Urban Violence in São Paulo

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About the Author

Nancy Cardia (Ph.D, The London School of Economics and Political Science) is a Social Psychologist who has been working on the theme of continued gross human rights violations within a process of democratic consolidation. The focus of her research is on societal reactions to violence perpetrated both by agents of the state (police officers) and by society itself (vigilante/death squad groups or lynching mobs). Her primary research concern is the challenges posed to democracy in the context of growing violence and growing impunity combined with little or no trust in law enforcement agencies and in the judicial system. Previously she worked as a researcher in a multidisciplinary group that studied low-income housing alternatives from different perspectives: from decision making processes to problems of cooperation and competition in management of sanitation facilities in urban slums (favelas)—in particular with social movements in favelas—focusing on the differential success rate of the movements in maintaining membership participation. At present, she is the Research Coordinator at the Center for the Study of Violence at the University of São Paulo. The Center's research efforts have highlighted the role the criminal justice system plays in continued gross human rights violations. Their work focuses on the connections between the lack of access to socio-economic rights and human rights violations.

Executive Summary

Today homicide is the highest cause of death of young people in Brazil. Nancy Cardia, senior researcher at the University of São Paulo's Center for the Study of Violence, examines urban violence in São Paulo arguing that violence has become a major public health problem.

As in other countries, violence in Brazil is not homogeneously distributed throughout society. Violence is concentrated in certain cities and in specific areas of the cities. It victimizes young males living in the poorest areas of cities (the deprived areas at the peripheries of the cities which were opened up and made habitable by the people themselves) where the public services that now exist arrived precariously after people had settled the area.

Cardia argues that the growth of violence is also being indirectly encouraged by federal, state and municipal government budget cuts resulting in less resources to invest in law enforcement and in a modicum of social safety networks: health, education, public services, and violence prevention programs.

Cardia focuses on violence that is concentrated in the periphery of the Municipality of São Paulo, spilling over the borders to neighboring municipalities of the Metro area. Through an examination of the literature on the impact of violence on individuals and communities and a series of surveys taken in 1999, Cardia investigates why such deprived areas are the loci of this violence and how under stressful circumstances, these conditions can facilitate violence.

Urban Violence in São Paulo
by Nancy Cardia

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Background

In 1940 about a third of all Brazilians lived in urban areas (12 million people) and by 1991 that number had increased to 70 percent of the population (123 million people). This rapid speed of the process of urbanization is one of the causes of the poor quality of urban life which contributes to the growth of violence, particularly violent crime, throughout Brazil. Lack of political power and of political efficacy by the majority of the population is also the cause of poor urban environments and violence.

Rates of violent crime have been growing for the past three decades, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. Homicide in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (population: 16,792,329, data for 1997)[1] grew from 14.62 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 1981 to 33.92 cases in 1993. By 1996, the rate reached 55.77 homicides per 100,000 persons which is double the Brazilian national average of 24.76 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Table 1: Homicide rates in the Metropolitan areas of Brazil, Salla and Souza, 1998). This lethal violence is affecting more young people, in a process that bears similarity to other urban centers in the Americas. Today homicide is the highest cause of death of young people in Brazil. The risk of death by homicide for males between 15 and 24 years old is much higher than that of traffic accidents. In 1995, in the Municipality of São Paulo, 430 young people between 15-24 years of age died as a result of traffic accidents compared to 2,080 homicides in the same age group. As in other countries, violence in Brazil is not homogeneously distributed throughout society. Homicide rates have risen all over the country, but the growth seems to be concentrated in the Metropolitan Regions. In five years São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro's share of the country's total homicide rate has increased from 38 percent of the total (1991) to 42 percent of all the homicides in the country (1996).[2]

Violence is concentrated in certain cities and within cities in certain areas. It victimizes young males living in the poorest areas of cities (the deprived areas at the peripheries of the cities which were opened up and made habitable by the people themselves) where the public services that now exist arrived precariously after people had settled the area. This pattern seems to be the same for São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife, Vitoria and in most metropolitan regions in Brazil as well as in Cali, Bogota (Concha, 1998) or Caracas, Venezuela (Sanjuan, 1998).

TABLE 1. Homicides in the Metropolitan Areas of Brazil

	1991		1992		1993		1994		1995		1996(3)	
	Total	Rate per 100,000	Total	Rate per 100,000	Total	Rate per 100,000	Total	Rate per 100,000	Total	Rate per 100,000	Total	Rate per 100,000
Brasil(1)	30,750	21.04	28,435	19.06	30,610	20.20	32,603	21.21	37,128	23.83	38,894	24.76
Baixada Santista	346	28.35	327	26.34	328	25.98	342	26.67	393	30.20	506	38.65
Belém(2)	378	26.63	386	26.59	276	18.60	368	24.24	333	21.47	322	20.20
Belo Horizonte	471	13.71	437	12.48	466	13.07	421	11.67	584	16.02	618	16.25
Curitiba	283	13.77	300	14.29	358	16.69	379	17.54	431	19.81	475	19.58
Fortaleza	416	18.03	372	15.72	468	19.28	430	17.50	638	25.65	578	22.38
Natal	110	13.31	87	10.26	119	13.69	109	12.34	133	14.83	137	14.87
Porto Alegre	780	25.56	741	23.92	511	16.26	671	21.11	721	22.44	785	24.19
Recife	1,552	53.15	1,392	46.96	1,482	49.27	1,390	45.73	1,487	48.44	1,643	53.21
Rio de Janeiro	4,254	43.34	3,620	36.55	4,450	44.54	5,392	53.49	7,187	70.68	6,999	68.67
Salvador	43	1.72	230	8.99	802	30.63	967	36.38	733	27.18	971	35.84
Sãо Paulo	7,520	48.69	6,912	44.07	6,887	43.25	7,535	46.60	8,903	54.26	9,247	55.77
Vitória	563	52.87	496	45.30	722	64.18	813	71.10	804	69.21	828	70.03

Source: Datasus

(1) Total Brazilian population 146,136,910, 1991 Census, IBGE- *Funda ªo Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estat stica, Governo do Brasil.*

For 1995, the Brazilian population was estimated at 155,822,296. For 1996, the population was estimated at 157,070,163. Homicides- (Datasus- Ministry of Health)

(2) Data for the metropolitan areas,

Source: IBGE- *Funda ªo Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estat stica, Governo do Brasil.*

(3) In 1996, the Ministry of Health adopted the World Health Organization typology   homicides are now classified as deaths that resulted from aggressions.

Prepared by Souza, L.A. and Salla, F. (1998) Nucleo de Estudos da Violência.

Violence has become a major public health problem; an epidemic that annulled part of the gains in male life expectancy resulting from the drop in the infant mortality rate.[3] Decreases in life expectancy are a direct result of the growth of the homicide rate among young males.[4] Homicide has become the first cause of death for 15-24 year olds in major cities. In 1991, the homicide rate for this age group totaled 185.1 homicides per 100,000 in Rio de Janeiro and 170.7 per 100,000 in São Paulo. The numbers have continued to grow and in 1995 in São Paulo alone this ratio was 262.6 homicides per 100,000 for males between 15 and 24 years of age (Mello Jorge, 1998).

We can only speculate as to the reasons for the growth of violence and crime since studies exploring the causes are still in progress. Rates of crime and violence increased even as the population growth in São Paulo's Metropolitan region slowed down during the 1980s and the 1990s (from 1.88 percent per year during the 1980s to 1.39 percent per year during the 1990s). Political changes in Brazil may have played a role. During the last two decades, the country has gone from a dictatorship to a democracy while simultaneously experiencing a series of economic crises. The economic turmoil has had repercussions in the government's ability to invest in the prevention of violence or in its repression. Throughout this period economic inequalities also grew, fueled by inflation and by instability in the job market and consequently in income.

Democratic Consolidation, Economic Crises, Violence, and Crime

In the midst of democratic consolidation, people in Brazil, as in other Latin American countries, are experiencing a widening in the gap between expectations and reality in terms of income, access to social services, and in the democratic process itself. The growth of homicide is rooted in multiple causes and has various impacts. It is the result of a near absence of social safety nets and of investments in urban life that have continued to give priority to the needs of upper income groups. The impact of the growth of lethal violence, although not homogeneously distributed, nevertheless affects the inhabitants of the metropolitan areas as it reduces quality of life in general and the economic vitality of the city in particular.

Violence and the Economy

The job market is undergoing major changes as a result of the economic crisis and of the measures adopted to stabilize the economy. The Metropolitan region of São Paulo is simultaneously experiencing a de-industrialization process (concentrated in the Municipality of São Paulo) and a re-structuring of the industrial sector in other localities of the Metropolitan Region. Many jobs have been eliminated, especially in automobile manufacturing, while the new jobs that have been created demand more and newer skills. Unskilled workers, who traditionally found a position in the building industry, are faced with the prolonged slowdown of this sector (due to lack of financing for home mortgages).

Qualitative data from the Metropolitan region of São Paulo demonstrates the role the informal sector plays in the region's economy: 20.3 percent of the economically active population, representing about 1,800,000 people, were unemployed in the informal economy in April 1999.[5] Since Brazilian unemployment benefits are symbolic rather than substantial, it is no surprise that there has been considerable growth of the informal sector which consists of irregular jobs (temporary odd jobs) and of unregistered formal work (meaning no benefits- health, sick leave, retirement pension, or vacation).[6] The rise in the number of street vendors is indicative of the vitality of the informal sector.

While the informal job market fills the vacuum left by a retreating economy and structural unemployment, it comes at a cost. The connections between violence and the irregular or informal job market have been suggested in a study of unemployment, the job market, and violence in the United States (Crutchfield, 1997). In Brazil, public spaces in the commercial

areas of the cities have been taken over by street vendors; this, in turn, enhances violence since the intensely occupied sidewalks are very attractive to petty thieves. The illegality of the street vendors also makes them prone to extortion from city officials and from police officers. The presence of this informal trade is seen by local store owners as unfair competition; to counter the competition, some store owners hire people to "put pressure" on vendors to move out. Finally, the intense competition for room in such areas fosters the emergence of "mafia" type activities: powerful groups—in terms of their capacity to inflict harm—start to demand payments for the use of the space and for protection. Not surprisingly considerable social and interpersonal violence are present in such areas.

The need to find a means of economic survival combined with the absence of regulation by the state opens the gates for arbitrary actions from government officials (city workers and police officers) and from other interested parties. The street vendors are not the only example; the crisis in the public transport system coupled with the lack of jobs has led to a new industry of passenger transport vans. The Municipality has restricted the official number of these vans to 2,500; however, the number of actual vans in business is estimated to be between 11,000 and 30,000. It is a flourishing business met with all sorts of ambiguities from the public administration.

With less than 500 city officials to oversee all public transport (composed of buses, taxis and vans), the system can be said to be uncontrolled. Since there is some fear by van owners that illegal vehicles will be confiscated, a "cloning industry" has developed. Plates, license, and chassis numbers from legal vehicles are duplicated and used on illegal vehicles. Also, since the route and their itineraries are not well regulated by government, informal "controllers" appear with inspectors. All this is part of regular business except that in this case the "controllers" are self-appointed. Once these informal "controllers" become "legitimized" on the basis of their "power"—usually based on their physical strength—anyone that disagrees with the established rules does so at their own risk. The

potential for violence resides in the absence of regulation from the state leaving this activity in the hands of entrepreneurs who set rules and enforce them according to their will. This form of "regulation" is not based on consensus between interested parties; instead, it is grounded in physical strength and the ability to intimidate and coerce.

Costs of Economic Crises, Unemployment: Social Mobility and the Drug Trade

The costs of the loss of regular registered jobs and of the benefits associated with them still need to be assessed. What we can determine from many surveys and qualitative studies is that people's feelings of social mobility have changed. There is a growing perception that the reduction of the formal job market reduces social mobility. Furthermore, studies by Minayo e Souza (1993) and Zaluar (1990), two researchers from Rio de Janeiro, have found that the reduction of "legal opportunities in the job market has been associated with the growth of illegal opportunities" in the drug trade. It is known that unemployment hits youth harder and the Metropolitan areas of São Paulo are no exception. In 1994, in São Paulo, the unemployment rate for youth between 18 and 24 years was already at 20.1 percent; this may explain some of the appeal of the drug trade.[7]

Unemployment of the head of the household is also growing. This is a new phenomenon since in the past unemployment seemed to affect other members of the household more. This type of unemployment has more of an impact on violence since it is considered to effect patterns of family interaction, children's expectations, and family violence. The association between prolonged unemployment and psychological problems such as depression caused by low self-esteem is widely reported, as is the connection between low self-esteem and alcohol and drug intake. The producers of "pinga," a very popular and cheap beverage distilled from sugar cane, are reporting record sales of their product—whenever unemployment soars their sales escalate. The availability and demand for cheap alcohol[8] and cheap crack cocaine in São Paulo makes them attractive alternative sources of income for un-

skilled adults and for inexperienced youth trying to join the job market. Youth living in such areas are recruited by drug dealers to join in the trade because they have criminal impunity, they are cheaper labor than adults, and are more daring and willing to take risks. Also, since these parts of the city lack amenities most young people take to the streets just to be with friends and to "kill time." Their presence in the streets is less likely to call attention from the police or other authorities, since it is expected that they socialize in such settings.

Violence and the Criminal Justice System

The growth of violence is also being indirectly encouraged by federal, state, and municipal government budget cuts resulting in less resources to invest in law enforcement and in a modicum of social safety networks such as health, education, public services, and violence prevention programs. Even in the 1960s and 1970s, when Brazil had high rates of economic growth, the state had little resources (or political will) to control and oversee its law enforcement agents. However, during the economic crisis of the last two decades, this lack of control has escalated and resulted in more violence and corruption from police agents. People's mistrust of the police forces has been maintained, if not enhanced. The state has continued to fail, as it did during the dictatorship, to provide universal protection for all Brazilian citizens. It still cannot guarantee the security of the people (O'Donnell, 1993). The Brazilian government has also failed to prevent violence by encouraging economic growth, providing a social safety network, effective law enforcement, improving the criminal justice system, and reducing selective impunity.[9]

Budget cuts have affected the criminal system as a whole—the courts, the police, and public prosecutors. There are fewer personnel involved in crime fighting than the growth in crime and violence requires; wages are lower than what is necessary to prevent corruption, and there is a lack of available mate-

rial resources such as equipment, installations, etc. Problems are made worse by the lack of public accountability of the criminal system and by the extreme concentration of decision making power in the hands of top ranking officials. So far, reforms in the state have not tackled the performance of the criminal system or their managerial practices such as personnel or resource allocation. Major distortions in the system and performance problems justify the widespread mistrust citizens have of these institutions.[10]

To make matters worse, existing resources are unequally distributed within institutions and society. Inequities within institutions are exemplified by the distortions in wages and in the allocation of the resources. Within the military police, for instance, salaries at the top ranks can be 20 times that of the lower ranks. Within the judiciary, decision making about budget allocation is the prerogative of higher level judges with little public accountability. Individual fringe benefits such as the provision of cars for higher judges are continued while many judges still lack access to computers, electronic databases or the Internet, and have to pay out of their own pockets to have such tools. There are also gross variations of salaries between the judiciary, public prosecutors office, and the police forces. This promotes resentment between members of the three institutions since the Brazilian Constitution guarantees that people doing similar tasks should receive similar pay. The demand for what is called "salary equality," consumes much of their energies.

Finally, resources are not distributed across the Metropolitan region according to need but according to the political prowess of area representatives. Since 1991, it has been well known that violent crime is concentrated in certain regions of the Metro area; yet despite these reports, these areas continue to be the least policed.[11] In 1996, a study revealed that downtown São Paulo had one police officer per every 250 inhabitants and one police car per 2,083 inhabitants.[12] Meanwhile in the most violent areas of the periphery, the ratios were one police officer per 1,429 inhabit-

ants and one police car per 10,000 inhabitants. Despite the uproar that the study provoked, in 1998, new data showed very little change: the center city had one police officer for every 187 inhabitant and the periphery as little as one police officer for 1,226 persons.

The poor performance of the criminal justice system provides two incentives for the perpetuation of violence:

> a) Research has shown that when people feel unprotected and fearful for their lives they resort to private means to protect themselves. People with the means to do so will rely on the private security market to protect their homes. It is estimated (The World Bank, 1997) that 10 percent of the Brazilian GNP is spent on private security including insurance, security gadgets (alarms, TV cameras, sensors) armored cars, armed private guards, etc. This leads to the increased presence of arms in Brazilian society. One of the major (Taurus) arms manufacturers of Brazil reported record sales in 1998 in the formal/legal market. However, there is very little information about the illegal arms market.[13] What seems to be a pattern is that growing insecurity and fear appear to lead people to adopt self-defense measures that could result in increased violence. It is also known that many delinquents gain access to legal arms when they rob private guards or break into houses where arms are kept.

> b) In poor communities, the state's incapacity or unwillingness to provide law enforcement and protection could be fostering the adoption of mechanisms of self-protection and the survival and reproduction of elements of a culture of violence based on the maintenance of honor, self-respect, and self-image (Cohen, 1994). People are encouraged to arm themselves which in turn heightens the chances that arms will be used, particularly when drugs and alcohol are involved. In sum, the greater the number of arms available, the greater the likelihood they will be used.

Breaking the cycle of violence requires an in-depth understanding of the factors contributing to it and a multi-dimensional approach. In contrast to violence, infant mortality can be reduced by improving sanitation, educating mothers, and carrying out national inoculation campaigns. These measures have the advantage of being measures that once adopted produce lasting effects; the results are quickly assessed and evaluated and there is little risk that they will not work. Moreover, such measures demand little behavioral change and much less change has to be sustained over time. Violence is different; it has multiple causes. It is somehow related to conditions of life, but the causalities are more complex, far less studied, and much less agreed upon than are the causes of infant mortality. Lack of access to social and economic rights seems to enhance violence, but we still have not established the dynamics of this relationship. Violence prevention, in particular, preventing the violence that victimizes the young poor, demands a set of articulated actions which necessitate certain re-allotment of resources in society. These type of actions are often controversial since they contribute to the redistribution of power. Moreover, these are measures that need to be implemented over time.

Inequality in the Distribution of Violence

Violence against people and homicides are concentrated in the periphery of the Municipality of São Paulo, spilling over the borders to neighboring municipalities of the Metro area. Why are such deprived areas the loci of this violence? These areas differ in many ways from the inner cities in North America. They are the result not of urban decay, but of near total absence of state presence. They were rural areas that were slowly occupied as the Municipality of São Paulo grew and new housing was needed. Occupation took place during the 1960s and 1970s when the economy was growing at 10 percent a year and the metropolitan area was importing labor from elsewhere. Private land developers supplied low-income families with affordable land plots—some were legally subdivided and others were not. New families or migrants moved in settlements serviced only by some form of public transport. Water, electricity, and sewage networks arrived much later. In the 1980s, the areas that had been left by land developers for collective use (since they were commercially less attractive—the very steep hills or the banks of rivers and streams which were prone to flooding) were taken over by people who were unable to pay rent or had been evicted from their homes in more central areas due to large public works projects. The density of these periphery neighborhoods grew, bringing yet another set of problems. Whereas before people complained mostly of the hardships they endured due to the lack of services, they now also had to endure the growing competition for whatever was there. Finally, as the areas became congested, residents also had to cope with greater violence.

It cannot be said that these are deteriorated areas; they are deprived areas. The history of these communities in São Paulo, Rio, and the rest of Latin America are mostly histories of self-help, which resulted in areas that were occupied at the whim of the unregulated "market," without compliance to regulations. When the state acknowledged the existence of such settlements it did so in a punitive way, through fines, threats of demolition, or through corrupt actions by city workers. The maintenance of some degree of illegality functioned to reduce collective actions within these communities. The illegality of buildings and/or the land occupied encouraged the establishment of a sort of pecking order. People started categorizing the occupiers in terms of perceived differences in the legitimacy of the land occupation. At the top of the scale were the legally entitled land owners of legal land allotments and at the bottom, the favelados—the slum dwellers. While a social order developed in the peripheries, outsiders perceived them as homogeneous and rejected and discriminated against the entire group. Living in the periphery, especially in the most violent areas, set the residents apart and placed them under suspicion. Time, however, has made the distinctions between legal and illegal communities much less visible. As illegal settlers invested in their houses and timber shacks were rebuilt in cinder blocks or bricks, they came to resemble the houses in the legal land developments.

Ingrained in the history of most peripheral areas are episodes of exploitation of dwellers by other dwellers. For instance, those who had access to water or electricity could become "informal suppliers" of utilities charging very high rates to do so.[14] This experience of exploitation by people like themselves produces lasting ill feelings and is yet another obstacle for cohesion. People are taught over and over again that individual solutions ("exit") are better than collective action ("voice"), (Hirschman, 1970). This is a powerful obstacle for the perception of common problems and for a unified action; it hinders the development of collective identities and it fosters divisiveness in communities increasing the potential for social conflicts. Under stressful circumstances, these conditions can facilitate violence.

While on the one hand there is a culture of distrust, whatever gains have been made, have been as a result of community action. Despite the obstacles to community development in the early 1980s, strong social movements for health and for public services man-

aged to unite the populations and resulted in improvements in access to water and electricity. Bringing these services to areas after they were occupied, and in some instances densely so, presented many technical challenges and even the removal of some houses. As a result, the quality of the services is still not totally satisfactory. Water is available, but provision in the summer—when the demand is the greatest—is less regular. The same problem happens with electricity. It can be said that even in terms of access to utilities, the center of the city is better serviced and that when areas in the periphery compete with the central areas, not surprisingly, they lose. This is a serious problem since nowadays more and more people are being forced into the informal labor market meaning that they often work from home and need to be easily reached by potential customers in their residences. A secure provision of water, electricity, and access to communications (i.e. telephones, cell phones, and pagers) may be an essential part of business development and income generation (Toledo Silva, 1999).

Today, thirty or forty years after they started being occupied, many of the periphery areas still lack accessible roads and street lighting, as well as schools, day care centers, health centers, police services, etc. More expensive infrastructure provision such as paving streets, building sewerage networks and stations for sewerage treatment, or public works to stop hills from sliding down or containing floods, are still not available. This means that they remain high-risk areas subject to natural disaster as well as manmade risks.

Each deficiency in turn leads to a series of others. Without accessible roads, refuse collection is random, cooking gas is not brought in homes, emergency services (ambulances, police, fire brigade) cannot reach people, deliveries are not made, and public transport is distant. If refuse is not regularly collected, it is disposed of in any public space attracting rats or clogging up streams so that when the rains come the areas are more prone to flooding. If, in addition, the area acquires the reputation of being violent, service pro-

viders discriminate against inhabitants. Postal services are cut once postmen are robbed, department stores refuse to deliver goods, public opinion polling services and even the Census Bureau avoid working in the areas. [15]

The quality of life, which was poor when the settlements were first created, remains poor after the areas have consolidated for other reasons. The pressure for public services grows while the capacity (or willingness) of the public sector to provide is reduced. This means that there is more competition and friction within communities. For instance, when communities experience water rationing and when water is finally returned to the pipes, if the area is hilly, people living at the bottom of the hill will be served first. Those at the top will have to wait for the water reservoir of the houses at the bottom to be filled before the water can reach the top. In the midst of this, if people at the bottom start washing their cars,

those who are waiting for water service complain. This breeds resentment and anger between people and encourages destructive competition. People tend to turn to what they identify as the immediate target of their anger: their neighbors, not the water company or the city authorities.

Literature on violence shows that fast population growth is one of the variables associated with greater violence as it causes some disruption in the structure of the community. The distribution of violence in São Paulo seems to confirm this link between the rate of population growth and the occurrences of violence. Violence, in São Paulo, as expressed by homicide rates, is greater in the Metropolitan area where the population is growing at a much faster rate than the national average. The rate of growth results not only from population growth, but also from internal dislocations moving new people to the area. People coming from outside the community are people no one knows, possibly with different values and attitudes, which can contribute to conflict in a sensitive area.

As the density of the area increases so does the number of dwellings; resulting in overcrowding and a lack of privacy or intimacy. Overcrowding is a stress factor as are other characteristics of the houses, namely poor ventilation and lighting. Scarce space results in many shared functions. Houses and plots are overcrowded because often newly formed families lack the means to pay rent or a mortgage so the only option left is to stay with their relatives. [16] If there is room in the plot of land, a new abode is built or a new floor is added or else the original house is subdivided. Plots rapidly fill in with new precarious dwellings eliminating open areas.[17] Soon activities such as children playing or washing clothes have to be done in public or semi-collective spaces. Leisure and functional activities become public and there is competition for space. Clothes are hung to dry in passages and alleys, forcing pedestrians to bend over or pass through them and leaving them exposed to theft. Children play amidst the traffic of cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

There seems to be some irony in the naming of the most established parts of the periphery "garden so and so." There are few places that are further from gardens than these places, whether in terms of the presence of greenery or green areas or in the sense of being esthetically pleasing. Quite the contrary, these areas are visually very unattractive. Buildings are covered in graffiti, garbage is thrown anywhere, and cars that were destroyed in accidents are left to rot on the side of the roads, giving a derelict feeling to the areas. There are no proper sidewalks, even on major roadways. This means that pedestrians have to compete with passing traffic on major roads, endangering their lives. Walking or waiting for a bus in such places is very unpleasant. The heavy smell of fumes from trucks and buses, and the noise from engines negotiating the steep hills all contribute to stress as do the lack of parks, playground, and green areas—amenities that make life a little easier.

The lack of recreational facilities is a major problem. Investors do not come to such areas to build cinemas, theaters, clubs, or ballrooms. Even fast food restaurants do not locate in these areas. There are no amusement parks, public parks or city gardens; even supermarkets are scarce. Mothers have nowhere to take their children and youngsters lack safe places to be with their friends to play ball, gossip, or gather. Except for informal bars, precariously serving beer or "pinga" and equipped with a small pool table, boredom prevails. Without public gardens or, trees on the streets, the environment seems dry and harsh. Here we ask the critical questions: Does living in this type of esthetically unpleasant environment affect residents self-esteem and sense of self worth? Unfortunately, the answer seems to be, yes. Is it possible to feel valued by society living in such neglected, ugly areas? Again, unfortunately, the answers seems to be, no.

Such areas are not very attractive to civil servants who rarely volunteer to work there and who, once appointed, try to get transferred as soon as possible. For many civil servants, being appointed as a teacher, doctor, social assistant, or police officer in the peripheries is interpreted as a sort of punishment. Many people will resort to using political connections to be relocated as soon as possible. Since the periphery areas are considered undesirable places to work and there are no incentives to stay and provide quality services, there is high turnover among civil servants. This, in turn, means that commitment to the members of the community and the emergence of some form of mediation between the public and the administration (which can be used as a type of power brokerage) does not happen. As a result, not only are public services lacking in quantity, but in quality as well. Their minimal commitment to the people they work for means that they do not become "voices" for them. On the contrary, they often reinforce existing prejudices by fostering competition within the area and the perception that some citizens are more deserving and more

entitled than others. However, this is not always the case. Civil servants that do not follow this description and have a commitment to their constituents can make a tremendous difference and start what can amount to a small revolution. They possess a key element that the dwellers do not have: information about alternatives and how to obtain access to services and opportunities.

To the people in the peripheries, the government means the police, schools, doctors and city officials. Law enforcement agents, in particular, seem quite oblivious to the role they play in socializing citizens in their rights and duties. More often than not, their actions, the way they respond or—more often—fail to respond to people's calls, reinforce a community's sense of powerlessness and unworthiness. At no time is this better expressed than when there is a murder in one of these areas. It is common for the police to take a long time to reach the scene of the crime and much more time for the coroner's office to arrive and collect the corpse. The people who witness the events interpret this inaction by the authorities as the police not caring enough to investigate. As a result, bodies—often exposed—are left for hours in public spaces. Children witness this as do adults, and killings may become "events." Violence is then made trivial and "normal," increasing people's powerlessness as well as undermining their self-esteem and whatever beliefs they may have had about the role of the state in providing security and ensuring their physical well-being.

The greater the violence and fear, the less residents are satisfied with the neighborhood, the less they feel as though they belong to the community, and the less they feel the urge to cooperate. Fear reduces communication and contact between people. It encourages people to avoid places and routes and adopt defense mechanisms that further impoverish collective life. Fear reinforces stereotypes and prejudices, especially against strangers and youngsters. The less con-

tact there is between people and the more suspicion that exists, the smaller the probability that social capital will be developed (Putnam, 1994).

Within violent areas, young people will have different strategies for survival and adaptation. By the nature of their stage of emotional development—in order to form an identity—young people need to be with their social group. Violence does not eliminate this need. On the contrary, being part of a group may be a survival strategy—a form of defense against violence. The problem is that the same group that gives them the feeling of security may be interpreted by outsiders to the group as meaning a "gang" with all its negative connotations and as such is seen as a threat (Sanjuan, 1998). There is a need for more research on youth behavior and strategies for survival in violent areas.

One added consequence of violence is the devaluation of people's assets. Violent areas are less commercially attractive, thus most people simply cannot sell their homes and move out (Taylor, 1995). More successful families are able to move away and this further deprives the community of examples of upward mobility, impoverishing young people of successful role models. Focusing in on their domestic life is one way of "fleeing" the situation, another is to re-conceptualize violence as "a normal fact of life" (Mithe, 1995).

What we know so far about the USA, Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela is that young people are dying in areas where there are few legitimate employment opportunities. The public education system fails to motivate, inform, train and, in sum, educate and qualify youngsters for the labor market. Furthermore, the likelihood of violence is greater when there is less protection from the state and where more people are left to protect themselves. If the poor areas in the Metropolitan area of São Paulo differ from the decayed or decaying inner cities in North America, the consequences when violence is present and the effects on people do not seem to differ.

Social Exclusion and Urban Violence:
The Case of Jardim Angela

Lack of socio-economic rights seems to overlap with violence. The data available suggests that violence grows as deprivation increases and, moreover, as access to legal opportunities decreases. The picture described above portrays, to a large degree, the reality of Jardim Angela, a district located in the Southwest of the Municipality of São Paulo. By 1994, Jardim Angela had the highest homicide rate among youths between the ages of 15-24. In the Municipality of São Paulo there are 47 homicides per 100 thousand; Jardim Angela represented the highest rate of risk to homicide (Mapa de Risco). Most of the area is officially rated as a water source area and as such it should not have been occupied at all. Both state and city officials failed to enforce this legislation and by 1996 the population of this district totaled 221,424 people (1996, IBGE-Fundaçá Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística). This district also presents one of the highest ratios of population growth during the 1990s growing at 4.4 percent a year, eleven times the average ratio for the Municipal area (0.4 percent). By 1996, it had 149.2 inhabitants per hectare which was one of the highest ratios of people per abode and per room (4.24 and 2.81 respectively) in the Municipality.

In addition to high density and overcrowding, the infrastructure in Jardim Angela is also very poor. Despite the fact that this district sits in the middle of a major water source area for the metropolitan region (responsible for one-fifth of the water supply), only 55 percent of the houses are connected to the sewerage system; this is in contrast to the average of 87 percent water coverage in the municipality. The percentage of precarious dwellings is twice (18 percent) that of the average for the city (7.7 percent).[18]

If infrastructure is scarce, so are amenities and places for recreation. A survey done by a pool of community organizations identified the need for:[19]

    a) 73 day care centers for infants (there are at present 16)

      b) 10 kindergartens (there are 10)

      c) 7 health centers (there are 7)

They have also identified the need for recreation facilities: soccer, and volleyball, and basketball fields. Only 4.5 percent of the youngsters in the area have access to a youth center. There are no public libraries, no children's reading facilities, and there is only one proper supermarket to serve this population. Unfortunately, this picture of deprivation is not exclusive of Jardim Angela, but it is repeated with slight changes in other peripheral communities.

The illiteracy rate of the heads of the household is twice the average for the city; not surprisingly there are many lower income families and unemployed people in this area. Since the region is a water source area, there are also limits on income-generating activities because environmental protection laws prohibit industrial installations and severely restrict housing. As a result there are very few job opportunities for the dwellers.[20]

The Impact of Exposure to Violence:
The Neighborhood

What impact does violence have on people's lives? What does it mean to people to be exposed to this high number of homicides and to live in a state of fear of being victimized? Are high exposure and fear fostering an acceptance of violence as a legitimate means to solve conflict that breads a culture of violence? In order to investigate the consequences of living with violence, a series of research projects have been carried out by the Center for the Study of Violence at the University of São Paulo. Two of such research projects helped us further our understanding of the consequences of living with violence and fear.

In a series of 140 in-depth interviews with people living in 28 areas of the periphery of the Metro Area by the Center for the Study of Violence, we asked our interviewees to tell us about the history of their settlement.[21] All the early settlers referred to the initial difficulties of moving to a place without services. Violence is, at present, the major problem. Although, while the area was being developed, settlers suffered from the absence of infrastructure, at least, they claim,

they were not frightened. The tale they tell is of a violence that differs from what they were used to because it is more ruthless. They claim that people and the police forces are crueler. Younger interviewees differ from their elders in that the history of their communities is told through episodes of violence. They also feel that people are different and that interpersonal contact is strained by the way people relate to each other. The words used to describe the people in their communities are "odd, strange, rude, brutal, and tough." This description conveys the feeling of the lack of trust between people; a feeling that is corroborated by their reports of limiting trust to family members or friends from early on. Young and old differ in how they describe those who deviate. The young generation, having known the ones "who got into trouble" from early on, do not blame them for their fate. Often they shared their infancy, childhood, and adolescence, and they witnessed the problems piling up. Many times when deaths occurred these were foretold and they pitied the victims. Unlike their elders, youngsters also do not blame the drug dealers for all their wrongdoings. The world is more complex in their experience, and blame should be shared by families and the police as well. The older generations interpreted the fact that young people—whom they had known since birth—steal from neighbors and offer the goods to other neighbors as an indicator of a total breakdown in moral imperatives. For the younger generations, theft is just a sign of desperation from drug addicts trying (often in vain) to keep their creditors at bay. Despite their different perceptions, the old and the young agree that the police have grown corrupt, violent, and threatening to them.

The literature on violence shows that it affects different age groups differently and that living in high-risk areas increases the chances of victimization (Sampson and Laub, 1994). Exposure and victimization also appear to increase the risk that young people will become perpetrators of crime and violence.[22] The majority of youngsters are resilient to it, but studies show that most offenders suffered or wit-

nessed violence in the past.[23] Families and communities play key roles in the development of resilience (Rountree and Land, 1996).

Greater exposure to violence affects school performance provoking post-traumatic syndrome; children exposed to constant stress have been linked to violence within schools. Studies (Lorion and Saltzman, 1993) in the U.S. showed that children from violent neighborhoods were so frightened that they sometimes hid in their schools to avoid going home at the end of the day. Similar facts were observed in São Paulo in another recent study by NEV/USP (Núcleo de Estudos da Violência, Universidade de São Paulo, Universidade de São Paulo).[24] The emotional development of the children is also affected: they are more irritable, anxious, less adventuresome, and lack self-confidence (Osofsky, 1995). Again studies show that families play a key role in moderating the effects of the exposure to violence (Richters and Martinez, 1993).

A survey from March-April 1999 of ten state capitals in Brazil conducted by the Center for the Study of Violence assessed respondents' beliefs, attitudes, behavior towards violence, and exposure to violence.[25] As can be seen from the table below, the data for São Paulo shows that similar to results obtained in the U.S., violence seems to occur in the neighborhood much more frequently than near the workplace or school. [26]

Overall, verbal assault and threats to a relative were the most frequent form of violence followed by theft and robbery. For the younger group, being offered drugs, being asked to find drugs or tell where they could be found was common. In general, the younger group seem more exposed to the types of violence listed than older groups. Verbal assaults, seem trivial enough, but it is documented that such assaults can escalate to physical violence when they become more abusive, especially when people are experiencing other forms of stressful events as seems to be the case with the respondents.[27] Moreover, when people's safety relies on their reputation rather than on the efficiency of public security (i.e. the effectiveness of law enforcement

Table 2- Victimization

Different things can happen to people. In the last 12 months did you experience any of the following in your neighborhood?

Number of Respondents: 500
Location: Sª o Paulo

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
		Percent Answering Yes			
Verbal assault	20	30	19	19	11
A relative had his/her life threatened	10	19	9	7	3
Gun threats forced you to surrender property	7	8	7	6	8
Drugs were offered to you	7	17	5	6	0
Physical assault	4	8	4	2	1
You felt the need to be armed	4	8	2	6	0
A relative was murdered.	4	8	4	2	1
Knife threats forced you to surrender property	3	4	3	2	2
You moved to another residence for fear of violence	3	4	4	2	1
Assault or mistreatment by a police officer	3	8	2	1	0
You were asked to find drugs	3	12	2	1	0
A relative was hurt by a knife or fire arm	3	7	5	1	1
You were extorted by a police officer	2	3	4	1	1
A relative was kidnapped	1	1	1	0	1
You were hurt by a fire arm	0	2	0	0	0

Source: *Nœcleo de Estudos da ViolŒEcia (Center for the Study of Violence)-Universidade de Sª o Paulo (University of Sª o Paulo), 1999.*

agents), being insulted can easily become a life-threatening situation if it is interpreted as a challenge. If the offended party does not repair the damage he/she may be perceived as weak—someone to be "messed with." People may react violently to insults in order to preempt further threats.

The younger group also differs from their elders in that they report having experienced more abuse from the police, more physical violence, and thus it is not surprising that they felt a greater need to be armed. All these experiences enhance their vulnerability. Data from our open-ended interviews reiterate the survey data. Most young people (and their elders as well)

report abuses and violence when stopped by the police conducting searches. These searches are felt to be arbitrary and marked by prejudices. Interviewees specifically report that the police will search workers coming home from work while ignoring people smoking marijuana. Black youngsters also report that they are searched and humiliated in front of their peers more often than their white counterparts.

Exposure, defined in terms of witnessing events, was also investigated and the answers given (shown in Table 3) indicate that the use and trade of drugs was the most common illegal activity witnessed by all age groups, but by young people more frequently. This

exposure to the consumption and trade of drugs is an indicator of the availability of drugs in our society. The data also indicates that youngsters are more alert to the signs and symbols involved in such transactions than the adult population. Young people have also been more exposed (in the previous 12 months) to violent criminal events. More often than other age groups, they have witnessed people being shot and murdered, robbed, and arrested. They also witnessed more episodes of interpersonal violence, with varying degrees of seriousness, such as people pulling guns on each other or being assaulted. Part of this may be the result of greater use of public space by younger people which in turn means that they are more likely to witness incidents when they take place.

This intensity of exposure is not unique to São Paulo or to Brazil. Existing studies in the U.S. reveal that children and adolescents in violent areas are heavily exposed to violence (Shakoor and Chalmers, 1991).[28] A recent survey, of students in three schools in Rio de Janeiro, showed that 42 percent had witnessed someone being shot or knifed, 25 percent had witnessed a person being robbed, 18.6 percent had had a friend or relative threatened at gunpoint; 10.2 percent had had a relative seriously injured; 15.3 percent had been robbed; 8.4 percent had a relative who was murdered; 5.1 percent had a relative kidnapped and 5 percent had a school colleague murdered.[29] More shocking is the data on their contact with the police; 15 percent had been mistreated by the police and 12 percent had been extorted by the police.[30]

Table 3- Witnessing Violent Events

And in the past 12 months did you or did you not witness anyone :

Number of Respondents: 500
Location: São Paulo

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
Percent answering yes					
Smoking marijuana/using drugs	52	72	55	49	29
Buying/selling drugs	32	46	34	31	17
Being assaulted	30	46	35	22	17
Being robbed	22	26	23	19	19
Being arrested	21	27	23	22	12
Pull a gun on another person	19	29	23	19	5
Have his/her house broken into	17	23	15	16	14
Being shot	11	16	13	13	3
Being murdered	11	14	13	11	5
Who had been murdered	8	13	8	9	4
Being knifed	6	7	9	4	5
Being kidnapped	1	3	1	1	2

Source: *Núcleo de Estudos da Violência (Center for the Study of Violence)- Universidade de São Paulo (University of São Paulo), 1999.*

Table 4- Friends' Exposure to Violence

"A close friend witnessed someone:"

Number of Respondents: 500
Location: Sª o Paulo

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
Percent Answering Yes					
Being robbed	22	24	25	21	19
Having one s house broken into	14	16	15	14	10
Being shot	8	13	6	9	4
Being assaulted	7	12	4	8	4
Being murdered	7	13	9	4	4
Who was killed	7	10	6	6	5
Pulling a gun on another person	6	8	6	7	2
Smoking marijuana/consuming drugs	4	7	2	4	4
Buying selling drugs	4	9	3	1	1
Being arrested	4	8	4	4	0
Being knifed	4	9	1	4	1
Being kidnapped	3	8	2	1	1

Source: *Noœleo de Estudos da ViolŒcia (Center for the Study of Violence)- Universidade de Sª o Paulo (University of Sª o Paulo), 1999.*

Exposure to violence can also be measured in terms of hearing about other people's experiences. Respondents that did not witness such events were asked about whether any of their close friends had experienced any of the situations listed in the questionnaire. Those who did, reported experiences very similar to that of people who witnessed it first hand. So whether the exposure is direct or indirect, the results are similar. Again the younger groups seems to be the most exposed to violence, be it criminal or interpersonal.

The greater risk of violence for young people led us to ask them specific questions. Part of the questionnaire was applied only to respondents below 20 years of age (16-20), only 66 respondents fell into this cat-egory in the São Paulo sample (total number of respondents=500); however, the results are impressive. When asked whether they knew any young person in their neighborhood, at school or at work who had experienced various forms of violence in the previous 12 months, thirty-three percent of the young people reported knowing victims of armed robberies, 25 percent reported knowing victims of gun violence, and 17 percent knew a youngster like him/herself who had been a victim of homicide.

The younger groups are more exposed to violence by being more victimized, by witnessing more, and being told more. This violence is more familiar to them because their friends experience much of what they

Table 5- Changes of Routine Motivated by Fear.

Fear of violence can lead people to change some routines.
Have you felt the need to do any of the following?

Number of Respondents: 500
Location: Sª o Paulo

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
		Percent Answering Yes			
Avoid going out at night	47	41	46	51	47
Avoid areas of the city	29	33	28	30	25
Change the route from home to school/ work	18	23	16	17	14
Avoid contact with neighbors	15	13	19	16	13
Avoid certain public transport lines	9	7	11	9	7

Source: *Noœleo de Estudos da ViolŒcia (Center for the Study of Violence)- Universidade de Sª o Paulo (University of Sª o Paulo), 1999.*

do. Moreover, it seems, from their reports, that part of this peer group also victimizes others. When asked whether any of their friends or colleagues had victimized someone, over one-half responded that they had a friend that seriously assaulted someone. One-third had friends that had been involved in a gang fight, another third had friends who carried guns, close to a third knew someone who had held someone up at gun point, and 12 percent knew a young person who had committed murder. This exposure to violence by young people—witnessing their peer group being victimized and victimizing—seems to be affecting how they think about violence, its causes, and its uses.

According to the survey, extreme exposure to violence also affects young peoples' routines and the way that they use the city. Staying indoors at night and avoiding areas of the city are the most frequently adopted behaviors by all age groups as can be seen in Table 5.

Surprisingly, despite the fact that people are more exposed to violence within their own neighborhood, this has not resulted in intolerance or justification for the exclusion of people different from themselves. Although one-third of the respondents would be willing to expel people considered to be troublemakers (and this seems to be more consensual among younger respondents), in general, the survey points to a tolerance with respect to social class, religion, race, and political ideas.

Table 6- Perception of the Neighborhood
I would like to know whether you agree or disagree with the following statements :

Location: Sª o Paulo
Number of Respondents: 500

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
		Fully agree and agree*			
		Percent			
People have the right to expel persons that cause problems	35	41	31	31	35
A neighborhood should be inhabited by people of the same social class	13	15	10	14	12
A neighborhood should be inhabited by people with the same religion	6	7	6	7	7
A neighborhood should be inhabited by people of the same race	5	4	7	6	5
A neighborhood should be inhabited by people with the same political ideas	6	7	7	5	6

Source: *Nœcleo de Estudos da ViolËcia (Center for the Study of Violence)- Universidade de Sª o Paulo (University of Sª o Paulo), 1999.*

- Respondents were presented a five point attitudinal scale, ranging from fully agree to fully disagree with the neutral point in the middle. For the purpose of this analysis, agreement, whether partial or full, was added up.

Exposure to Violence and Beliefs about Violence and its Legitimacy

When there is significant violence in a community, there are strong incentives for self-defense mechanisms. This is particularly the case if violence is considered to be a legitimate tool to solve conflicts and if the state cannot ensure people's safety. In such a scenario, reputations may be used as a shield from threats and violence may be used to support and maintain a reputation or social status. Petty confrontations, conflicts, and disputes, if perceived as threatening reputations, may become a matter of life and death. When personal safety relies on their personal image or social reputation, there is much sensitivity to any threats viewed as challenges to one's reputation. Responding to these threats may result in a cycle of retributions: retaliations and vengeance.

In the survey, values and norms concerning violence were explored (see Table 7) through situations presented to the respondents. The situations involved values about self-defense, honor, jealousy, response to insults, disputes over partners, etc.

Most respondents agree that violence can be used for self-defense and that a person is entitled to kill in order to defend him/herself or his/her family, but only one-third approves of killing to defend property. Still

this approval is less strong than that among respondents surveyed in the United States (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). Studies carried out to identify the roots of the differences in violence between Southern states and other states within the United Stares have pointed to a stronger acceptance of the use of violence in self-defense in Southern states. The results in the Brazilian survey point to less acceptance of violence— even if used for self-defense—than that of surveys in the U.S. irrespective of whether the data refers to Southern or other states outside of the South (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). The use of violence to solve disputes between males over a woman or between females over a man are rejected by the majority, as is the possession of guns for safety. Still this rejection is least strong among the younger group, especially in reference to the possession of guns. A third of the young respondents believe that having a gun in the house increases the safety of the home and nearly one-fourth believe that carrying a gun increases a person's

Table 7- Legitimate Uses of Violence

"People have different opinions about the use of force. Do you agree/disagree:"

Number of Respondents: 500
Location: Sªo Paulo

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
			Fully * agree and agree		
			Percent		
A person has the right to kill in self defense	66	71	63	66	61
A person has the right to kill to protect his/her family	62	67	64	62	53
A person has the right to kill to protect his/her property	35	39	31	35	35
A man has the right to hit another man who tried to seduce his wife	18	29	15	13	15
A man who is unfaithful to his wife deserves to be hit	18	27	20	13	16
A woman has the right to hit another woman who tried to seduce her husband	17	29	14	12	14
A woman who was unfaithful to her husband deserves to be hit	17	24	19	13	15
Often it is necessary to use violence to prevent violence	16	17	14	14	14
Having a gun in the house makes the house safer	14	31	8	7	14
Carrying a gun makes a person safer	9	23	5	3	6

Source: *Nœcleo de Estudos da ViolŒncia (Center for the Study of Violence)- Universidade de Sªo Paulo (University of Sªo Paulo), 1999.*

- Respondents were presented a five point attitudinal scale, ranging from fully agree to fully disagree with the neutral point in the middle. For the purpose of this analysis, agreement whether partial or full was added up.

safety. Also, between a third and a fourth of the younger respondents accept that violence can be used in response to what is perceived as betrayal by a partner, either by physically punishing the partner or the third party involved. Such beliefs could make them more vulnerable to involvement in conflicts that result in violence.

The concept that violence for self-defense is legitimate was reaffirmed by the respondents' answers to other questions about whether resorting to violence was just or unjust. These responses reiterate the acceptance of violence used for self-defense and, for some age groups, to defend their property. It seems that certain forms of violence, rooted in a need to "keep face" are thus considered by some people (more than a third of the respondents) to be legitimate. More important, young people seem to believe more in this legitimacy than their elders. This alongside with their greater tendency to believe in the efficacy of possessing guns and their greater exposure to risky situations could be a key element in their greater vulnerability.

Table 8- Causes of Violence

People have different ideas about why people commit violence. Do you agree/disagree that people commit violence because:

Number of Respondents:500
Location: Sᵃo Paulo

	TOTAL	AGE 16-24	AGE 25-34	AGE 35-49	AGE 50 and over
			Fully agree and agree*		
			Percent		
They use drugs	91	89	95	90	90
They sell drugs	90	86	94	90	91
Get drunk and provoke others	89	89	89	93	86
Are provoked by others	68	74	72	63	60
Take pleasure in inflicting pain	68	76	70	67	56
Want to feel important	66	73	70	65	59
Feel jealous of their partner	66	71	70	60	65
Want to protect their family	66	73	66	63	59
Have to maintain their reputation	65	74	68	63	52
Want to protect themselves	65	74	68	60	60
Are racially prejudiced	63	74	63	61	55
Want to impress their friends	62	77	64	60	57
Bystanders encourage violence	61	56	72	56	52
They are afraid of being hurt	58	61	66	55	48
Have to maintain a reputation of toughness	51	62	57	47	38

Source: Nœcleo de Estudos da ViolŒncia (Center for the Study of Violence)- Universidade de Sᵃo Paulo (University of Sᵃo Paulo), 1999.
Respondents were presented with a five point attitudinal scale, ranging from fully agree to fully disagree with the neutral point in the middle. For the purpose of this analysis, agreement, whether partial or full, was added up.

A study (Fagan, 1998) about the context of homicides of young people in New York has shown that the need to maintain status and reputation was the motive behind many homicides. Homicide is associated with incidents perceived to be insults (or disrespectful to or threatening) to the perpetrator's masculinity (such as competition for girls), or preventive violence ("getting him before he gets me"), competition for power or influence in the territory, or retribution for humiliation or previous violence. The reaction of the community, in particular of bystanders, is key to the outcome of incidents that lead to such conflicts. Bystanders can discourage or encourage a fatal outcome. What Fagan observed is that in communities where there is significant violence, there is also the tendency for bystanders to encourage disputes. When drugs and alcohol are present, language becomes more provocative, anger is exaggerated and there is greater sensitivity to the group's encouragement.

In Brazil, we must keep in mind that police behavior is one key element helping to encourage violence. Many police officers provide an extremely negative role model for the communities because they use excessive force and/or are themselves involved with criminal activities. This behavior reinforces the lack of trust in the police and ensures that the police will have little or no credibility to help solve conflicts peacefully. Added to this, is their lack of efficiency in solving cases. The result is that people do not trust the police forces. People that feel threatened or who have been victims of violent crimes are encouraged to solve the problems by their own means.

The Causes of Violence

The consumption of drugs and alcohol is recognized as the major cause of violence. Among the respondents, this belief is widespread and it is disseminated by the media and the police. It is interesting to note that there is more of a consensus among the younger groups on the causes of violence than among the older group. Young people surveyed in São Paulo see violence as related to the need to maintain one's reputation or status within their group. The greater consensus among young people as to the causes of violence may derive from their more frequent exposure to violent events. While the context where violence takes place can vary, as can the degree of deprivation and need, the causes of violence are quite universal and have to do with values and with what is learned and with how people are socialized.

Other Causes of the Greater Vulnerability of Young People to Violence

Greater exposure to violence and holding beliefs that are more conducive to violent responses, would seem enough to place youngster at a high-risk of being victims and victimizers. However, given their vulnerability, the question is why most youngsters survive this difficult stage of life without being seriously harmed or imprisoned. Adolescence and early adulthood are periods of greater vulnerability, not only to violence, but also to substance abuse, emotional problems, risky sexual behavior, and suicide. Resnick et al. (1997) in a survey of 12,118 U.S. adolescents reported that the protection against such risks comes from the family and from parents in particular. Parental expectations in terms of educational achievement are critical. The literature on resilience has often credited parental supervision, especially of the peer group (Emler and Reicher, 1995), but what this last survey underlines is that more than supervision, the quality of the relationship between parents and their children is a critical part of reducing vulnerability. A good rapport, intimacy, affection, and the capacity to have fun together were found to be elements that granted protection and motivated children to do well in school.

The school, along with the family, is another critical actor in safeguarding youth. Good ties to their schools protect youth from risks (Resnick et al., 1997), whereas school failure increases frustration, lowers self-esteem and encourages aggression (Werthamer, 1991; Le Blanc et al., 1992). Family violence also enhances vulnerability. Family violence affects school performance, increases failure, weakens the children's ties to school, socializes children into accepting violence as normal,

and increases the chances of delinquency (Jenkins, 1995). To reduce young people's vulnerability, it is necessary to improve school achievement. The family and the community need to be involved (Jessor, 1993; O'Donnell et al. 1995). The family's role is not an easy one. Adolescence is characterized by a profoundly ambiguous relationship between youngsters and their families. Adolescents need to define their identity and thus to distance themselves from their parents, yet they also need parental closeness, support, and affection (Emler and Reicher, 1995). Depression, isolation, and solitude alternate with euphoria when with friends. Their social life—their peer group—fulfills many functions: providing support, mutual protection, companionship, and security. Within their peer group they develop social skills and are allowed to be rebellious and to challenge rules and norms. Some such rebellions will involve deviant behavior and even misdemeanors. Emler and Reicher (1995), similarly to Farrington (1985), discovered that in the U.K. most adolescents between 10 and 16 years of age are guilty of some form of deviant behavior—from skipping classes to stealing small items in shops to lying, cheating, or vandalizing. As they grow older, these behaviors disappear.[31]

The peer group is fundamental to the development of social identity and individual and social reputation. Reputation is always public. Youngsters are very much aware of this fact and act in order to reinforce or change their reputation. Much of what they do as a group is directed to an audience with a goal in mind. That is the reason why young offenders frequently act in groups. Generally, their actions can be decoded by their peers as related to their reputation or their image. Part of the incentive to break rules is that this type of behavior is more expressive than compliance (Emler and Reicher, 1995). What is important to reinforce is that there are aspects of adolescence which can contribute to violence. Having a reputation for aggression in a dangerous area can be a form of pre-empting violence. The problem, of course, is that once reputations are established, they have to be maintained, and what was once a source of protection may become a source of risk.

In the poor areas of the Metropolitan region, the problems listed above are made more intense by overlapping deprivations and the extreme visibility of peer group life. Having nowhere to meet but the streets, their reputations are based on a mixture of fact and fantasy. Different dress, language codes and different behavior from that of adults may be labeled dangerous or even criminal instead of just different. The irony is that once labeled, the group will try to live up to its reputation thereby becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Trivial things like chatting with friends may be interpreted by fearful outsiders as threatening activity. In addition, once youngsters believe that violence is functional, they may respond with violence in order to maintain their reputation or territory.

The reduction of violence demands prevention and improvements in communities that are more at risk. One strategy is making schools more effective in meeting the needs of the community. Teachers need to find teaching tools that allow them to present materials in a more accessible way. It is also necessary to recognize other needs youngsters and their families have such as adequate job training opportunities and facilities for healthy group activities. Youngsters should have a place to go where they can be with their friends in a more protected environment, where they can practice sports, listen to or play music, and dance or chat. Psychological and economic support for families at risk—including treatment for drug addiction—is also needed. Families despair when their children get involved with drugs and have little or no information about what to do and where to go for help. This lack of information fosters helplessness and hopelessness and in the end may cause families to give up on their children because their home life is perceived as unacceptable. It is also critical to provide hope for the future by introducing income generating programs to train youngsters for the job market.

Civil servants working in impoverished areas can play fundamental roles. However, incentives—not necessarily just economic—for civil servants to commit to these areas need to be introduced. Moral and psychological incentives such as awards, public recognition

of efforts, or the provision of equipment to improve their performance can also facilitate the development of this commitment. Other forms of support such as group support to deal with the challenging circumstances can also foster greater commitment and reduce frustration (Meek and Ware,1996).

Finally, more information is needed about the nature of adolescent life in poor neighborhoods, about the role of group experience, and the challenges youth face when growing up in such hostile contexts. Interventions that ignore the particularities of adolescence, peer groups, and poverty have less of a chance of succeeding.

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Footnotes:

[1] The Metropolitan area of São Paulo is comprised of 39 municipalities of which the Municipality of São Paulo is the largest with 9, 856, 879 inhabitants in 1997. (Source: IBGE-Census Bureau)

[2] In 1991, there were 30,750 homicides in Brazil, 7,520 occurred in the Metropolitan area of São Paulo and 4,254 in Rio de Janeiro (11,774 homicides in both cities). By 1996, the national total was 38,894 homicides with São Paulo Metropolitan area responsible for 9,247 homicides and Rio de Janeiro 6,999 cases—16,246 homicides in both metro areas. (Source Datasus-Ministry of Health)

[3] To illustrate the achievements in this area, in 1980, in the Municipality of São Paulo, the deaths of children between the ages of 0-4 years totaled 23.38 percent of all deaths, by 1992, these deaths totaled 8.86 percent of all deaths. This was achieved through massive investments in inoculations, the provision of potable water, the extension of sewerage networks, and through public educational campaigns about detecting and treating dehydration, etc. (Cardia, 1998).

[4] Brazil had also reduced death rates among young people from illnesses such as infections and diseases caused by parasites (Vermelho and Mello Jorge, 1996).

[5] DIEESE-SEADE (DIEESE-Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e de Estudos Sócio Econômicos - SEADE- Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados, São Paulo State government.) Employment/unemployment survey, May 1999, Fundação Seade.

[6] Benefits are only available for a period of six months following dismissal, and only workers who were registered are eligible, and on average, people are taking more than twelve months to find a new job (when they find one).

[7] Data from Fundação SEADE- Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados, São Paulo State government.

[8] A survey (1999) by the Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction of the Federal Medical School in São Paulo identified one (informal) bar selling alcohol for every 10 houses in one of the more violent and deprived areas of São Paulo.

[9] Crime clearance rate is generally very low. In 1998, according to data from the Public Security Secretariat in São Paulo, less than 3 percent of all crimes committed in the state were solved. In terms of homicides, the rate is better. The Homicide Division claims that it solves 60 percent of the homicides perpetrated in the Metro region. There is less information concerning actual convictions, but a survey of the homicides that took place in 1991 shows that by 1995 only 1.72 percent of cases had led to convictions (Adorno, 1998).

[10] The police do little to investigate, in part because they claim they are overwhelmed by the growth of criminality, and in part (as we are finding out in one of the on-going research projects at the Center for the Study of Violence) because they believe that homicides cannot be prevented. This lack of priority given to investigating homicides of poor youth results, as expected, in growing numbers of unsolved cases. The community knows the killers, but the community does not trust the police and thus does not cooperate with the investigations.

[11] Folha de São Paulo, January 28, 1991 C-1 "Estudo da "geografia da morte" prova que a violência mata mais na periferia."

[12] Mapa da violência na cidade de São Paulo, 1996 CEDEC (Centro de Estudos de Cultura Contemporânea), Ministério da Justiça, Núcleo de Estudos da Violência showed that the risk of homicide for young people in the worst areas is 4 times that of youngsters living in better policed areas.

[13] Arms used by the Armed Forces exclusively to fight organized crime operations have also been found in the possession of drug dealers. This suggests that the illegal arms market is flourishing.

[14] Cardia's research in the favelas of São Paulo during the 1980s (1987) found that suppliers of water and electricity would multiply the value of the bills by the number of houses being provided instead of dividing the bill. (A example would be the following: suppose 10 houses shared a water source or a light source, this meant that their consumption would be measured by one single meter, generally located on the house of the person who had access to a legal connection. When the bill arrived it was expected that this bill would be divided by the number of households connected to the meter. Instead, most often the full bill would be charged to each household connected to the system. The owner of the meter would have his/her neighbors pay for the full bill (including his/her own share) and make a profit of 800 percent on the bill.) More recently, in another study by the Center for the Study of Violence, (Authoritarian Continuity and Democratic Consolidation), interviewees reported that when postal services are restricted to the central areas of the periphery, some houses are entrusted with keeping the post for others located in the periphery. When people went to collect their post they were charged R$ 1.00 per letter/bill.

[15] Folha de S. Paulo, 18/02/97, pg.3.1. "Violência impede acesso a serviços" and O Estado de São Paulo, 04/08/96, pg. A27, "Medo de violência dificulta censo do IBGE."

[16] Rents have fallen all over the Metro area except in the periphery where the rental of one bedroom, living room, bath, and kitchen costs between 200.00 and 300.00 Reais (or between US$120.00 and US$185.00) while the wage is US$ 80.00 monthly.

[17] Space is so scarce that an article in the Jornal do Brasil: April 28, 1996, "Favela Bairro muda a face dos morros cariocas" (pg.40) reports that in Rio, in certain areas of the Santa Marta Hill, when people sell their houses, they have to sell them along with the furniture since removing the furniture would demand that walls be demolished.

[18] Data from Infurb-FAUUSP, *Núcleo de Informações sobre o Urbano (Center of Urban Data) Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo- Universidade de São Paulo (School of Architecture and Urban Studies- University of São Paulo)* "São Paulo: Globalização da economia e Impactos na estrutura urbana,"1998 coordinated by Sueli Schiffer and from " Mapa da Exclusão Social da Cidade de São Paulo," 1996- Núcleo de Seguridade e Assistência Social da PUC-SP (Pontifícia Universidade de São Paulo), coordinated by Aldaíza Sposati.

[19] Movimento em Defesa da Vida- Movement in Defense of Life (1997).

[20] Survey by SENAI (*Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial)* in 1993/94 in the area identified the existence of 764 industrial jobs in this district inhabited by 221,000 people.

[21] Project: "Authoritarian Continuity and Democratic Consolidation." A reconstruction of 28 high media profile cases of gross human rights violations: death squads, lynchings, and killings by the police to identify the role such cases play in the political culture and the impact on trust in laws and in democracy. Cases were reconstructed from the criminal justice perspective (archival data), from the perspective of the communities where they happened, the media, NGO's, and the law enforcement actors: policemen, public prosecutors and judges. The performance of the criminal justice system was also analyzed.

[22]Assis (1994) identified the same for young offenders in Rio de Janeiro: "they reproduce the victim-aggressor syndrome." They are victims as well as victimizers.

[23] Hartless et al. (1995).

[24] Pesquisa "As condições de vida das crianças que circulam pelo campus da USP" (Street Children in the University Campus), sponsored by Instituto Ayrton Senna.

[25] Exposure to violence was measured in three different contexts: the neighborhood, at work, and at school.

[26] Respondents were asked to remember events that took place in the 12 months prior to the survey.

[27] About a third of the respondents had some stressful experience during the previous 12 months: death of people close to them, changes in family composition, moving houses, or violence in the neighborhood. Again violence in the neighborhood seems to affect the younger groups more. This may be because younger respondents have more contact with community life, have a more intense social life, and are more exposed to collective public life than older groups.

[28] The exposure of children of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro and of the periphery of São Paulo to violence is not negligible. The Jornal do Brasil (April 18, 1996) reported that in September 1995 a survey found that 1 in every 3 children in Rio had been robbed and that 50 percent of them had witnessed a robbery and 18 percent had witnessed some type of shooting.

[29] Instituto de Educação Continuada no Rio de Janeiro, in November, 1996.

[30] This is not an isolated result. Assis (1991) researching students from Duque de Caxias Municipality obtained similar results, 20 percent of the students had one relative killed, robberies and killings had been witnessed by 36 percent of the students.

[31] Data refers to information provided by the adolescents themselves.