figure 6.20. Drawing of House (Leo, age 12, father disappeared)

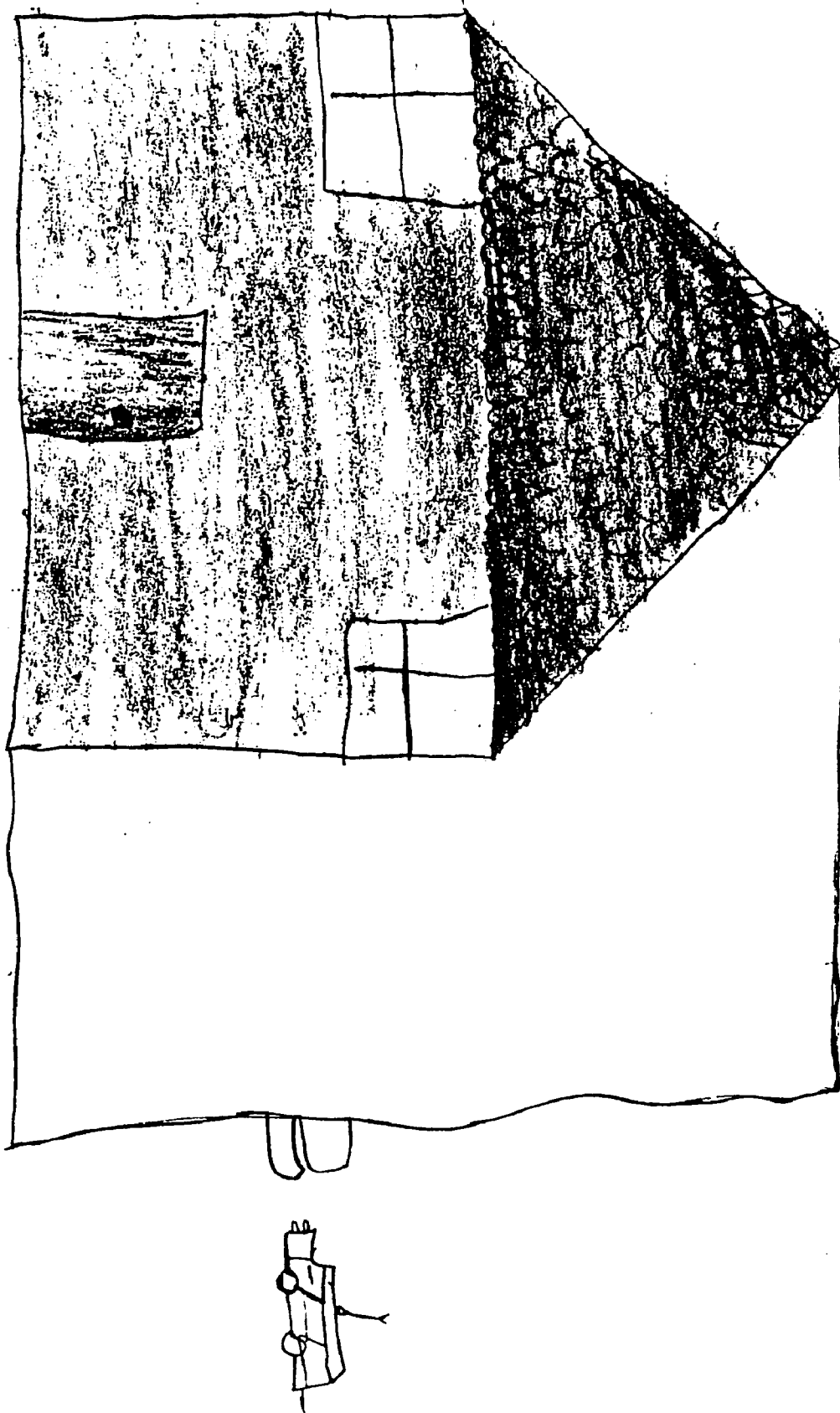


Figure 6.21. Drawing of House (Andrea, age 15, 1, father disappeared)

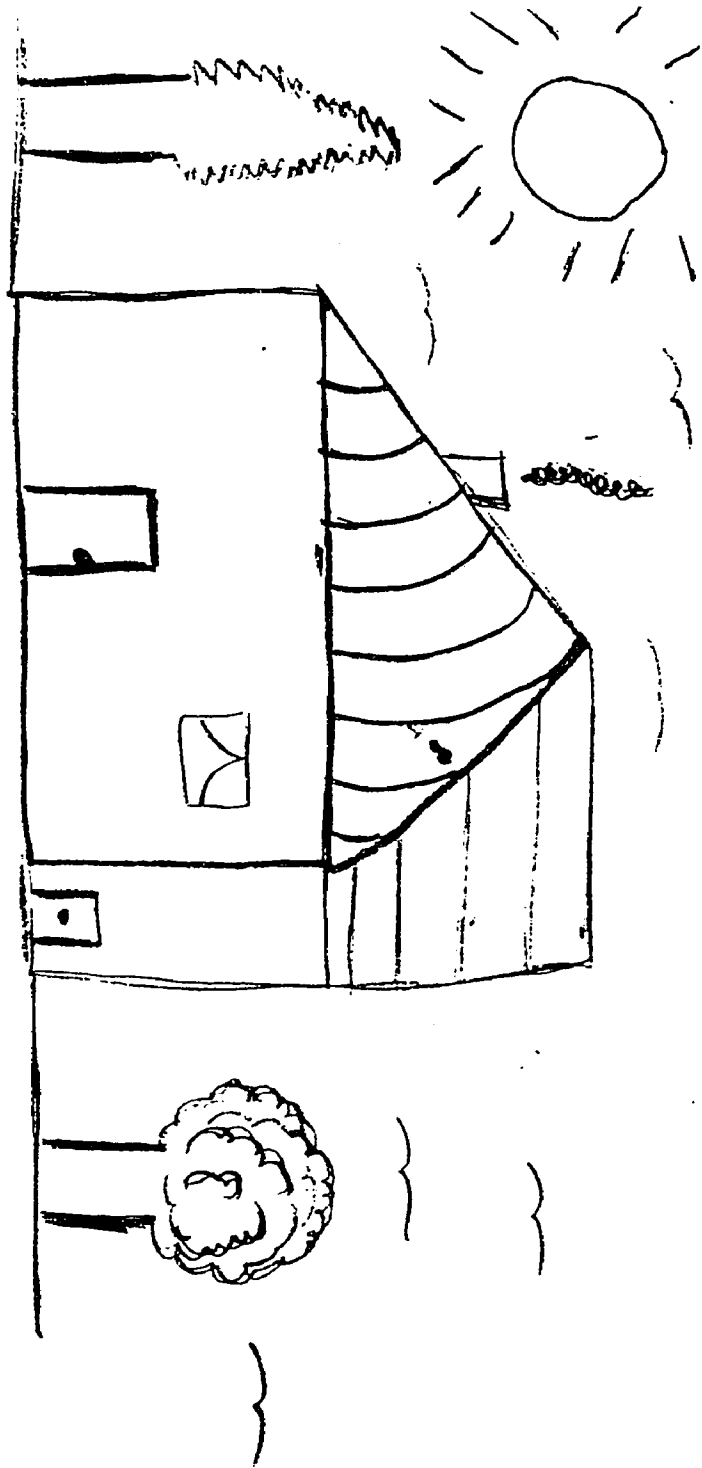


Figure 6.22. Drawing of House (Roberto, age 11, 2, father disappeared)

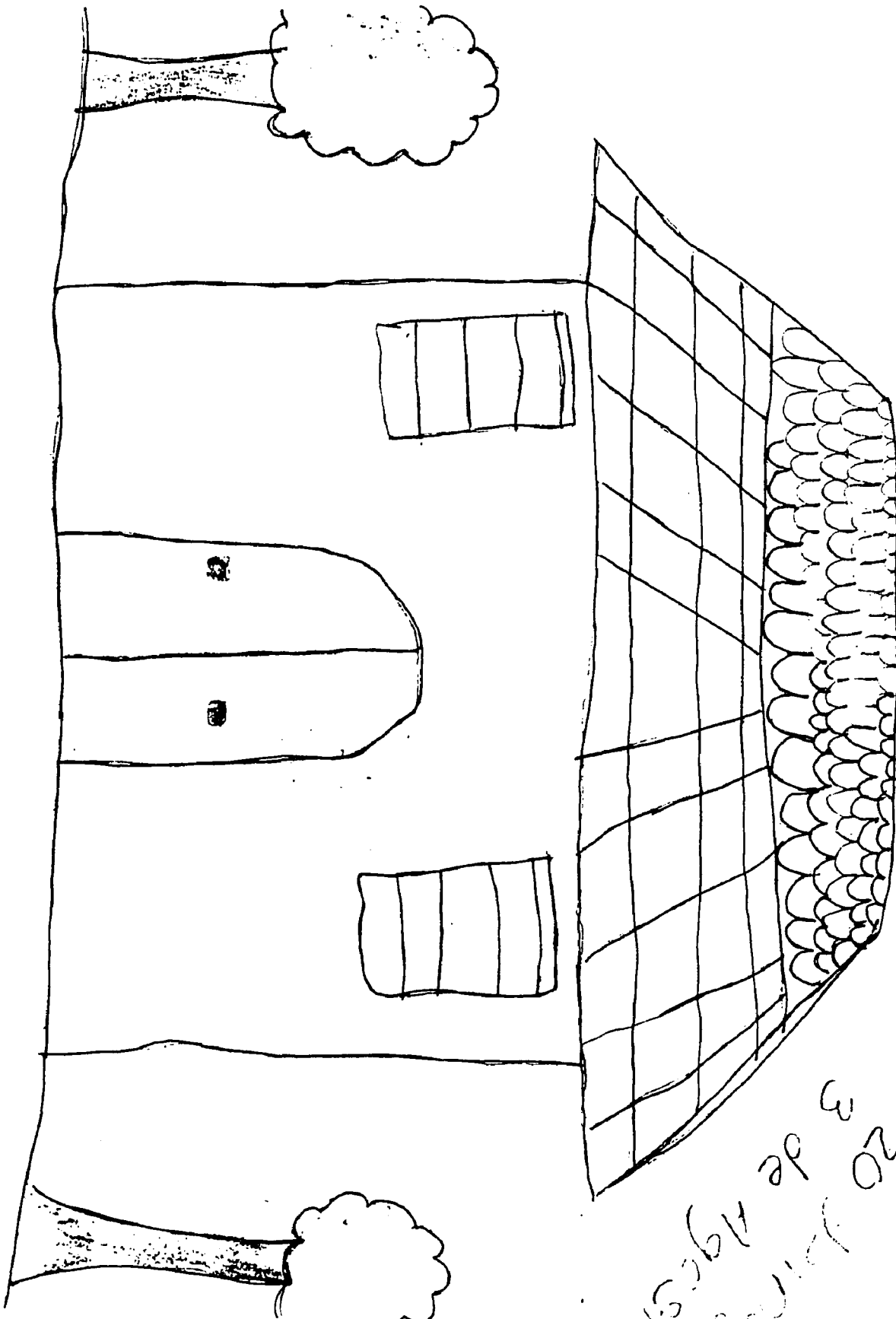


Figure 6.23. Drawing of Tree (Johny, age 11, 8, father assassinated)

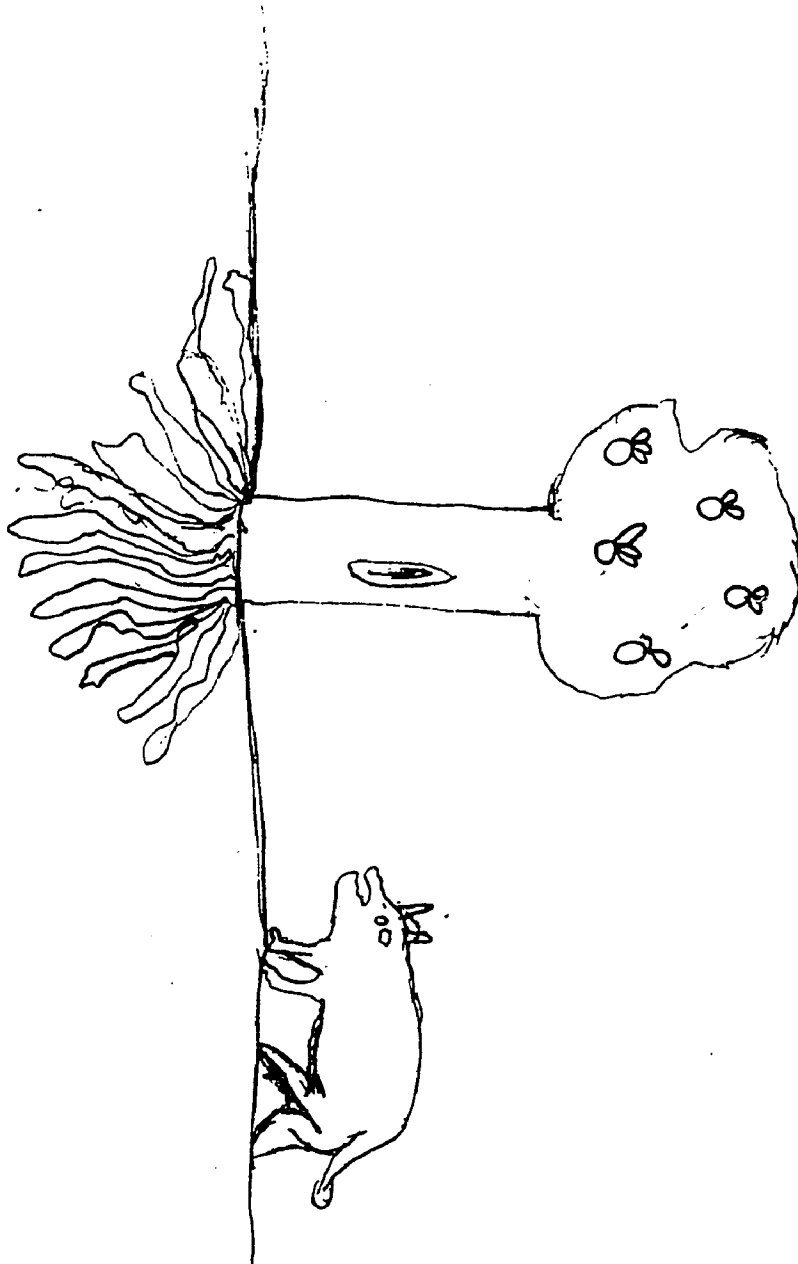


Figure 6.24. Drawing of Tree (Fernando, age 19, father assassinated)



Figure 6.25. Drawing of Tree (Carmela, age 12, 2, mother assassinated).

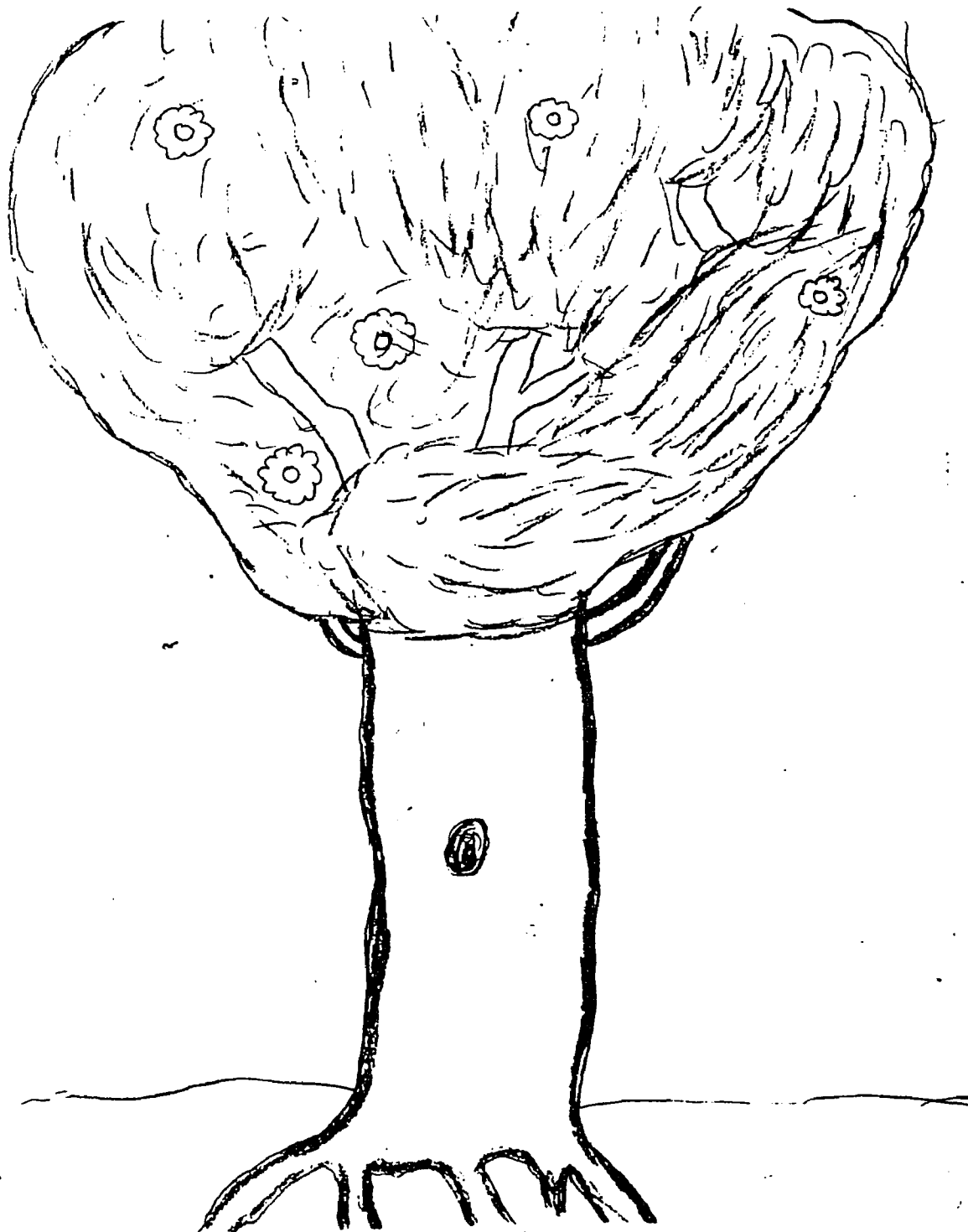


Figure 6.26. Drawing of Tree (Francisco, age 15, 8, father assassinated)

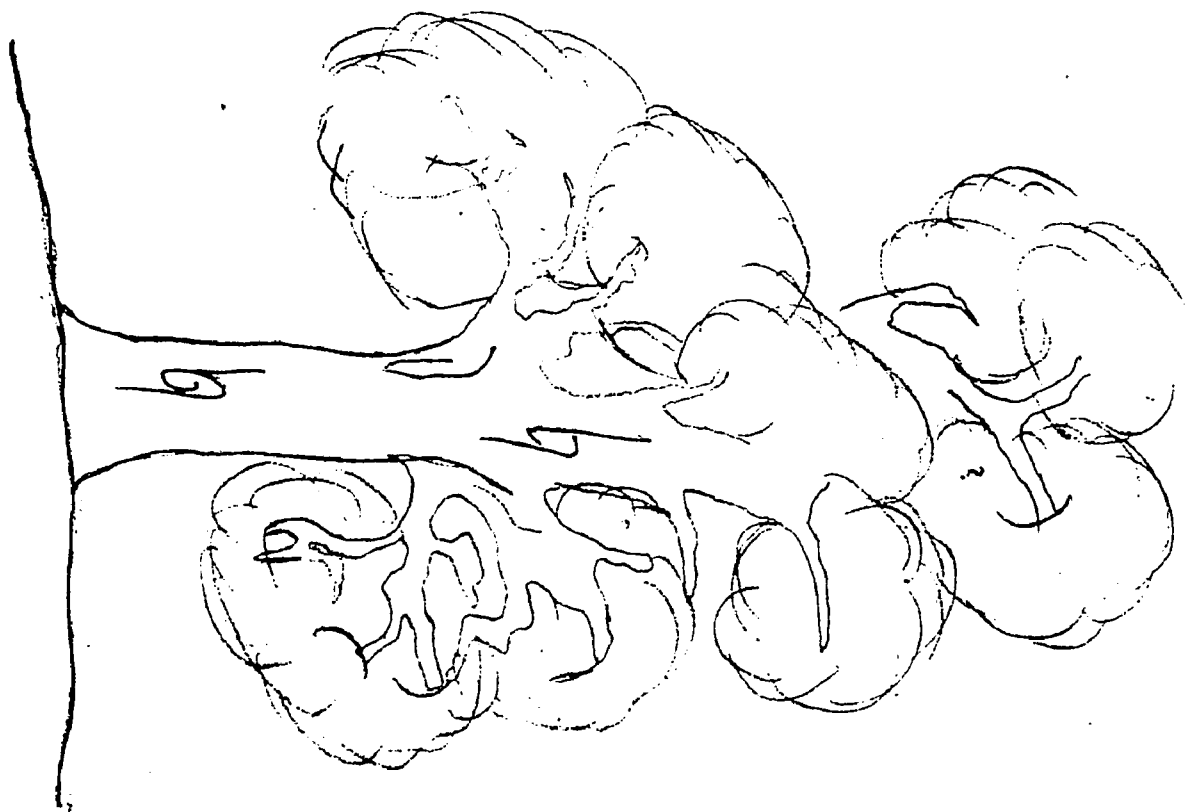


Figure 6.27. Drawing of Tree (Julio, age 18, 4, father assassinated)

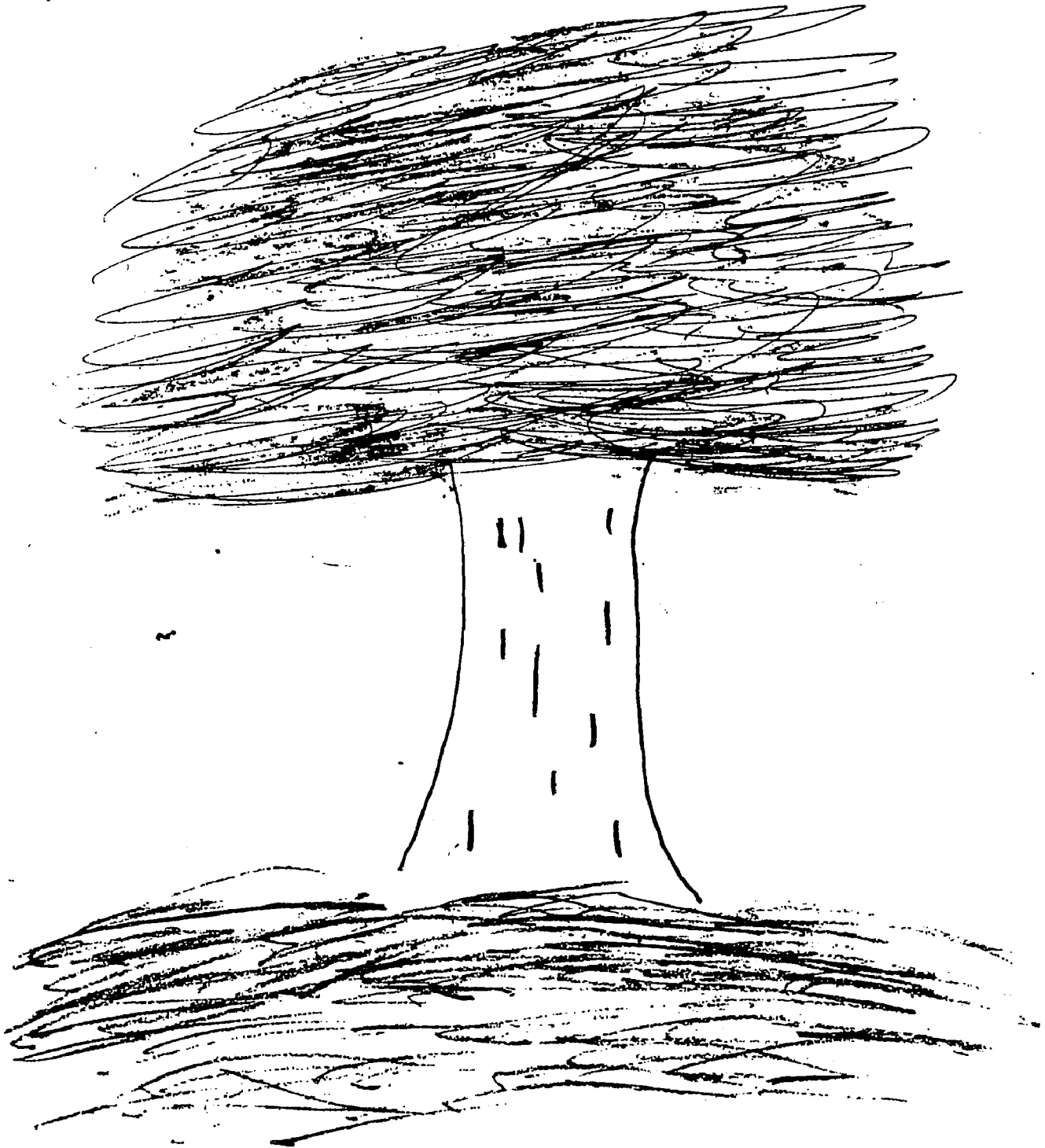


Figure 6.28. Drawing of Tree (Hernan, age 11, 8, father assassinated)

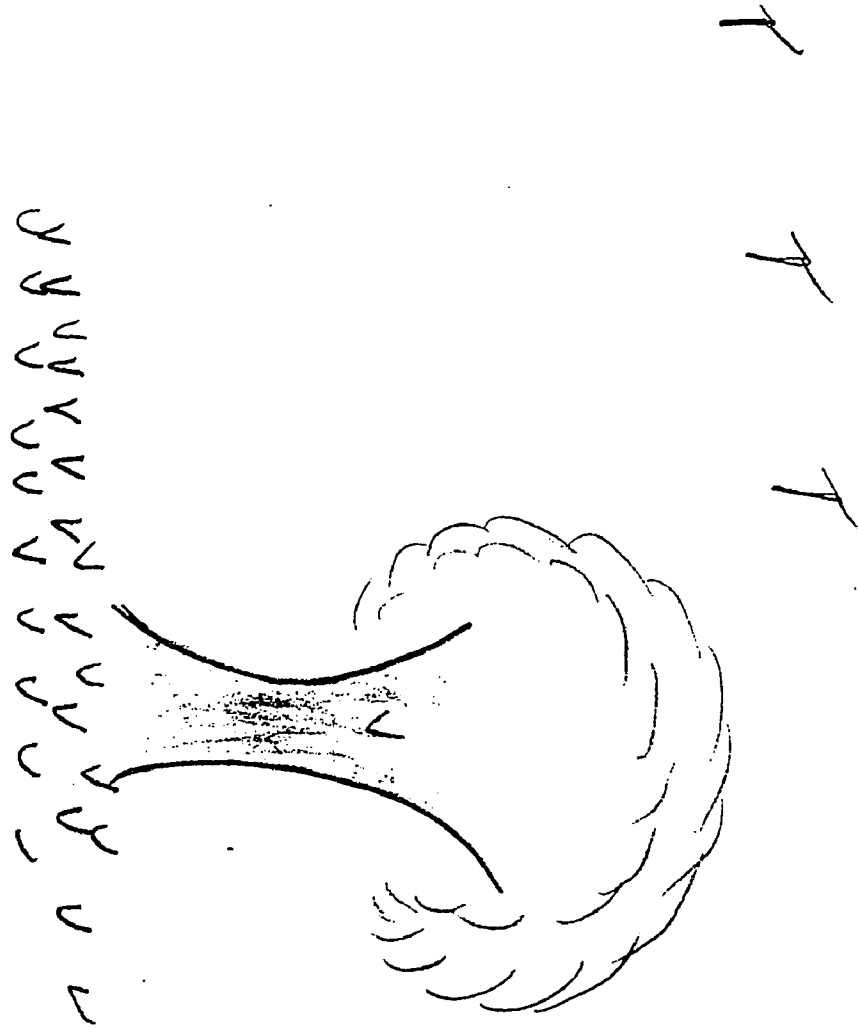


Figure 6.29. Drawing of Tree (Fabio, age 19, 9, father disappeared)

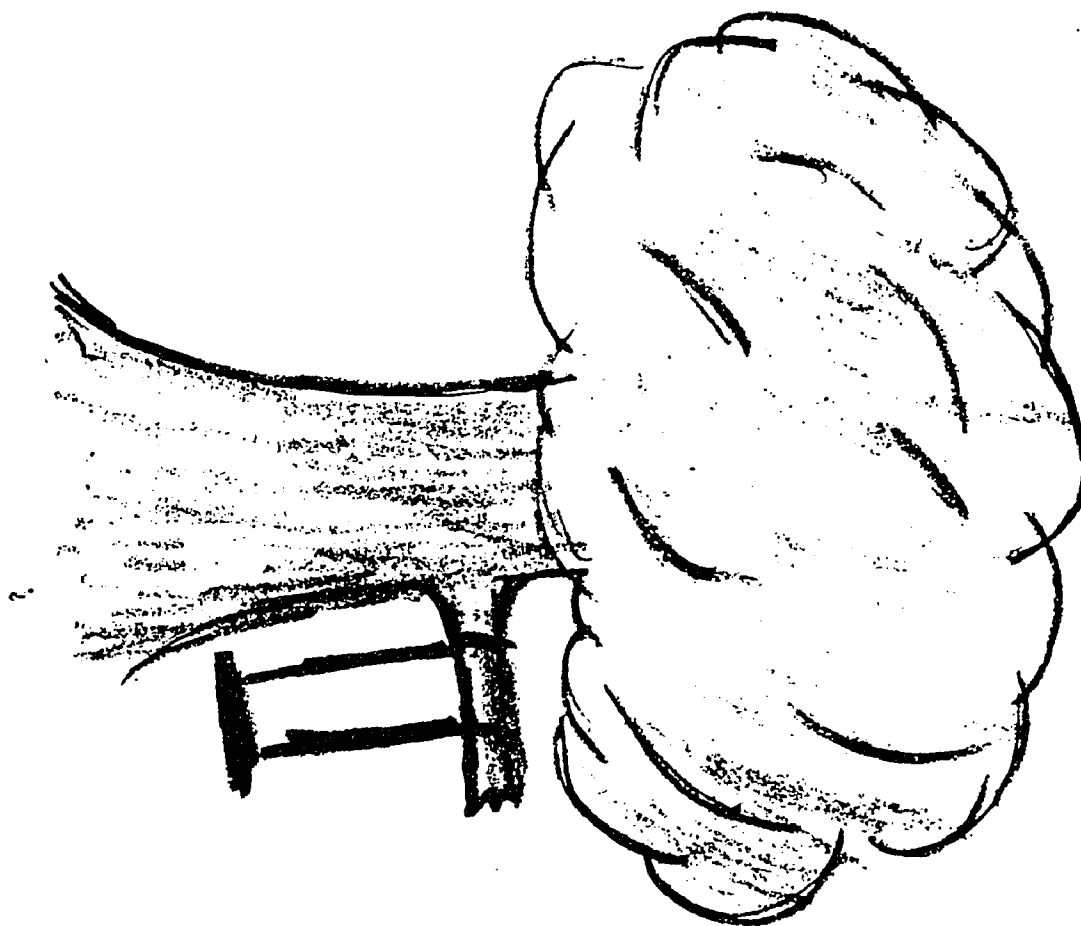


Figure 6.30. Drawing of Tree (Sebastián, age 15, 3. father disappeared)



Figure 6.31. Drawing of Tree (Andrea, age 15, 1, father disappeared)

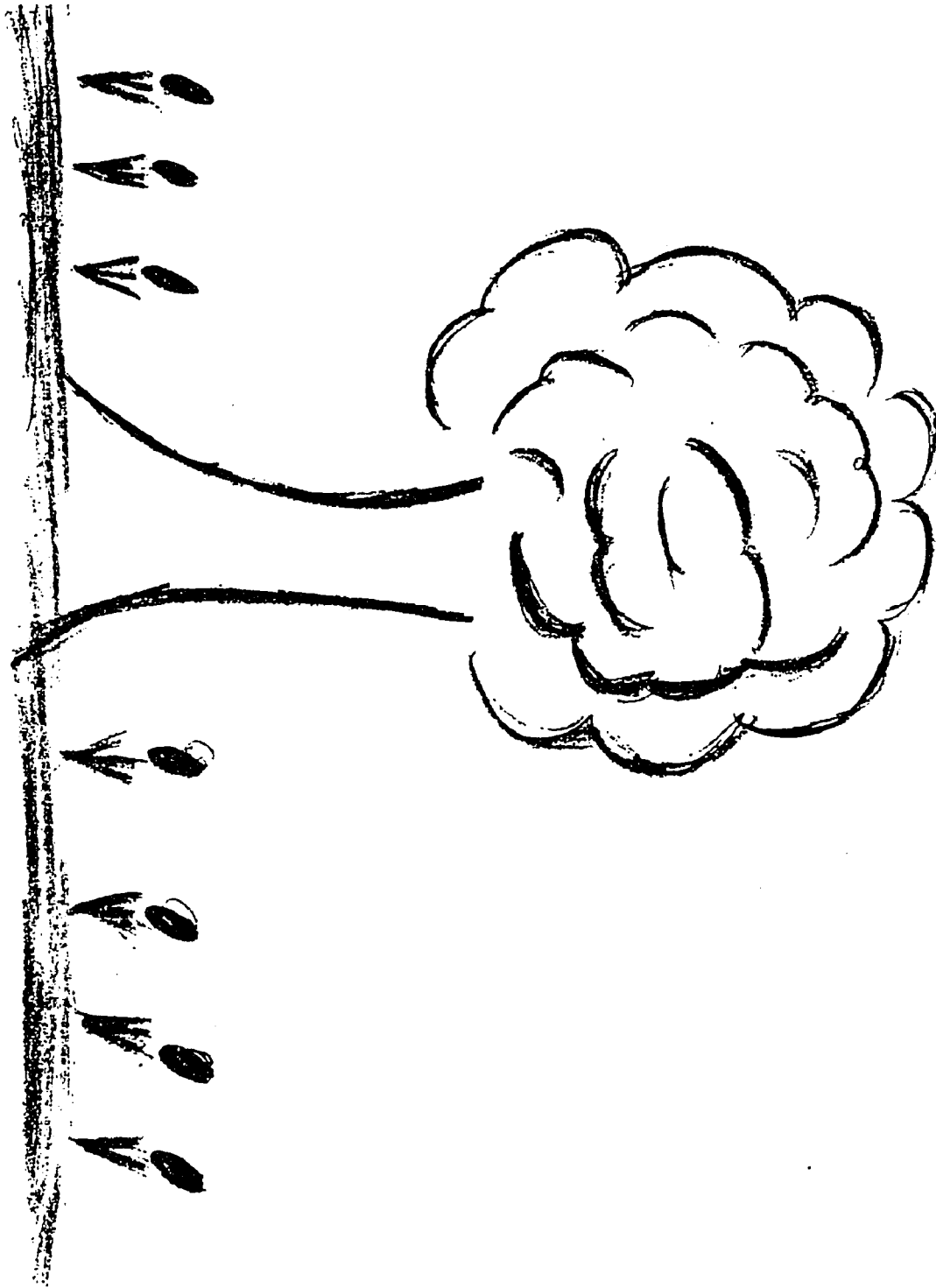


Figure 6.32. Drawing of Tree (Juan, age 13, 11, father disappeared)

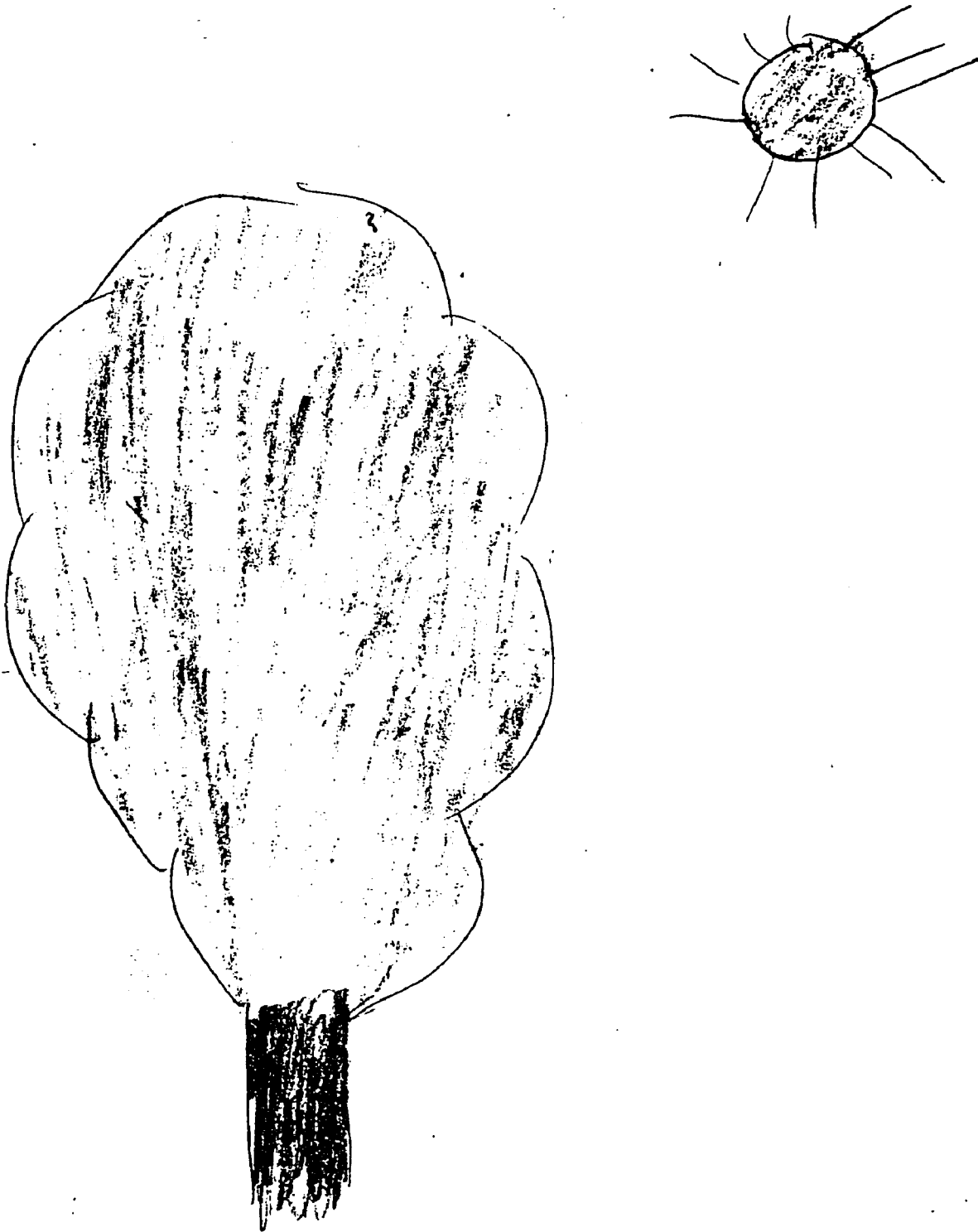


Figure 6.33. Drawing of Tree (Nora, age 18, 3, father assassinated)

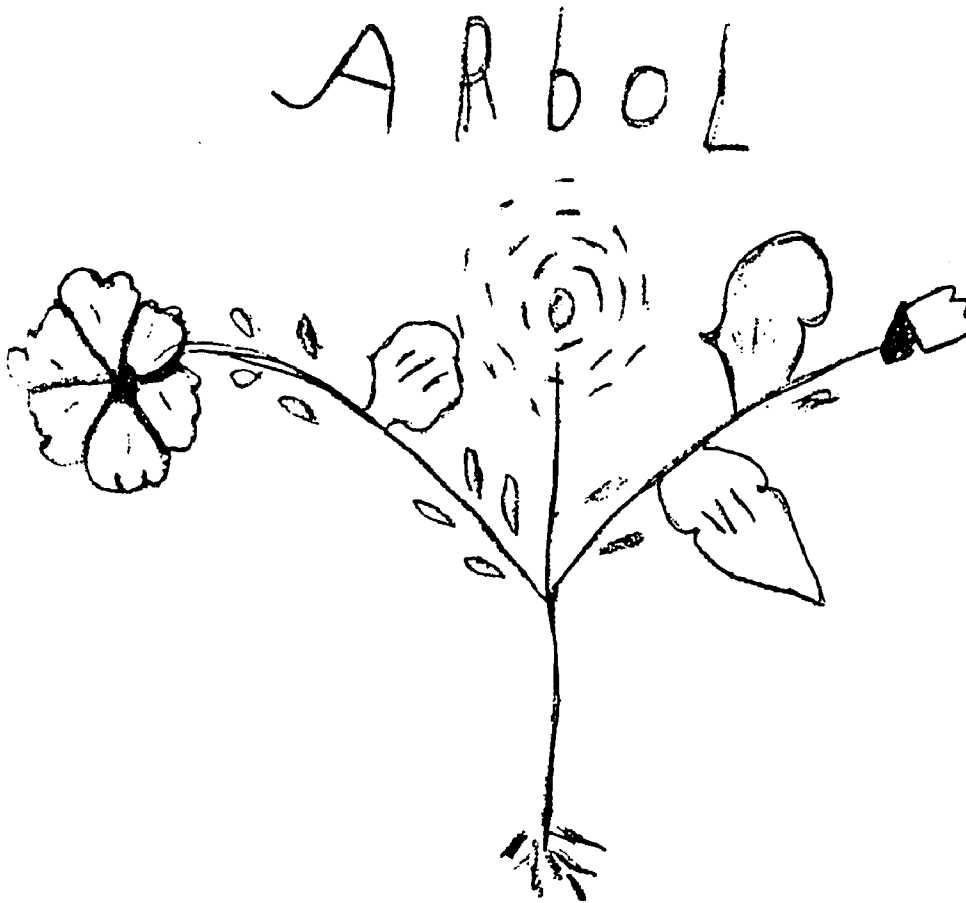
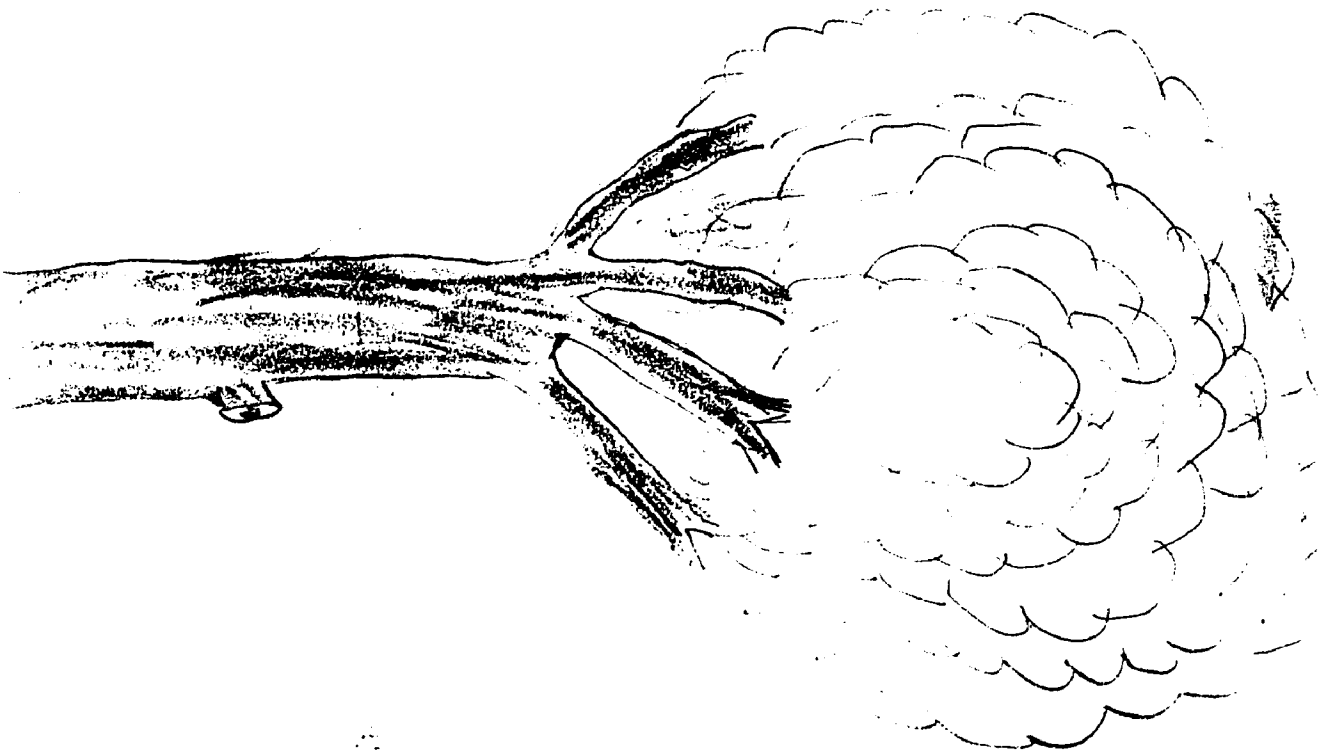


Figure 6.34. Drawing of Tree (Felipe, age 14, 8, father disappeared)



Figure 6.35. Drawing of Tree (Elvis, age 12, 4, father disappeared)



CHAPTER X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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